

Church Visitors Reports with Community CRC and Cornerstone Church

Background to October 9 Visits

At the September 24, 2025 meeting of Classis Huron, a motion was presented to recognize Cornerstone CRC—an offshoot of Community CRC (CCRC)—as an emerging church under the supervision of Stratford CRC. After considerable discussion, this motion was defeated.

During deliberation, delegates expressed that the request from Cornerstone had come across as sudden and unexpected. Before receiving a letter from the Cornerstone group in July 2025, Classis had not previously been informed of a potential church plant, nor had it been made aware of significant conflict at Community CRC. No formal church visits had taken place, and now there appeared to be a division within the congregation. Rather than act hastily, Classis chose to withhold approval in order to follow proper procedure and ensure due process.

To that end, Classis Huron passed the following motion: “To direct AdCom to appoint mediating parties to facilitate conversations between the leadership of Community CRC and Cornerstone CRC.”

In response, AdCom appointed Church Visitors Rev. Darrell Bierman, Rev. Ken Labbé, and Rev. Victor Laarman to lead these conversations.

Step 1 of this process was to meet individually with the leadership teams of both congregations. The purpose of these meetings was twofold:

1. To listen carefully to the history, concerns, and grievances that contributed to the breakdown in relationship.
2. To discern each church’s hopes for their future relationship with the other.

Meetings with both leadership teams were promptly scheduled for Thursday, October 9, 2025. The Church Visitors first met with Cornerstone CRC at 6:30 p.m., followed by Community CRC at 8:30 p.m. Both groups were open and cooperative in participating. Cornerstone’s leadership invited Rev. Martin Dam to serve as a support person, while CCRC’s leadership did not feel such representation was needed at this initial meeting.

The format for both meetings was the same: Rev. Bierman facilitated, beginning with introductions, a reading and reflection on Philippians 4:2–3, and prayer.

Two guiding questions framed the discussion:

- How did we get here? Tell us the story of how the development of Cornerstone came about.
- What are your hopes for your relationship going forward?

Each meeting concluded with prayer led by the three Church Visitors.

Visit Summary of October 9 Visits

Note: A more detailed report was written by Church Visitors to capture the core narratives and the specific grievances of each group in detail, which was then shared with both parties. But in order to respect confidentiality of some specifics that were shared, the following is a summary of each report.

Cornerstone Church Visit – Key Themes

Cornerstone's leadership described a gradual erosion of trust in their former council over several years, primarily around the congregation's response to the Human Sexuality Report (HSR) and subsequent decisions. They felt that the processes CCRC used—such as listening circles and the implementation of a council-approved “Community CRC Statement on the HSR”—did not allow for meaningful scriptural engagement, did not follow previously stated procedures, and ultimately created a sense that traditional/confessional convictions were being sidelined.

These concerns contributed to the perception that remaining at CCRC with integrity was becoming difficult. For many, the decision to form a new worshipping community represented a matter of conscience and a desire to remain aligned with Synod's decisions while staying within the CRC denomination.

Looking ahead, Cornerstone leaders expressed a desire to “leave well”: to maintain respect, avoid negative speech, encourage ongoing friendships, and—where feasible—support continued participation in shared ministries. They also acknowledged the sadness and relational cost of separation.

Community CRC Visit – Key Themes

CCRC's leadership shared that their decisions also emerged from a long process of discernment. Their intent in hosting listening circles and drafting a congregational statement was to foster unity, empathy, and welcome, especially for individuals who might feel marginalized by denominational decisions.

They described feeling misunderstood by others in the denomination and by departing members—particularly the perception that CCRC had become an “affirming” church, which they do not believe accurately reflects their position. They acknowledged that moving forward with the implementation of the “Statement on the HSR” document after receiving less than two-thirds approval caused significant hurt and contributed to the eventual division.

Community CRC leaders grieve the loss of relationships, the financial strain created by the departure of many families, and the difficulty of not knowing who has left or why. At the same time, they expressed continued love for those now worshipping with Cornerstone and a hope for reconciliation, even if reunification seems unlikely.

They also expressed concerns about the broader impact of the division—on the Christian school community, on shared ministries, and on their ability to move forward faithfully within the CRC.

Reflections on October 9 Visits

The Church Visitors report that both leadership groups engaged constructively and participated in the October 9 conversations with openness and honesty. Although each group expressed significant grief over the division that has taken place, the leadership teams demonstrated mutual love and a shared desire to move forward well.

General Observations:

1. **Relational Posture.** Both councils spoke of the other congregation with appreciation. While the separation remains painful, no explicit animosity was observed. This underlying goodwill provides a constructive basis for ongoing cooperation.
2. **Recognition of Irreconcilable Differences.** Both leadership groups acknowledged that reunification is not a viable option. The divergence surrounding the interpretation and pastoral implications of Synodical decisions on human sexuality has resulted in distinct ministry trajectories.
3. **Role of Misunderstanding.** The visits revealed that mutual misunderstanding played a significant role in the deterioration of trust. For instance: Community CRC has, at times, been characterized as “affirming,” which it has never adopted as its position. And Cornerstone has been perceived as intentionally trying to draw members away, while the group understands itself to have gathered individuals who had already left or were preparing to leave.

A particular moment of miscommunication seems to have been during the joint meeting on August 21, 2025. Both parties came with good intentions but left disappointed, each misreading the other’s motives and actions. It is clear, that meeting would have benefitted from a neutral facilitator.

4. **Delayed Engagement with Classis.** The Church Visitors note that earlier involvement of Classis Huron could have prevented aspects of the separation. For instance, when CCRC’s Council felt compelled to move toward a position at odds with the denomination, they should have sought Classis Huron’s input, both for guidance and accountability. Similarly, those who later formed Cornerstone should have sought Classis’ oversight when they perceived a departure of CCRC from confessional commitments.

Despite this delay, both councils welcomed the involvement of Church Visitors once the process began.

As Church Visitors, we believed that meeting together with both parties was the best next step.

Background to Visit # 2 on October 30, 2025

Following separate meetings with the leadership of Cornerstone CRC and Community CRC (CCRC) on October 9, 2025, the Church Visitors prepared a written report summarizing the core narratives, frustrations, and hopes expressed by each congregation. Each leadership team reviewed its respective section and submitted minor adjustments before the finalized report was shared with both groups. The intent of that first report was to foster mutual understanding by allowing each congregation to read and process the other's perspective.

The Church Visitors—Revs. Darrell Bierman, Ken Labbé, and Victor Laarman—then convened a second meeting on October 30, 2025, with representatives from both leadership groups. The purpose of this gathering was not to attempt reunification, but to discern together how to walk the path of separation in a way that honours Christ—with integrity, grace, and mutual blessing.

Prior to this meeting, both congregations were invited to submit questions related to the initial report. These were reviewed in advance by the Church Visitors to ensure that discussion would be constructive and respectful. Each group was also invited to bring a support person if desired; only Cornerstone chose to do so.

The meeting was hosted at Community CRC and began at 7:00pm. In attendance were four members of CCRC's Council, and four members of Cornerstone's leadership, along with Rev. Martin Dam as a support person for Cornerstone.

Rev. Darrell Bierman served as facilitator, opening the meeting in prayer, and outlining the evening's process and ground rules. He noted that the goal was not speed but careful listening, and that the process might extend beyond one session if needed.

The evening was structured in three parts:

- **Step 1: Responding to the report.** An opportunity was given for both parties to ask clarifying questions of each other's core narrative and key frustrations.
- **Step 2: Lament and Blessing.** Through silence, reflection, scripture reading of Psalm 42, and prayer, space was given to lament what was lost.
- **Step 3: Looking forward.** Time was taken together to identify shared values, commitments, and healthy boundaries.

The evening was ended in prayer by representatives of both leadership groups and the Church Visitors.

Reflections on October 30 Joint Meeting

The joint meeting on October 30 demonstrated great progress in communication and mutual understanding. It was clear that the representatives from both leadership groups engaged the process with sincerity, patience, and a shared commitment to honour each other moving forward.

General Observations:

1. **Constructive Communication.** The discussion was conducted respectfully and with evident care to understand one another. Clarifying questions were well-posed, and each group articulated its concerns without accusation. There were moments of break-through in understanding with each other. For instance, clarity was reached in understanding what the CCRC Council meant by its use of the term “pastoral accommodation”.
2. **Acknowledgment of Missteps.** During discussion regarding pastoral care, CCRC acknowledged gaps in communication with departing members. An apology was offered and received. This exchange contributed meaningfully to rebuilding trust.
3. **Shared Concerns Regarding Laurentian Hills Christian School.** Both groups named their desire to not let this conflict to adversely affect the local Christian school, where Cornerstone meets on Sunday mornings. This reflects a mature and forward-looking posture.
4. **Agreement on membership process.** Until Cornerstone is recognized by Classis Huron, they are unable to receive membership transfers from CCRC, which would help CCRC plan for budget and ministries in 2026. Stratford CRC has offered to start receiving the memberships of those wishing to join Cornerstone even before Cornerstone is formally recognized as an emerging church within Classis Huron, as they intend on holding those memberships as the supervising church once Cornerstone is recognized.
5. **Shared Commitments and Boundaries.** Both leadership teams identified shared values—such as the fact that they still mostly aligned doctrinally, they both have a shared heart and mission for Kitchener, and they both desire to pray for each other. In terms of boundaries, a clear commitment was made to speak charitably about each other, as well as to guard each other’s reputation, challenging rumours when they arise. These commitments reflect a shared desire to model Christian maturity and to move forward separately but honourably, maintaining mutual respect and goodwill as sister congregations within the body of Christ.

Summary & Recommendations from Church Visitors

During the October 30 meeting there was clear evidence of loving congeniality between the two leadership teams. Potential challenges that could have hindered reconciliation were avoided through careful listening, humility, and mutual respect. The spirit of the meeting reflected genuine Christian maturity—marked by love, trust, and grace.

Were all church separations conducted with the same care and faithfulness shown here, the witness of Christ's church to the watching world would be greatly strengthened.

Based on the October 9 and October 30 visits, the Church Visitors make the following recommendations for Classis Huron's consideration:

- 1. That Classis Huron recognize Cornerstone CRC as an *emerging congregation* under the supervision of Stratford CRC at the nearest appropriate opportunity.**
- 2. That Church Visitors be commissioned to meet again with the leadership of Community CRC and Cornerstone CRC in May 2026 to assess ongoing relationships, shared ministry considerations, and emerging concerns.**
- 3. That AdCom appoint Church Visitors to provide oversight and guidance to Community CRC, particularly regarding its "Statement on the HSR" and its alignment with denominational decisions.**
- 4. That AdCom review how Classis Huron communicates to congregations their right to request Church Visitors, appeal council decisions, and seek assistance in situations of significant conflict.**

Respectfully submitted,

Revs. Darrell Bierman, Ken Labbé, and Victor Laarman