

Press Release Classis Manitoba held 2023 05 26 in Winnipeg Redeemer CanRC

On behalf of the Winnipeg Redeemer CanRC, Rev. Joe Poppe welcomed all gathered for Classis. He led the gathering in opening devotions. In prayer for the proceedings, he also remembered a number of matters including the departure of Rev. James Zekveld and family to the Trinity Covenant Church (Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches) in Fort St. John, BC. He prayed for the retired pastors and their life circumstances and continuing service (Rev. & sr. John & Agnus VanRietschoten, Dr. & sr. Andrew & Inge Pol, and Rev. Klaas Jonker). Finally, the vacancies in Elm Creek CanRC and Niverville mission church were remembered.

Rev. Poppe especially welcomed Mark and Sheri Vanderlinde who were present for his preparatory examination. Having completed the four-year program at Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary, br. Vanderlinde was presenting himself before classis for examination with a view to being declared eligible for call. Rev. Poppe also welcomed the Grade 10 students of Immanuel Christian School, who were in attendance to observe proceedings, particularly the examination.

All the primary delegates were in attendance, except the delegates from Denver Emmanuel, who joined later via Zoom. Classis was therefore constituted. Rev. Carl VanDam was appointed president, Pastor James Slaa was appointed vice-president, and Rev. Rick Vanderhorst was appointed clerk. The agenda was adopted.

Classis proceeded to the examination of br. Mark Vanderlinde. He provided the required documents allowing Classis to examine him. Br. Vanderlinde first presented his sermon proposal on Romans 12:1-2. In closed session Classis evaluated the sermon proposal and decided to sustain this portion of the examination, thus allowing the examination to proceed. After conveying the decision, Classis proceeded to examine our brother regarding his spiritual life and motives for becoming a minister, then on Old Testament exegesis focusing on 1 Samuel 8, then on New Testament exegesis focusing on Mark 1:1-34, then finally on Doctrine and Creeds (focusing on the doctrine of man, the doctrine and person of Christ, and the doctrine of election). Once again Classis went into closed session and decided that the second part of the examination was also satisfactory and therefore declared that br. Mark Vanderlinde was eligible for call in the Canadian Reformed Churches for a period of three years. Brother Vanderlinde was informed of this decision, and together all rejoiced at this blessing! After Scripture reading of 2 Timothy 4, prayer was offered for br. Vanderlinde and his family, thanking God for the successful examination and praying that br. Vanderlinde would receive a call to the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In closed session, a report was read of a church visit to Emmanuel American Reformed Church of Denver, CO. Included in this report was the disheartening development that this congregation can no longer continue as an instituted congregation of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches. This is in part because two of the five office-bearers are moving away from this congregation, and an additional office-bearer will be joining another church in the area. They will remain as instituted church until after the Denver Family Camp in mid July. After that it will continue as an independent Reformed church. In the interim the existing office-bearers will care for the flock to ensure that no members will be left alone. Also, in the interim, Classis appointed Rev. Joe Poppe as a Counsellor (Art 45 CO) to aid them in the transition. Classis inquired about and was assured regarding the proper safety and distribution of remaining funds. In addition to this report there was a letter from the Committee for Aid to Needy Churches (CANC) seeking direction regarding support for Denver, since they will no longer need funds due to the departure of their pastor at the end of June. Classis instructed the CANC to stop sending

support and Classis will inform the churches that the requisition for the second half of the year will no longer be required. The delegates from Denver expressed to Classis and to the churches of Manitoba their deep appreciation and thankfulness for all the support they received over the years, both spiritually and financially. There were words of well-wishing and prayer was offered as well for the brothers and sisters in Denver.

Question Period was held as per Article 44 of the Church Order. One church requested advice in a matter of discipline with a view to proceeding to the second public announcement for a non-communicant member.

A report was received from the Committee for Contact with Neighbouring Classes and Presbyteries (CCNCP) requesting input from the churches regarding filling a vacancy in this committee due to the departure of Rev. Steve Vandavelde. Classis also received correspondence from the General Synod appointed standing Committee for Ecumenical Relations (CER) requesting classis to inform CER about any ecumenical relations. Classis instructed the CCNCP to inform CER of their activities. Another report was received very late and declared inadmissible, with encouragement to resubmit it to the next Classis.

An additional correspondence was received very late but was declared admissible due to time sensitivity. Redeemer church informed Classis with sadness that Rev. James Zekveld and his family have withdrawn their membership from Redeemer CanRC because of his acceptance of the call to the Trinity Covenant Church of Fort St. John, BC (Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches), with which we do not have ecclesiastical fellowship. Redeemer church requested Classis to decide that Rev. James Zekveld no longer retains any ministerial credentials in Classis and in the Canadian Reformed Churches. Classis so decided, and at the same time expressed thankfulness for Rev. Zekveld's faithful and fruitful labours and activities in the Ambassador CanRC mission work for the past five years. Classis expressed wishes for God's blessing on him as he continues to pastor at Trinity Covenant Church. Classis also wished blessing on the work that continues in and for Ambassador church, including the establishment of a calling committee and the search for a new missionary.

The convening church for the next classis will be Carman East. The date will be September 22, 2023, DV, at 9:00am. Classis also made suggestions for officers for the next classis. With thankfulness the president ruled that brotherly censure was not necessary (Art 34 CO).

The ACTS of Classis were adopted and the Press Release was approved. Rev. VanDam led in closing devotions and Classis was closed.

*For classis, Pastor James Slaa*