



March 2021

## Spring Classis Letter - 2021

At the writing of this letter, we are still in the midst of isolating ourselves yet see the hope of a return to life where we can gather together with our church families again (without masks!). There is something here about the “already and not yet” present in this, except that the joy I usually associate with such a piece of our theology seems to be missing in our daily existence in this pandemic reality. I understand how challenging it has been for all of you and want to affirm your work in persevering. This kind of reality gives me and the denominational personnel an even deeper resolve to serve you well through all this.

It is my prayer that coming out of the pandemic, people will be so hungry for real community again, that the church will be all set to fill a real need. Do know that having the church ready and ‘successful’ does not sit on your shoulders alone (esp. as pastors). We as denominational staff are present to support you. Classis is meant to be a place of mutual support, and your church council is your backbone. Use every friendship, family support structure or church system to support you and your work. More than anything, I wish for you to remain healthy and well.

Below you will find a number of updates since the Winter Classis Letter sent out in Dec 2020. Let me know if you have any questions about any of them (or matters not named on this sheet).

**Hearts Exchanged:** [Hearts Exchanged](#) is a learning and action journey designed to equip Reformed Christians to engage with Indigenous people as neighbours and fellow image-bearers of Creator God. Anyone connected to the CRC who is wrestling with the challenges and opportunities of reconciliation, with a mind and heart open to transformation, is welcome to participate in our regional cohorts starting in Fall 2021. Get more information at [crcna.org/hearts-exchanged](http://crcna.org/hearts-exchanged). (cstover@crcna.org, sperez@crcna.org)

**Canadian National Gathering:** Hearts Exchanged will be the centrepiece of the next Canadian National Gathering - which due to the pandemic and all the adjustments that need to be made, has been tentatively scheduled for some time between May and August 2023. Keep watch over the months to come for more details.

**Centre for Public Dialogue:** We are grateful for grant funds to support a Redeemer student intern at the Centre. Current work in partnership and on its own revolves around the development of the Hearts Exchanged initiative as well as focus on key governmental bills and matters. Some of the CRCNA’s partners in the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and the Canadian Council of Churches also benefit from the centre’s input. (Mike Hogeterp [mhogeterp@cccn.org](mailto:mhogeterp@cccn.org) is your key contact)



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**Partnership via Diaconal Ministries:** With the local church in mind, DMC and the CRCNA within Canada have been ensuring that the area of *stewardship* is being considered. From monetary stewardship to concern for creation...check this website out: <https://diaconalministries.com/stewardship/#stewardship-resources>. If your church is interested in continuing the conversation reach out to myself or Karla Winham of DMC (kwinham@crcna.org).

**Anti Racism and Diversity:** The Canadian board of the CRCNA (Canada Corporation) has approved a diversity strategy for the denomination that will see increased attention and support paid to local churches and the entire system of the CRCNA within Canada. This is NOT a reaction to the events of the summer of 2020 in the US and all that it created. Instead, it is a thoughtful consideration begun before that after key engagement conversations across Canada. This strategy is also an ode to the desires of the Canadian Council of Christian Reformed Churches who imagined such work more than 20 years ago. A person (Pablo Kim) is expecting to start in June. Look forward to introductions to him and the work in the months to come.

**The Canadian Restructuring:** In an attempt to honour the wishes of the classis, the federal government, staff, boards, and the broader denomination, there has been some serious juggling going on in connection to the way in which the Canadian side of the church achieves compliance. The Canada Corp board is in the midst of a journey toward an appropriate restructuring that is meant to go before Synod eventually. As well, a report entitled 'The Canadian restructuring report' has been put on hold until this larger denominational work has been settled. You might hear about the larger two-nation report with the language of "the SLAT report" which your COD/Canada Corp member can tell you more about.

When the report is brought back to the table, I will be excited to share with you the hopes and dreams that so many of you participated in and have been asking about. ([droorda@crcna.org](mailto:droorda@crcna.org))

**Finances and Finance Strategy:** Those of us who deal with the dollars and cents of the denomination (arising from members and churches across Canada) are tackling a journey of increased accountability and responsibility. This is partially tied to our capacity and need to comply with government regulations around 'direction and control.' In any case, it will mean that you as local leaders and believers will begin to be able to see Canadian specific information about spending and use of resources. This should help you all live into the accountability that is needed and make wise choices about how it is that we share our funding together (and in what direction).

**Ministry Share:** Speaking of finances, we wish to thank you for your faithfulness in the pledging process. After all the pledges are in we are delighted to report that the Cdn side of the church is pledging for shared ministry efforts to the tune of only a 5.8% decrease from 2019 (our last fully measured year). That your churches would pledge to this degree in a pandemic year is so very



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honourable. We thank you very, very much. We commit ourselves to use those funds in 2 ways: to strengthen the mission of God through the local church and second, to support the mission of God that goes beyond the local church that we all deem integral to Kingdom work in our country and world.

**Website:** As part of our continual push for support of the local church, some much-needed changes are coming to the CRCNA website. When you go into a variety of areas, it will ask you if you wish for Cdn content or US content. This will enable you as church leaders to access the appropriate material even better.

**Bridge App:** The last year has been a very strong year for The Bridge App. Usership and functionality are all up. Using the GIVE function as a measure, we have afforded churches increased functionality toward giving to the tune of 10X greater than the year prior. It appears to us that some churches are backing away from the Bridge App for the sheer reason of relying on old methods when this new one seems like “one extra thing.” Be assured that this missional, local and supportive tool is easy to set up and easy to manage. Plus, our staff is more than willing to support you in the journey.

**Ecumenicity:** In the past, it has often seemed to many in the local church that the work of ecumenicity is denominational work, irrelevant to the local scene. Recently though, entire cities are developing their own ecumenical networks and so this area is getting greater notice.

Additionally, items like [Project Ploughshares](#) being part of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize has highlighted the good work that the church can do together. As a result, we are in the beginning stages in Canada of developing a local-oriented strategy for ecumenical work. Thus making the ecumenical offerings increasingly available for your church. Keep watch for how this develops...

Do remember that grants up to 500 dollars to support you in participating in ecumenical work are still available by emailing Peter Elgersma [pelgersma@crcna.org](mailto:pelgersma@crcna.org), or myself.

**A small seed growing larger:** You may have heard about a small project entitled “*Good Governance for Better Missions*.” This is a project currently in its pilot form with 3 churches involved (east, west and central Canada). The idea is that by developing good governance and leadership structures a church will not have to burn all of its calories and thus have plenty of energy left over for the real mission of Christ in the community. More information to come in the future of this promising beginning. Ask me if you wish to know more about this for your church.

**Volunteer opportunity: Canadian National Gathering-** As mentioned earlier, the CNG is tentatively scheduled in the period of May-Aug 2023. If you wish to volunteer to be on the organizing committee or know someone in your church who might, please have them contact me at [droorda@crcna.org](mailto:droorda@crcna.org)



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