



CHRISTIAN
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CLASSIS HURON
of the Christian Reformed Church in North America
www.classishuron.ca

Documents that would have been included in the
AGENDA for **May 13, 2020**

The PURPOSE of Classis Huron

We will foster the Kingdom through shared resources toward spiritual renewal

The VISION of Classis Huron

The congregations, ministries, missional communities and people of Classis Huron will surrender to the work of the Spirit of Mission of Jesus, to embody the Kingdom of God. Recognizing the urgency of the times, we stand on the foundation laid for us by previous generations and step forward in the same faith we have been taught.

Spring 2020 Report: Classical Ministry Committee (CMC), Administrative Committee (AdCom), & Stated Clerk

*The **Classical Ministry Committee (CMC)** consists of the Administrative Committee and the representatives of all ministries/committees within Classis: Ministry Leadership Team, Rev. Brian Bork; Home Missions Team, Rev. Kevin teBrake;; Safe Church Committee, Atie Ott; Guelph Campus Ministry, Rev. David Tigchelaar; Waterloo Campus Ministry, Rev. John Medendorp; Diaconal Ministries & World Renew, Mary Blydorp; Youth Champion, Amy Baarda; and Treasurer, John Bell (ex officio).*

*The **Administrative Committee (AdCom)** works on behalf of Classis between sessions. AdCom consists of Rev. Martin Dam (Chair), Rev. Gary VanLeeuwen (vice), Albert Hovingh (at-large), and Sharon Van Kampen (Stated Clerk, ex officio).*

*The **Stated Clerk** serves Classis Huron by keeping accurate records of the proceedings, decisions, and rules of Classis as per Church Order, Article 32-b. The Rules of Classis Huron also task the Clerk to serve as a resource to the churches of Classis on matters of order and procedure, maintain the records and website of Classis, and serve as a central point of communication for Classis, among other responsibilities.*

AdCom met on March 10, 2020 to follow up on items arising out of the February 12, 2020 session of Classis Huron and discuss other ongoing tasks including:

- recruitment of deacon delegates for Synod 2020 (*secured to serve as delegate Jane Vandervelden and alternate Steve Kooy, both of Community CRC Kitchener*)
- inclusion of an opportunity for churches to share stories regarding infant dedication on the February 2021 session agenda
- confirmed agenda items for the May 2020 session
- review of the draft Rules of Classis Huron, draft Servants of Classis list, classical pulpit supply schedule, and list of pastors willing to serve as chair of classis
- securing an Alternate Synodical Deputy (*now filled by Rev. Sid Couperus of First CRC Owen Sound*)
- securing a new Alternate Stated Clerk (*churches are to submit nominations to the Stated Clerk*) due to the resignation of Pastor John Medendorp.
- review of the [formal] proposal for the new [CH] website
- status of youth ministry [at the classical level]
- licensed exhorters and encouraging churches to push gifted members to pursue licensure

Despite not being able to meet face-to-face, communications continue, as per 'norm', between the members of AdCom and/or CMC. More recent decisions:

- 1) Cancellation of the meeting of CMC
- 2) Cancellation of the May 13 session of Classis Huron (email issued April 23) and thus,
- 3) More pressing matters (i.e. that cannot wait until the September session) will be addressed by AdCom and/or CMC as required.
- 4) In consultation with the Financial Resource Team (FRT): [Ministry shares are coming in well below normal and as Classis Huron has some funds in reserve,] the Treasurer will proceed with temporarily moving funds, as required, to cover costs during this time.

-submitted by Sharon Van Kampen, Stated Clerk

Report from your Classis Huron Mission Team (CHMT) May 2020

On behalf of the CHMT – Greetings! The current members of this team are Kevin teBrake (chair), Jane Vander Velden (reporter), John Vanderstoep, John Zwart, Amy Baarda, ex-officio member Joan Brady (CH Mission Catalyzer), and advisor Lesli van Milligen (Faith Formation and Connection rep).

Firstly, we welcome our newest member, Amy Baarda. Amy is on staff at Water Street Church in Guelph, and is our Classis Huron Youth Champion. We are excited to have Amy join the team, and look forward to her gifts and connections.

Secondly, did you notice the name change? We have changed the name from Classis Huron Home Missions Committee (CHHMC) to Classis Huron Mission Team (CHMT). We feel this reflects the fact that the Home Missions name is no longer used, and we still have the same mission to assist and encourage existing and emerging congregations of Classis Huron in their mission and ministries in line with the Mission and Vision of Classis Huron.

Since our last Classis meeting, the world has changed drastically on account of COVID-19. The church has changed. How we worship and instruct as churches has changed. How we do mission has changed, but the mission has not changed. We continue to be the church that God calls us to be. At our last CHMT meeting, we discussed some of these challenges that churches have. Whether your church is a church plant or a long-time established church, we are all in new territory, and maybe we are wondering how to “canoe the mountains.” (If you have time, read Tod Bolsinger’s book titled “Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Unchartered Territory.” You will not regret this reading). Our mission catalyzer, Joan Brady, will continue to connect with churches, although somewhat differently. And please, as a church, do not hesitate to reach out to Joan. Share with her some of your challenges and blessings at this time. You can reach Joan at churonmissioncatalyzer@gmail.com.

In January 2020, some members of the CHMT team and other leaders from Classis Huron attended a Church Renewal Conference in Steinbach, Manitoba. This was shared at the Classis meeting in February 2020. Members of Classis Huron will be encouraged to attend renewal conferences that are typically held three times a year. During COVID-19, the Church Renewal Conference team is discerning different ways to lead these conferences. You will hear more about this in the future.

The CHMT continues to support and pray for the established and newly-established church plants/sites. And we are always open and willing to hear your dreams about church renewal and establishing new church plants.

We continue to seek two or three more people on this team. Please prayerfully consider this opportunity. We typically meet four to six times a year in Drayton. But, even prior to COVID-19, we changed to having more meetings through Zoom video in the comfort of our favourite place. This saves time and driving costs.

Thank you for your prayers and encouragement, and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to connect with any one of us.

In His Service,
Kevin teBrake (On behalf of the CHMT)

During a recent video call, I reported to the Classis Huron Mission Team of the work I had been doing in the first quarter of 2020. It was, as all can relate, detailed in 2 categories – before and after COVID 19. Previous to the prescribed lockdown – I had been able to reach out and meet with other Classis Huron leaders, attend learning events and looked forward to more of the same. After COVID 19, I was faced with canceled opportunities and events and challenged to consider a new way of doing things.

Since then, I have been meeting via Zoom in various contexts and have been intentional to both use my time to prepare for a post-COVID reality as well as support Classis Huron and Resonate in this time of social distancing. Connecting with one another has never been more important.

So, I ask you to celebrate with me my completed work in the past four months including:

- Attending the Church Renewal Conference in Steinbach, Manitoba (as reported at the last Classis meeting (February 12,2020).
- Visited with a number of Church Leaders – once again connecting to get to know them and their congregations and how potentially I could support their call to be a 'Church on a Mission' or Church Plant.
- Organized: 'Go Local' 'Taste and See' event in Drayton – scheduled for April 04, 2020 – it was subsequently canceled.

And also, I ask you to share my sadness in the cancellation of a number of meaningful events including:

- Resonate Canada East Team Retreat – March 18-19
- Water St. Church – Church on a Mission workshop – March 23
- Lucknow CRC – Celebration – April 03
- Go Local Taste and See – April 04
- Faithwalk Retreat – April 17-18

I am discovering new spaces through increased conversations via the computer or the telephone. New learning opportunities abound, as I am challenged to use digital technology to a greater degree and am able to participate in learning opportunities now available in on-line formats. As encouraged by the Classis Huron Mission Team, it is my hope that by the time we meet for Classis either in person or virtually that I will have reached out to many of you to do a check-in about how we are respectively continuing as His Church within the COVID 19 constraints.

I trust that our Heavenly Father is leading us all to new spaces and expanding our awareness of the needs and strengths in our respective communities. He is comforting us as we mourn various aspects of our normal daily life and the close connections with those we love. Even in these difficult times we have the assurance of his love and care. He is our always and forever and will guide us through.

Wishing everyone of you all the best and strength and safety within the shelter of God's love.

Joan Brady, Classis Huron Mission Catalyzer

churonmissioncatalyzer@gmail.com

cell:226-237-3108

The Bridge Classis Report May 2020

Greetings from The Bridge in Centre Wellington! In this report we acknowledge that “We make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps” (Proverbs 16:9). We began the year with plans that were ministry realistic and financially optimistic. Now, just a few months in we are all living in an entirely different ministry and finance landscape. It is our determined hope that God’s plan for the Bridge, to make disciples while he builds the church, is now even clearer to us who are seeking to follow Jesus on mission in Centre Wellington.

I reported in our January report that we frame our missional rhythms around the three directions in which we see Jesus having lived his life -- Up (Communion), In (Community) and Out (Commission). We had been dedicating two Sundays per month to Up, or worship, and one to In, or fellowship, with the fourth being dedicated to Out, or some kind of way of being out in the community to serve and to witness. Covid-19 has changed these rhythms as distinct weeks and instead we see our lives continually blending our Up/In/Out rhythms in new ways.

I have also reported that we have been “hosting” a number of ministries and events. Now, thanks to two grants from Resonate for \$200 and \$1200 for a license and better equipment, we are hosting our events online through Zoom and even expanding them. Here is a list of things we are now doing through Zoom: 1) Weekly Sunday morning worship including a time of sharing prayer requests and praying for one another; 2) Weekly discipleship zoom with teaching and prayer; 3) Biweekly Generous Space Group; 4) Weekly teaching of “Hearing God”, a course from Church Renewal; 5) “coffee times” and “happy hours” with our neighbours to check in how they are doing; 6) an hour of prayer daily on zoom advertised on facebook community and caremongering pages that has allowed us to pray with other Christians for our community; and 7) Hosting the CCBF (Canadians Christian Business Federation) monthly “breakfasts.” In addition, I am being fast-tracked as a coach for Church Renewal and anticipate being able to gather a cohort of interested CRC pastors for Church Renewal training; and as a new discipleship tool from Church Renewal which was to be ready later this year is being fast-tracked, I expect to be able to teach “The Way” curriculum shortly. Ministry hosting on zoom has been an incredible gift from God and we are thankful for this **expansion** of ministry in these opportune times.

Our relationships with other churches and hosting weekly meals as we have in the past two years has significantly expanded as the team of churches cooperating in this has expanded our mandate to deliver the meals under the name “CW Meals To Go” (for Covid-19 protocols in cooperation with our local health unit) and to move the meals from weekly to three times per week. Additionally, The Bridge received a grant for \$5000.00 from World Renew (added to our

donation of \$1250) for a total budget of \$6250.00 to partner with a local restaurant, The Red Door (wanting to be good corporate citizens as The Bridge as an organization) to provide 80 weekly meals from April 14 to July 7 as the Covid-19 crisis affects increasing numbers of people in Centre Wellington. In addition, we have spurred on others to copy our efforts and beginning April 23 working with my fellow realtors are delivering meals from The Brew House provided by a collection of local donors. At the time of writing this report, we were coordinating funding and volunteers across our town for "CW Groceries To Go."

One fantastic thing to report about the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on discipleship is that this pandemic has helped us get in touch with our helplessness and our need for God. While many have had economic stability shaken and health confidence threatened, while these 'losses' are to be grieved, they also sweetly expose our need for and dependence on God. In our Thursday night DNA group, where we have struggled to have people be vulnerable with their sharing and prayer requests, we are suddenly "going deep" and finding God meeting us there. We recently had an entire evening dedicated to Lament, as we shared what we are losing and then entered some scripture-guided prayer of lament with one another. This really is a rich time to be a community who is learning to depend completely on God.

One joy of small town living is the absence of crowds. In Fergus and Elora, we are finding that many people are out walking and able to keep significant physical distance. We are regularly walking in our neighbourhood and having a number of extended conversations (from one shoulder of the road to the other) with neighbours. We have been able to bring meals to the three households in our neighbourhood with nurses and receive their kind thanks. And online conversations with acquaintances through hockey and real estate are more easily able to go deeper.

Finally, the economic opportunities for The Bridge will be to notice and care for our neighbours who are struggling. The economic challenge of funding the Bridge as our planters' covocational real estate income dries up for a few months. We are thankful for our Administrative Team (Jack Tacoma, Gary Mohle, John Kalverda, Mark Kabbes) who are helping us address and take these challenges and opportunities.

Please pray for us. Consider, like some churches are still doing, taking an offering or two for The Bridge during this time. We need your prayers, your support, and your encouragement. But most of all, give thanks with us for the ways in which we can continue to be on mission for him here in Centre Wellington.

An Update from Guelph Campus Ministry: Stepping into the Challenges of our Time

From Sara DeMoor, Campus Minister – April 20, 2020

Students are finishing exams this week and the winter semester wraps up at the University of Guelph. But what a different semester this has turned out to be! On campus and with students, it felt like everything changed in one day. On Thursday, March 9th the staff and student interns of Guelph Campus Ministry spent the day in the University Centre courtyard—the large foyer in the busiest building on campus—tabling and meeting students and staff as part of a resource fair for faith groups on campus. And by Friday, the university was starting to shut down in response to the rapid spread of Covid-19 across the world. By Monday, I (Sara) took what I needed from our on-campus office and left, knowing that I would need to work from home for a while. I didn't imagine how long "a while" would end up needing to be!

Like many churches, GCM moved its programming online. Starting that week, we moved all of our small groups, Bible reading and prayer groups, and meetings to Zoom. We have continued in this "new normal" way of doing ministry and being the body of Christ together until this week. We meditated and prayed through Psalm 46 and 91 in those early weeks, during our weekly Lectio Divina gatherings, this time mediated by our computer screens. Weekly (or more) I met with our student interns and my colleague Alison virtually, and I regularly meet with students for pastoral care by phone or video call. Our Podcast Discussion small group continues to meet on Zoom for conversation, questions, and discernment—and most of the time, we intentionally choose podcasts unrelated to this pandemic; we all need something different to think about! GCM's Christian Graduate student group continues to meet weekly to check in (with members now all over the world), pray together, and encourage one another—and we will continue through the summer too. Pastor David Tigchelaar continues to lead GCM's Faculty and Staff Bible study, now meeting over Zoom, and they have been praying for each other and our world and diving into Scripture together.

This year we have quite a number of students who are graduating, so it was bittersweet that our annual farewell party at the end of the semester had to be held via Zoom, with each of us dressing up and eating fancy snacks in our own homes. I have been grateful for the encouragement and commiseration of meeting together with colleagues during this time, whether colleagues from within Classis Huron (thank you for organizing that Zoom call, Ed Jager!) or from the Christian Reformed Campus Ministry Association (CRCMA), which has been gathering weekly on Zoom.

Many of our students are anxious, grieving, lonely. Others are feeling some relief from the regular pressures of the academic year, and still others are experiencing added pressure from so quickly needing to shift to learning and test-taking completely online. Some students are looking for ways to serve our vulnerable neighbours, and a number of GCM students continue to serve the elderly through their work at long-term care homes. As exams wrap up this week, most of our students are uncertain about whether or not they will have summer employment, which also elicits financial anxieties about how they will pay for tuition next year. (For a glimpse into the various responses from university students to this crisis and the uncertainty it brings, this is an interesting article from University Affairs: <https://www.universityaffairs.ca/opinion/in-my-opinion/a-professor-asked-her-students-how-they-were-coping-heres-what-they-said/>)

When I've been "seeing" students lately, some common themes have been emerging: Lament, and the Biblical example of it. Paradox. Trusting God in uncertain times. Loss. Fear. Gratitude—so much gratitude. Generosity. Creativity. For a really engaging and inspiring conversation among three Christian thought-leaders around these and other ideas emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic and resulting isolation, I recommend the Veritas Forum's three recorded panel discussions, especially the first one featuring author and journalist Andy Crouch: <http://www.veritas.org/veritasforumlivestream/> In GCM's weekly update emails, we used to share GCM's new mission statement, recently shared with Classis Huron during GCM's report at the February Classis meeting: "Mission: To be a community where

all who are curious about life and God wrestle with Scripture and are challenged to root their identity in Christ.” Thanks be to God for the technology—and the support of Classis Huron and all our partners-- that enables GCM to continue to join God in this mission at the University of Guelph.

Now, in addition to reminding ourselves of our mission statement on a weekly basis, we are also including most of our newly-adopted *vision* for GCM, which feels even more compelling now than it did when the GCM board approved it last year:

The Vision of Guelph Campus Ministry: *Resilient graduates who know that Christ calls them to live faithfully, without fear and with hope, stepping into the challenges of their time.*

As followers of Christ, GCM declares with joy and trust that our world belongs to God. WE strive to equip students to go out into our troubled world, living faithfully into the challenges of today, knowing they are called for times such as these to bear good fruit, and to overcome despair and fear with love and hope—resisting the anxiety of today’s culture and trusting God.

We believe with confidence that the Lord is faithful, giving meaning to our days and hope to our years. Our future is secure because our world belongs to God.

This vision has become my prayer for our students, faculty, and staff at the University of Guelph. As we all navigate these uncertain and often scary times, my prayer for all of us in Classis Huron is that we may allow the Holy Spirit to move us to living faithfully, whatever that looks like in these new surroundings—without fear and with hope, stepping into the challenges of our time. We do not go alone; God goes before us. Thanks be to God!

Classis Huron Safe Church Team Report – May 2020

Mandate: The Classis Huron Safe Church Team is mandated to:

1. To function as an ART (Abuse Response Team) according to synodical guidelines.
2. To provide comprehensive and ongoing education.
3. To provide support to our churches in the prevention of, and response to abuse.

To fulfil such a mandate, your Classical Safe Church Team meets 3-times per year in order to share information, plan for the annual conference, and help any local Safe Church Team or congregation if the need arises.

Feedback from Classis February 2020 reps following a question after Pastor Carel's presentation.

Following the presentation, by Pastor Carel Geleynse, on the recommendations of the Task Force on Abuse of Power as approved by Synod 2019, the following question was asked of the delegates:

What suggestions do you have for keeping pastors and councils accountable for awareness training?

What follows are the written answers:

- Has your Pastor/leadership taken training?
- Online training modules
- Need to be current with other professions/community organizations
- Annual Conference to be continued and accessible
- Looks like great 2020 program
- Adopt/create the "Culture" in Classis Huron

Require Pastor to go to continuing education on safe church. Police checks; how to get them all.

Have Safe Church Council Rep receive yearly package or video that all council members go through, whether it be during meeting (at open discussion). Every current serving Council member sign off that they have seen or heard the training package or video Safe Church Classis receives said document.

We don't have any organized clout!! Councils are able to require persons to upgrade!! Require Council members to go for training. Insist on weekly or bi-weekly activities for Clergy with colleagues – through Skype. Have all Pastors upgrade training around sexual woundedness, abuse, survivors, addictions, paedophilia, LGBTQ community, internet safety, pornography & victims!!! & restoration!! Make sure Regional Persons ask the hard questions around accountability.

Link to awareness/training/commitment for on church website. Annual training/review with volunteers. In order to maintain leadership status/ordination – annual code of conduct, every 5 years external audit re continuing education, etc. Paid fees (eg college of Nurses certification, etc.). Greenspace Mental 2 week checks re overall mental health – results shared with "credentialing body".

Standard employment contract elements. Classical HR resource committee? Condition of office. Licence renewal process? 15+ hour continuing education.

What if you created on line modules that Pastor, councils, ministries, leaders could complete and receive a certificate which they could present to clerk for record keeping. Short multiple modules would be easily accessible and include some assessment for knowledge gained. Classis is probably a good place to keep track of participation. Perhaps the help of robust church visitation.

On-line resource for training that record/create certificate of completion. Short videos to use at Council meetings. Look at education on abuse of the elderly member of our church.

5-7 minute video that could be shown at council meetings –perhaps with registration test they were watched. Make the question part of church visiting.

Report which pastors have some for training and which haven't. Comes up every year. Information/training at councils. Online training modules. Sharing time at council meetings. A code of conduct can provide clarity (for perhaps all staff and council members).

Standardized, denomination wide, using same guidelines. Video resources, required for all pastors/leaders (every 2 years). Enforcement at local/classical level. Treat like credentials, required for being seated at Classis. (Yes/no question, if no requires special vote of Classis.)

Database of who has done training – for pastors, youth leaders, Sunday school teachers, etc. Insurance coverage needs this information. Need somewhere to keep record of discipline of pastors, youth pastors, etc. so that future congregations can access this information in their research. – should be cross denomination as well.

Regular review of policy. Update regularly. Training schedule for staff. Ensure policies are broadly distributed and available to anyone who seeks guidance. Ensure you have a local Safe Church Representative or Committee who stays current and active.

Make sure someone is set in charge of safe church program. Make it on credentials form for Classis whether your church has completed training.

Video training. Training within Church! Awareness program to all church members.

Annual asking within council if any complaints have come forward – and somehow introduced in policy manual are part of evaluation of Leadership. – do along with criminal check. Training should be part of being elder or deacon.

Give the Classis Safe Church Team the responsibility to “over see” the training of councils and leaders. If needed they can be paid part time workers, but they need to have the authority to do their job – in addition, to give training. Also, develop on-line modules with video clips, councils can use for discussion.

Annual day of training for ministry leaders – policy to support/enforce. One council meeting designated as an mandatory awareness training evening (1 per year).

Annual Interclassis Safe Church Conference

About 90 people gathered at Waterloo (Ont.) Christian Reformed Church on Saturday, March 7, for the Annual Inter-Classis Safe Church Conference. The all-day event, hosted each year by Classis Huron, brought together safe church committee members, pastors, council members, and others for training and workshops on topics such as bullying, harassment, abuse, and LGBTQ+ issues.

Attendees came from Classes Huron, Chatham, Niagara, Hamilton, Toronto, Quinte, and Eastern Canada. Participant Rita Reitsma noted, "I've come today because I'm new on our Safe Church Committee. I was on years ago, when we did our first policy booklet . . . and I just agreed to be back on. I want to catch up and find out what's new and maybe how we should update and what we should look at to learn."

After worship and greetings from event organizers, the day began with an update from the CRC's Safe Church Ministry director, Bonnie Nicholas, then moved into a presentation from local youth initiative WAYVE (Wellness Acceptance Youth Voices Empowerment), a mental-health awareness and bullying-prevention group organized by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA).

The five young WAYVE presenters defined bullying, including cyberbullying; told stories from their own experiences of bullying and mental health issues; described the impacts bullying can have on both the bullied and the bullies; and suggested ways to deal with bullying and to build better relationships and positive environments.

WAYVE member Jenna said, "I think our intended impact is to just bring awareness to [the problem of bullying], and bring understanding. Not a lot of teens actually know what's going on; they might not exactly know what they're feeling, and they could feel alone, so by doing these [presentations], we can show them that they're not alone, that other people do understand."

Fellow WAYVE member Latesha added, "I think that for me, after doing WAYVE, I realize that you still need to treat [mental health struggles] almost like you would a physical injury, so you go to a doctor and get proper treatments. [You also need to] do self care routines, and [continue to] see a doctor if you're really struggling."

A workshop led by Woodland Christian High School principal John Van Pelt continued the discussion, reflecting on the WAYVE presentation and how it might apply within a church context.

In another workshop Bonnie Nicholas spoke on walking alongside survivors of abuse, helping participants understand the impact of responses to survivors' stories of abuse, both negative and positive, and how to create safe spaces to find care and healing, while Carol Penner, a Mennonite minister and professor at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, led workshop participants through an exploration of healing, justice, and forgiveness after abuse.

Other workshops were led by Yvonne Lammers, a manager with CMHA and the chair of the Classis Chatham Safe Church Team, and Leslie Smith, an employment lawyer, workplace investigator, and author. Lammers addressed possible legal questions in safe church policies, such as how to respond if a volunteer's police check reveals a criminal history, while Smith spoke about how to prevent and deal with workplace harassment in a church context. Becca Sawyer of Generous Space Ministries suggested practical ways for churches to become safer places for LGBTQ+ members.

Charlene Gray attended the workshop on LGBTQ+ issues and remarked, “That’s a conversation that a lot of churches are having, and an important one to have. [The workshop] kind of gave us parameters of how to have that caring conversation.”

Harrie Talen and his wife formed their vacation around coming to the conference, attending from Charlottetown, PEI. Talen noted that the day was helpful but not easy, as the topics can bring to mind difficult things from the past. He reflected, “You think of the cases that you know yourself personally of, [and] you think, ‘Oh, what can be done about it? You need God’s grace and love.’ And it takes time.” He added that it can be hard to bring the learnings home to a congregation, but he is grateful that some people are always interested to continue learning.

Organizers and presenters were pleased with the event, encouraged by people coming together to support Safe Church, wanting to learn more and make positive changes in their home churches. Wrapping up, Josh Vriesema said, “You come to a place like this out of love for your neighbor and your congregation, and you learn how to create policy in situations to treat everyone well.”

Updates

New things are in store for Safe Church Ministry as director, Bonnie Nicholas, makes plans to retire in November.

Learning Opportunities

You are invited to the next webinar, May 27th, featuring Chuck DeGroat, author of “**When Narcissism Comes to Church: Healing Your Community from Emotional and Spiritual Abuse**”.

Next meeting

Due to the Covid -19 our regular scheduled meeting was cancelled. We are currently in the process of exploring a zoom meeting for later this month to deal with outstanding issues and to plan for the future.

In His service,

Atie Ott

Carel Geleynse

Council of Delegates Report – Spring 2020

From February 19-21, 2020, the Council of Delegates of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, met in Grand Rapids, MI. A significant amount of time was spent discussing the changes that have been outlined by the Canada Corporation of the CRC, in order to ensure that the Canadian church is fully compliant with Canadian charitable law. On February 20, at the last meeting of Classis Huron, the proposed changes were presented in a report.

The presentation of these changes may be construed as an attempt to divide the denomination, but the desire of Canada Corporation has been exactly the opposite. As a bi-national denomination, we recognize that each part of the denomination works within the framework of their respective national government and must comply with those government's charitable laws. Canada Corporation had come to the realization that we were not complying fully with Canada's laws and made the recommendation to change. It will take some time to sort through how the denomination will be structured after this, however, there is dedication on both sides of the border to see this work.

COD also dealt with the unexpected resignation of the executive director, Steve Timmermans, who felt that it would be best that he step aside to make room for someone better suited to deal with the coming changes. It is with deep regret that the COD accepted Timmermans' resignation, and we wish him God's blessings in his retirement. Until a new executive director is found, the denomination will continue to be well served by acting executive director, Colin P. Watson. Sr.

On March 12, 2020, Mrs. Ashley Medendorp submitted her resignation as a Canada-at-Large delegate of the COD, citing difficulty with the changes that the Canada Corporation has made. During her time on the COD, Ashley served faithfully as a strong voice for the continued unity of the denomination. Her dedication to the work of the Christian Reformed Church and the COD has been greatly appreciated, and she will be missed.

On April 21, 2020, the budgets of the denomination and its various ministries were presented to a Budget Review Committee. This committee will report on the denominational finances at the May meeting of the COD. It must be noted that much of the work that has been done in preparing these budgets, for the 20/21 fiscal year, is now in question. With no idea how long the COVID 19 travel and gathering restrictions will be enforced, it is virtually impossible to predict what impact this will have on revues required for the various agencies. As a result, all of the denominational agencies will be looking at the possibility of having to consider what ministries may need to be cut back.

The next meeting of the COD was scheduled for May 5-8, 2020 in Grand Rapids. Due to the current restrictions, it has been decided that the meeting will take place online, via Zoom. There will also be an online meeting in June, to deal with matters that would have been discussed at Synod 2020, since Synod has also been cancelled because of the COVID 19 restrictions.

Your COD Representative,
Ralph Wigboldus

Diaconal Ministries Canada (DMC) rep & World Renew board delegate for Classis Huron, Mary Blydorp, shares the following:

You may already be aware that DMC has hosted a few webinars to help churches navigate care during Covid-19. These include:

"How You Can Help During Covid-19"

"Emotional and Mental Health During Covid-19"

They also list resources available. <https://diaconalministries.com/covid-19-resources/>

Please note that DMC has a page dedicated to this and various links to other websites. It is being updated regularly.

Shalem Mental Health is also available for support. Some of the churches are part of the *Congregational Assistance Plan* which allows members to access free, anonymous support.

<https://shalemnetwork.org/services-in-communities/congregational-assistance-plan>

Classis Huron Report – May 13, 2020

Submitted by Peter Bulthuis, Canadian Director of Church and Community Engagement

Thank you, brothers and sisters of Classis Huron, for your churches' support of the work of World Renew. Thank you for your very kind gifts of prayer, volunteering and financial donations. The churches in this classis gave World Renew \$292,294.10 to continue to bless communities around the world, on your behalf.

What a difference a few months make. A short while ago, we shared with you the impact of Jeremy Benjamin's **I AM NOT MY OWN** tour across Canada. Now I'm thinking that phrase has taken on a whole new meaning. I copy it here:

Q. What is your only comfort in life and death?

A. That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from all the power of the devil. He also preserves me in such a way that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, all things must work together for my salvation. Therefore, by his Holy Spirit he also assures me of eternal life and makes me heartily willing and ready from now on to live for him.

This sure comfort is the foundation of our faith, and informs our life of gratitude as we as individuals and as World Renew move resolutely ahead to serve this faithful and risen Christ.

I do want to recognize and thank Eve Mazereeuw for her tireless work in her role as the Delegate on the World Renew board for the past six years. Eve, you have been a blessing. God bless you, my friend!

This report is a snapshot in time; it was written during the week of April 6-10. What is sure, is that the situation is fluid and World Renew is continually working to respond to the situation as it changes as much as we can.

A. General Updates:

At the time of this writing, the Church and Community Engagement (CaCE) team of World Renew is involved with three major initiatives: first: working with the International Disaster Response (IDR) team, the Global Volunteer Program (GVP) team, and Diaconal Ministries Canada (DMC) to enable grants for diaconates developing innovative community-based responses to the COVID-19 crisis. Second: working with DMC to develop and offer webinars to support ongoing deacon work across Canada, and third, calling each diaconate/CRC church across Canada to offer such assistance as we can, and to let folks know what World Renew is doing in response to this crisis.

The marketing and communications team is ensuring that every part of World Renew stays in touch with every other part, so that there is continual synergy throughout. Regular updates are sent out to constituents and donors; the website is constantly being updated, and the various social media platforms are also used as ways to ensure that constituents and supporters of World Renew are made as knowledgeable as possible. If you have the opportunity, do open this page: www.worldrenew.ca/corona, and this one: www.worldrenew.ca/moment-of-hope. Both will share updated information about World Renew's current responses to COVID-19.

B. Upcoming Offering Dates

As we together continue through this uncharted time of the COVID-19 pandemic, please remember the ongoing needs of communities and participants around the world, who suffer poverty and injustice. Your prayers and donations continue to shine the light of Christ on them. Here are three upcoming dates for which your church will be resourced with information on how your church can continue to make a profound impact on those people in need.

June 28: -Canada Day (recognition only),

Oct., 12: -CDN Thanksgiving,

Nov. 1: -World Hunger Sunday. Thank you!

C. Community Development: Pivoting to include COVID-19 Responses

We have launched an international COVID-19 response that includes:

- Preparing for corona cases in remote communities that are so far unaffected by the virus.
- Moving staff and volunteers that are in at-risk locations to safety and complying with "stay at home" and other public health orders worldwide.
- Working in refugee camps to keep COVID-19 out, including doubling up food deliveries to reduce exposure.

- Modifying existing community- and group-based projects to individual interactions such as village savings and loan activities.
- Supporting our local church partners by phone and internet.
- Continuing to train individuals and families in good hygiene and sanitation
- Adding covid-19 prevention education to our existing projects
- Supporting our partners and communities worldwide who are involved "essential services," particularly agriculture production, as price gouging increases and food supplies decrease.

D. International Disaster Response

The International Disaster Response team priorities moving forward are (1) continuing life-saving, essential humanitarian programming, and (2) examining how programming can be adjusted and adapted to the constantly evolving situation. While this global pandemic adds to the many needs faced by families around the world, their pre-existing needs remain. Those displaced by conflict, affected by drought or natural disaster, still require the basics, like nutritious food each day, and we are committed to providing that.

That means that we still need support to make these essential programs possible. It is not a time to forget about the global community we live in, but to walk alongside our global neighbours as they experience many of the same challenges that we are now experiencing. As food prices rise and currencies fall, it becomes even more difficult to provide the same level of assistance as before, yet we cannot forget those in need. The reality is simple: millions of people are more vulnerable today than they were just one month ago, and we must do what we can, with the resources and capacities we have, to offer assistance.

E. Refugee Settlement Activities:

The work of the Refugee Program continues in the context of COVID-19. We continue to work with churches on finalizing new sponsorship applications for submission to IRCC. Currently the Refugee Program is working on 76 sponsorship applications for 214 refugees. IRCC staff in Canada continue to receive and review sponsorship applications. However, processing overseas has stopped as many visa posts are closed. Between January 1, 2020 and April 6 2020, 12 refugees arrived in Canada through World Renew sponsorships. However, with the Government's travel ban we received flight cancellations for 13 refugees. Weekly meetings with the Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) elected council who meet weekly with IRCC, as well as weekly meetings with the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP) and the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) have been very helpful in gathering relevant and timely information that we share with sponsoring churches. In particular, the Refugee Program is providing resources and information for sponsors who are currently settling newcomers in the context of physical distancing. This is a challenging situation for the sponsoring churches as well as the newcomers.

F. What else can the people and the churches of Classis Huron do?

Pray for a continuation of the work being done; pray that the virus will be stopped.

Share the continuing need for support for families and communities around the world for food, water and the basic necessities of survival by encouraging folks to go to this page: <https://worldrenew.ca/CORONA>.

In Hebrews 13:5, God promises: "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." God emphasizes that He will not abandon us. He wants us to grasp firmly the truth that no matter what circumstances may indicate, we can know that He will not leave us to the mercy of those circumstances. We can rest in him, because God doesn't leave us on our own. NEVER leave....NEVER forsake.

He is very near to us in times of trouble. We KNOW that Almighty God is with us. No crisis is too big for God. The earth could give way - the mountains could fall into the sea - and even that would not cause us fear - because God is with us. Our omnipotent God is an "ever-present help.

God is our REFUGE and STRENGTH; a VERY PRESENT HELP in times of trouble (Ps. 46). God calls his church to share that comfort.

Blessings,



Peter Bulthuis, Director, Church and Community Engagement Canada

How is **World Renew** responding to Covid-19 and what does it need to respond well? Two needs have been brought to our attention—one for displaced **Syrian families** and the other for the **Rohingya refugees** in camps in Bangladesh.

“We come to you with good news! We are now able to provide essential hygiene kits to displaced **Syrian families** to help slow the spread of COVID-19.

Working alongside our local partners in the region, we have an opportunity right now to **provide hygiene kits** that will help prevent the spread of COVID-19 among displaced and vulnerable families.

For many of these families, physical distancing is not an option. Living conditions are overcrowded and their homes often lack basic facilities or separation. The only way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other diseases is through proper hygiene and care. **Each kit contains items like: bars of soap, bottles of hand sanitizer, packages of paper towels, and health information on how to reduce the spread of the virus.** World Renew is working with our partners to ensure that these kits are packaged and distributed.

We have stood with families impacted by the Syrian conflict for nearly a decade – and we are resolved to be there for families who escaped the violence, only to face new dangers now. But we know that God is faithful. He never leaves or forsakes us. And He has called us for such a time as this to be his hope to others – to be Christ’s light in the darkness.”

“This March, COVID-19 reached Cox’s Bazaar in Bangladesh, and with its arrival, World Renew’s staff has begun to brace ourselves for the unimaginable: transmission of the virus to the Rohingya refugee camp.

Already, the trauma sustained by over 800,000 Rohingya refugees feels immeasurable. We have sat with countless mothers who recall horrors too graphic to name. We have grieved with families shattered by the death of countless loved ones. Today, over two years since the Rohingya fled to Bangladesh, we still struggle to understand the sheer magnitude of human suffering.

Now COVID-19 poses a new threat to an already vulnerable population. For our team, this threat cannot go unaddressed. Staff in Bangladesh are working tirelessly, following COVID-19 contingency protocols to help protect the Rohingya people. As the World Health Organization continues monitoring the temperatures of all workers entering the camps, we join the fight through emergency virtual meetings with humanitarian partners from around the world: preparing and maintaining the strictest health guidelines for these refugee communities and attempting to shelter these populations from the outbreak.

These health guidelines dictate personal protection equipment as imperative for frontline staff in order to protect these families who do not have the luxury to physically isolate from unknown carriers. During the COVID-19 outbreak, your support for the work in Bangladesh goes to the purchasing of such equipment and your prayers for divine protection are a gift.”

If you wish to donate to the work of World Renew as it responds to needs related to Covid-19, you can do so online <https://worldrenew.ca/CORONA>, or send a cheque to World Renew, PO Box 5070 STN LCD 1, Burlington, ON L7R 9Z9.

Redeemer University – Classis Report Spring 2020
Classis Huron

During times of uncertainty, our trust in the Sovereign God brings comfort and a sense of peace. I am encouraged by Colossians 3:12 that instructs, “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” Christians have a unique opportunity to embody Christ’s love during difficult times.

The impact of the COVID-19 public health crisis is far-reaching. For Redeemer, students are having to move out of residence and adjust to online learning, which will no doubt cause concerns and anxiety. Faculty and staff had to quickly make adjustments to work remotely. We anticipate this pandemic will also present significant financial implications for Redeemer, and for the broader community. Pray for students as they handle these changes and finish the year well under difficult circumstances. This is an unprecedented time in our history, and we ask that you pray that God will give the leaders of Redeemer wisdom to make the right decisions and provide the means to continue our mission in these uncertain times.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also affected Redeemer’s newly-created gap year program, Act Five, which was flourishing with its first cohort. It is disappointing that the program had to come to an abrupt end, just as students were entering their work placements, but the well-being of these students was first priority. Students were grateful for the time that they had this past year to live and learn together and were busy with the many programs and activities that Act Five offered. For example, students spent a week on the Six Nations reserve, learning from community members in partnership with Ohsweken Baptist Church. They also travelled to Zambia with Edudeo, serving in local villages and communities. The Act Five leaders are already making plans for next year and are excited about next year’s cohort.

Amidst this difficult situation, we have many things to reflect on and for which to be thankful. After a successful Organization Review and a Name Change application process with external expert review panels under the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB), Minister for Colleges and Universities Ross Romano granted Ministerial Consent for Redeemer to be known as **Redeemer University** on January 20, 2020. This is an exciting and historic change for Redeemer! We believe that changing the institution’s name to Redeemer University will clear up confusion that regularly arises from the term “university college.” Aligning the name with the university education that Redeemer provides, clarifies the degree-granting status that we have had for over two decades.

More exciting changes are coming in the long-awaited filling of the provost and vice president, academic position. We are pleased to welcome Dr. David Zietsma as Redeemer’s new provost and vice president, academic beginning April 1. Dr. Zietsma joined Redeemer in 2007 as a

member of the History department, and has served for the last five years as the vice president for external relations and enrolment. The wealth of knowledge and experience he gained in these roles, and his role as the dean of humanities, will serve Redeemer well as he makes the transition into the provost role.

During the first week of February, students, faculty and staff celebrated generous donors through the Gratitude Project - a week-long reflection and series of events highlighting the contributions made so that more students can afford a Redeemer University education. Redeemer is so grateful for the financial contributions and support in prayer from the Christian Reformed Church. More young people than ever are being educated through a Reformed Christian worldview, and your partnership is vital in continuing this mission.

Redeemer prayerfully looks forward to a promising future with increased enrolment, a new strategic plan and a continued commitment to prepare students to follow Christ wherever they are called.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Graham, PhD
President