

Press Release for Classis Manitoba held March 22, 2024, Elm Creek, Manitoba

It was an historic moment, on Friday, March 22, 2024, when Rev. Dathan Pleiter, on behalf of the Elm Creek Canadian Reformed Church, welcomed all gathered for Classis Manitoba – for the first time, classis was being convened by and in the Elm Creek church. Rev. Pleiter especially welcomed Rev. Chris Drew, Pastor of Faith Presbyterian Church (OPC), Grand Forks ND, who was in attendance as a fraternal delegate. Rev. Pleiter led the gathering in opening devotions, remembering several matters of joy and concern taking place in our classical region. He remembered the vacancies of Winnipeg-Grace church and of Winnipeg-Redeemer (Ambassador Mission congregation in Niverville), and also prayed for the house congregation in Rivers (Westman/Brandon area) under the oversight of Carman West. Winnipeg-Grace has extended a call to Rev. Julius VanSpronsen of Edmonton Emmanuel CanRC. Rev. Pleiter also prayed for the retired pastors and their life circumstances and continuing service. Rev. & sr. John & Agnes VanRietschoten continue to deal with the struggles of advanced age. Dr. & sr. Andrew & Inge Pol remain active and busy. Dr. Pol continues to preach and help vacant churches in our classis. Rev. & sr. Pol will also commemorate 40 years in the ministry on April 1. Rev. Klaas Jonker is active in his retirement. He is currently visiting Australia for many months and helping several vacant churches. Thankfulness was expressed for the ordination of Rev. Dathan Pleiter in Elm Creek this past January. This year, in July, Carman West will commemorate its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary as an instituted congregation. The Lord willing, CRTS student Josh Schouten will be undergoing an internship this summer in Redeemer and Ambassador with Rev. Joe Poppe.

All those attending Classis were properly delegated by their councils. Carman West sent a secondary delegate. Classis was therefore constituted. Rev. Carl VanDam was appointed president, Rev. James Slaa appointed vice-president, and Rev. Joe Poppe was appointed clerk. Rev. Dathan Pleiter signed the Form for Subscription since he was ordained into the ministry after the last Classis. Rev. Chris Drew was seated as a fraternal delegate.

The classis treasurer submitted a financial report. 2024 mileage rates for travel for classical purposes was set at \$0.64 per kilometre. There is no assessment for this year. Carman West church reported on the inspection of the books of the treasurer. It was noted that the books were in good order. Winnipeg-Redeemer reported on an inspection of the classical archives held in the Grace church. Classis received a report of the Deputies for Contact with the Manitoba Provincial Government. All these reports were received with thankfulness.

The church visitors reported on visits to Carman East, Carman West, Elm Creek, Winnipeg Grace, Winnipeg Redeemer. Supplication and thanksgiving prayer was offered after each report. Question Period was held as per Article 44 of the Church Order. One church requested concurring advice in a matter of discipline. Prayer was offered for the member concerned, the family, church, and consistory.

Classis dealt with and agreed to a proposal from the Committee for Contact with Neighbouring Classes and Presbyteries to organize combined meetings of classes and presbyteries with the Reformed Church of the United States (RCUS) Northern Plains Classis and South Central Classis, the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA) Classis Central US, and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) Presbytery of the Dakotas. The meetings are proposed to be held in Sioux Falls, South Dakota in the spring of 2026. Classis also dealt with and decided on a proposal from Carman East to revise the mandate of the committee for Needy churches.

Our fraternal delegate Rev. Christopher Drew was given the opportunity to address Classis. He explained to Classis the geography of the fifteen churches and two mission works of the Presbytery of the Dakotas of the OPC. There are 633 communicant members and 182 baptized members combined in all these churches. He shared some of the blessings and struggles that the presbytery is experiencing at this time. He expressed thankfulness for the warm welcome and hospitality he has received and promised to continue to pray for us. Rev. Drew fielded several questions. Rev. Poppe responded with gratefulness for his visit and led the assembly in prayer of thanksgiving and supplication for Rev. Drew and for the churches in the OPC Presbytery of the Dakotas.

The convening church for the next classis will be Winnipeg Grace. The proposed date is June 21, 2024, DV, at 9:00am. Alternate date is September 27, 2024. Classis also suggested officers for the next classis. Personal question period was held. With thankfulness the president ruled that brotherly censure was not deemed necessary (CO Article 34).

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

*For classis, Rev. James Slaa*