

Oversight Committee for Vanastra CRC | Report for Classis Huron, September 2025

Pastor Ed Den Haan and Pastor Tim Keep attended Vanastra CRC's congregational meeting on May 26, 2025. Pastor Darrell Bierman was unable to attend.

After opening devotions and regular business items were taken care of, Pastor Ed introduced himself and Pastor Tim.

Pastor Tim provided a brief oral history of events at Vanastra since Pastor Hoekstra's call, as well as a summary of the conversations the oversight team has had with the church council. Special note was made of what the oversight team heard. Things like:

- there is excitement for children's ministry
- there is still plenty of hurt
- finances are a concern
- council members are tired

Pastor Ed then provided some context for how a discussion could take place, using a few questions to help the congregation begin to share their sense of what they are feeling, what might need repair, what is to be celebrated, etc. The following is a summary of that discussion:

- When Pastor Hoekstra was called, Vanastra CRC had a sense of vision and mission. Is that really gone? We might have something to build on.
- How can we foster engagement in things like congregational meetings and listening circles (if we pursue them)?
- We are still grieving; we feel betrayed or at least as if we were "duped." Many feel prepared to begin moving through that suffering into something new. Forgiveness is already beginning to take place. The pain is no longer so sharp, but has dulled.
- There is a certain sort of unity and determined nature to continue. It was noted that this body has not fractured or split. They are still there, gathering for worship, enjoying fellowship, and sharing ministry together.
- A genuine question raised was how did we determine that 5 months of salary payment for Pastor Hoekstra was required?
- A few members really wanted to hear about the more practical resources for the congregation. The following were discussed:
 - Thrive Office having resources for Specialized Transitional Ministers, Listening Circles for discernment
 - Classis Huron's Mission Catalyst, Joan Brady
 - Renewal Lab
- A continuing question seems to be about timing. Essentially, when can we get going on finding a new pastor? What steps do we need to take?

] There seemed to be both a tiredness and a readiness. This may be a congregation that has poured out for a while and now feels drained. But this is not to say they are ready to quit—far from it. They are ready for action—to begin taking steps to heal and hope. Perhaps this is a natural progression in the process.

In light of that, Pastor Ed closed with a wise comment that the council ought to find the courage to act—to make decisions—even if new council members are coming on soon. Take courage to follow the leading of the Spirit and trust the next council to continue that work.

Following the meeting, a number of denominational resources were shared to the council: Thrive consultants, Next Steps Discernment information, Thriving Essentials course information, Church Renewal information, and contact for Joan Brady (Mission Catalyst). The Vanastra council had some significant turnover in the late spring with new members coming

on, along with a new chair. In their June meeting, the council reviewed possible resources and decided to invite Joan Brady to come to a future council meeting. A meeting is scheduled for September 9 (with Joan) to begin the process of articulating the vision and direction of the church. This is to both help the congregation get a sense and a reminder of what gifts and passions they have, as well as to help inform the council as to the sort of pastor they will be seeking. The council will also be considering whether Listening Circles will be a good practice to follow up as a next step. Healing is slow but steady.

We're encouraged to see the action steps being taken. There is more to do, but there is a sense of awareness that God is faithful and will lead Vanastra through the process.

In service to Christ,
Rev. Ed Den Haan
Rev. Darrell Bierman
Rev. Tim Keep