



1275 Blearns Rd.
Kitchener, ON
N2E 3X6

Tel: (519) 743-9482
Fax: (519) 743-4434
Email: office@ccrc.on.ca
www.ccrc.on.ca

November 2024

Overture to Classis Huron Regarding Voting Delegates

The decisions of Synod 2024 are an overreach into the authority of Classis Huron to deal with its member churches in ways it discerns is best. This overture asks Classis Huron to protect its authority and decide for itself who it will receive as delegates, how it will proceed, and who it will send to Synod.

Background

Synod 2024 declared that churches which have declared themselves to be “in the status of one in protest with ecclesiastical intent” regarding synod’s decisions shall be entered into a one-year process of discipline requiring repentance and a move toward restoration with CRCNA positions, or toward disaffiliation. During the one-year process, those congregations will be unable to send delegates as voting members to classis or synod or to serve on denominational boards or agencies.

Synod identified this process as “Limited Suspension”. Churches under limited suspension enter a one-year process of conversation and discernment toward either restoration and alignment with CRCNA positions on chastity, or toward disaffiliation from the denomination.

Synod’s only specific statements on the consequences of “limited suspension” are related to a church’s ability to have its officebearers serve as delegates at classis or synod or on denominational boards. Synod even allowed such officebearers to attend classis meetings and have privilege of the floor but not to be given a vote. Limited suspension means a limit on representation in classical and denominational meetings and ministries. Classes are expected to honor the limited suspension and discipline of these congregations with no thought to how this may affect the Classis budget. Is it right to expect a congregation that cannot vote on the classis budget to contribute ministry shares?

Limited Suspension is a new power that Synod gave itself, and it has yet to be proven to be a legitimate power. Synod did not tie this authority to any Church Order articles. Moreover, Synod imposed itself upon the Classes with no real thought on the implications. Synod seemed intent simply to dictate to the Classes who they can and cannot include as voting members. This is an overreach that impinges on the authority of Classis to seat delegates as the Classis sees fit.



1275 Blearns Rd.
Kitchener, ON
N2E 3X6

Tel: (519) 743-9482
Fax: (519) 743-4434
Email: office@ccrc.on.ca
www.ccrcc.on.ca

This overreach is invalidated by Synod's own rules. Church Order ensures the autonomy of the local Council in governing its own ministry and membership. Article 85 states, "No church shall in any way lord it over another church, and no officebearer shall lord it over another officebearer". Based in this principle, the church has maintained unity without uniformity in the matter of women serving in church office by underscoring the autonomy of the local council: "Every classis shall respect the prerogative of its constituent churches to call and ordain officebearers according to their own biblical convictions." (Supplement, Article 3-a.3). For Synod to require Classes to "guide into compliance" those Councils who hold differing views on the confessional status on Synod's interpretation of unchastity is an overreach that is not backed up in Church Order.

Overture

Community CRC of Kitchener overtures Classis Huron to affirm its authority by declaring that it

- A. Will continue to welcome, seat, and respect voting privileges of all delegates appointed by member Councils regardless of their being under "limited suspension" by Synod or holding a letter "in protest",
- B. Will not send church visitors or appoint any *in loco* committee to guide or direct local Councils into compliance with synodical decisions with respect to chastity, and
- C. Will delegate to Synod those officebearers it deems worthy and suited to the task.

Grounds:

- a. Church Order Article 27a states that "Each assembly exercises, in keeping with its own character and domain, the ecclesiastical authority entrusted to the church by Christ; the authority of councils being original, that of major assemblies being delegated."
- b. Article 27b states that "The classis has the same authority over the council as the synod has over the classis." Since a Classis cannot dictate who in a Council can vote on matters before that Council, a Synod cannot dictate who in a Classis can vote on matters before that Classis.
- c. Article 40a states that "The council of each church shall delegate a minister, an elder, and a deacon to the classis." These delegates are given voting privileges. As its own duly constituted ecclesiastical assembly, the delegates of a Classis retain the authority to determine who may be seated as delegates, how it will proceed, and who it will send as delegates to Synod.
- d. Church Order gives Classes the authority to invite delegations. Supplement 40c states that "if a classis so desires, it may invite councils to delegate up to three officebearers from emerging churches under their care to the meetings of classis. Supplement 40d states that "If a classis so desires, it may also invite councils to delegate campus ministers, who



1275 Blearns Rd.
Kitchener, ON
N2E 3X6

Tel: (519) 743-9482
Fax: (519) 743-4434
Email: office@ccrc.on.ca
www.ccrcc.on.ca

are ordained officebearers, under their care to the meetings of classis." This clearly shows that Classis has discretion on who has voting privileges.

- e. "Limited Suspension" is a term found nowhere in Church Order. According to Church Order articles 82-84, an officebearer under special discipline is to be suspended and deposed. There is no category in our Church Order for an officebearer or a council to be placed under "limited suspension." Synod did not base its 2024 decision regarding Limited Suspension on Church Order. Without any reference to Church Order, Articles 27 and 40 and their supplements have precedence.
- f. The Handbook of Classis Huron Article 2.2 authorizes Classis in special circumstances to decide who is seated as delegates, stating that if the credentials of any church are irregular or missing, Classis shall decide by vote on the seating of that church's delegates.
- g. Article 7 of the Bylaws of Classis Huron state that there is only one class of Members, and that each Member shall be entitled to receive notice of, attend and vote at all meetings of the Members of the Corporation.
- h. Article 8 of the Bylaws of Classis Huron states that Membership in the Corporation shall consist:
 - a. Of all those churches who:
 - i. Are a member of the Christian Reformed Churches in North America;
 - ii. Fall within the regional boundaries of Classis Huron as such boundaries may be determined by the Synod of the CRCNA from time to time; and
 - iii. Who maintain their Membership in accordance with the Articles, By-laws, Church Order and the Rules of Classis Huron as adopted from time to time.
 - i. Article 9 of the Bylaws of Classis Huron states that each Member has the right to send up to three individual, eligible delegates to all Meetings of Members, with each delegate permitted to exercise one vote as per the Rules of Classis Huron.
 - j. Classis Huron has every right to review and update its bylaws and Rules of procedure. But until that happens, regardless of synodical pronouncements, Classis has the authority to determine who is seated at Classis, and our bylaws provide no grounds to deny any member to be seated at this meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Paul A. [unclear]", is written over the typed name of the Council of Community CRC.

Council of Community CRC
Kitchener, ON