



Classis Alberta North of the Christian Reformed Church

Minutes

of the

160TH SESSION OF CLASSIS ALBERTA NORTH OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
June 29, 2016
held at West End CRC, Edmonton, Alberta

Vision/Mission Statement (adopted March 2, 2004)

The purpose of Classis Alberta North is:

- To encourage member congregations to faithful and creative ministry;
- To jointly undertake ministries of common interest;
- To participate in denominational ministries and governance;
- To hold member congregations mutually accountable for their work of ministry, and to provide appropriate resources for the same.

1. Welcome and Introductions: **John Ooms**, Chair of Classis, called the meeting to order at 7 pm, welcomed the delegates and other visitors. **Bill Nieuwenhuis** served as Vice Chair.
2. Devotions: were led by Chaplain of the Day **Leon Johnston** based on Psalms 134, 130, 139, and 121.
3. Roll call: Delegate presence was determined by the roll call as shown below. (*denotes first time delegates).

<u>Church</u>	<u>Pastor or Elder</u>	<u>Elder and/or Deacon</u>	
Barrhead	Harold Vandersluis	Meerten Zeldenrust	
Edm Bethel Comm.	Tom Baird	*Dan Wildeboer	Randall Huisman
Edm CentrepoinTE	Bruce Wisselink	Jesse Edgington	
Edm Covenant	*Nola Visser	Frank Van Veen	*Willy Olydam
Edm Fellowship	Edith Sinnema	Stuart Williams	
Edm First	Bertha Van Essen	Wilma McLaughlin	
Edm Inglewood	John Ooms	*Janet Paquette	
Edm Maranatha	Roy Schouten	Johanna Niemantsverdriet	
Edm mosaicHouse	Victor Ko	*Dan Booy	
Edm Ottewell	Martin Mobach	Peter Jonkman	Elly Zeggelaar
Edm The River	Bruce Gritter	--	
Edm Trinity	Gerry Schenk	*Chris Van Boom	
Edm West End	Bob DeMoor	Jack VandenBorn	John Taekema
Edson – Peers	Winson Elzinga	Pete Smit	
Fairview - Faith Fellowship	--	--	
Ft. McMurray – Evergreen	--	--	
Lacombe – Bethel	Mike Van Dyk	Henry Eisses	
Lacombe - Wolf Creek	Leon Johnston	Ken Vanderwekken	
Lacombe – Woodynook	Neil de Koning	Joe Doef	Keith Prins
LaGlance	--	--	
Leduc – Ebenezer	Jim TeVelde	Dick de Klerk	
Neerlandia	Peter Schuring	Bert Van Niejenhuis	
Ponoka – Sonrise	William Delleman	Siebe Brouwer	
Red Deer – First	Gary Bomhof	Karl Kranenborg	*Nick Vanderveen
Red Deer - New Life	Tim Van Doesburg	--	
Rimbey	Bill Niewenhuis	Ken Buist	Brian Weenink
Rocky – Covenant	Nic Wolmarans	Adrian Blaak	
Rocky – First	Brian Dunn	Gord Van't Bosch	
St. Albert	John Luth	Gordon Vlieg	*Britta deLeyer
Stony Plain – Hope	Jacob Boer	Louis Bourassa	

4. Opening Procedures

4.1. The *Covenant for Office-bearers* was signed by first time delegates.

5. Ottewell Closure: Elder Peter Jonkman updated Classis on the pending closure of Edmonton Ottewell CRC. Ottewell's plans are summarized in the Agenda for this meeting.

5.1. Ottewell CRC held its final service on Sunday June 26, 2016, celebrating the 54 plus years of ministry in the Ottewell area, and Ottewell CRC will cease to be an active church as soon as is practicable thereafter.

Q: Ottewell's memberships - are they being dealt with?

A: Transfers to other churches are being sent out and this will continue until dissolution.

MosaicHouse CRC has been gracious and is willing to accept any members wishing to join it.

5.2 Ottewell CRC intends to transfer ownership and title to its church building and associated lands (located at 6811 – 92A Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta) to mosaicHouse Christian Reformed Community Church (with a number of conditions), as outlined in the Agenda.

Motion: to approve the plans to end the ministry of Ottewell CRC in Edmonton. Carried.

5.3 Classis Chairman John Ooms noted that the official closure of Edmonton Ottewell CRC is to take place later this year, and will be formally approved by Classis at its October meeting. He wished Ottewell CRC well as it wraps up the closure formalities. Ottewell CRC noted this to be a joyous time for

mosaicHouse, but it is bittersweet for Ottewell and was difficult for Pastor Martin Mobach after 13 years of faithful service; Rev. Martin Mobach was thanked for that service.

6. Release of Rev. Martin Mobach from active service in Edmonton Ottewell CRC according to Art. 17-a of the Church Order.

The Chair declared Executive Session

Gary Bomhof, member of the Advisory Committee dealing with this matter, presented the following recommended motions:

- 6.1. **Motion: that Classis AB North approve the release of Rev. Martin Mobach from active ministerial service at Edmonton Ottewell CRC, effect June 30, 2016, in accordance with the provision of Church Order Article 17-a and its supplements. Carried.**

Grounds:

- a) Due to the declining membership and income, the Ottewell congregation voted on June 12, 2016 to cease being an active church and held its final service on June 26, 2016
- b) Rev. Mobach and Ottewell CRC have reached a fair, equitable and mutually agreeable severance package.

- 6.2 **Motion: that Classis declare Rev. Mobach “available for call” and that an announcement be placed in The Banner in which Classis “heartily recommends Rev. Mobach for consideration for a call”. Carried.**

Grounds:

Rev. Mobach has served the church and Classis well and the situation leading up to his release under Article 17-a was caused by circumstances beyond his control.

- 6.3 **Motion: That Classis appoint a mentor couple for Martin and Sandra Mobach to support, encourage and advise them during this transitional period and report back to Classis regarding any needs which need to be addressed. Carried.**

Grounds:

Article 17-a makes reference to an oversight committee which at times is appointed to assess “readiness for ministry”. This committee in this case is not necessary, yet the appointment of a mentor by Classis would demonstrate our love and concern.

- 6.4 **The Synodical Deputies (Bert Slofstra, Charles Krooger and Louis Korf) concurred** with the decisions of Classis.

- 6.5 **Leon Johnston** led Classis in a prayer of comfort, guidance and thanksgiving as Classis members laid hands on Ottewell delegates and Rev. Martin Mobach.

7. Release of Rev. John Luth from active service at St. Albert CRC Classis according to Art. 17-a of the Church Order.

Neil de Koning, member of the Advisory Committee dealing with this matter presented the following recommended motions:

- 7.1 **Motion: Classis Alberta North approve the release of Rev. John Luth from active ministerial service at the CRC of St. Albert, effective June 30, 2016, in accordance with the provisions of Church Order Article 17-a and its supplements. Carried**

Grounds:

- a) Rev. John Luth has requested his release and the CRC of St. Albert’s council has agreed to his release
- b) The CRC of St. Albert and Rev. John Luth have agreed to a termination package that are judged to be both just and kind.

- 7.2 **Motion: that Classis appoint a church counsellor for the CRC of St. Albert’s congregation to provide immediate support and advice as the council considers its next steps. Carried.**

Grounds:

Timely support would benefit the congregation as it works through this time of transition.

- 7.3 **Motion: that Classis appoint a mentor couple for John and Audrey Luth to provide support and encouragement and report back to Classis (via CIC) regarding any needs which need to be addressed. Carried.**

Grounds:

No oversight committee is required to determine readiness for ministry. Rev. John Luth intends to take a CPE course in the coming year. This support will demonstrate our love and concern and provide an avenue for matters that require the attention of Classis.

- 7.4 **Motion: that Classis declare Rev. John Luth “available for call” at an appropriate time in the coming year. At that time, an announcement is to be placed in The Banner in which Classis “heartily recommends Rev. Luth for consideration”. Carried.**

Grounds:

- a) Rev. John Luth’s readiness for ministry is not an issue.
- b) Rev. John Luth will be taking a CPE course this coming year so that an announcement at this time would not be helpful.

- 7.5 **Motion: that we mandate CIC to monitor the process and report regularly to Classis. Carried**

- 7.6 **Synodical deputies (Bert Slofstra, Charles Kroeger and Louis Korf) concurred** with the decisions of Classis. They ask that Classis take the following recommendations under advisement:

- a) that Classis use the word *approve*, not *acquiesce in* (as stated in the recommendations of the advisory committee), in the motions passed. (This change was made by common consent, as indicated in the motions recorded above).
- b) That Classis be strongly advised and encouraged to appoint a committee of at least three persons to walk alongside John Luth, and help him discern his readiness for future ministry and eligibility for call.
- c) That John Luth’s readiness to accept a call be not left to John alone, but that this be part of this oversight group – who would support and come alongside.

CIC will take these recommendations under advisement.

- 7.7 **Leon Johnston** led Classis in prayer as delegates laid hands on Rev. John Luth and the delegates of the CRC of St. Albert.

8. Observations. The Advisory Committee also made the following observations:

- 8.1. There is not a great deal of clarity about when to use which articles of the church order in the process of separating a pastor from the congregation. As demonstrated in the appeal from Dr. Ferry Yang to Synod 2016 and these Article 17 separations we are dealing with now, the circumstances and approaches vary significantly. For a Council, deciding which rules to follow can be challenging. Establishing a clearer set of guidelines would be helpful.
- 8.2. The supplements for Article 17 primarily deal with circumstances of conflict. While this is important, these present separations are not of this nature. It would be helpful to councils and pastors to know what considerations, questions and processes to follow in circumstances that differ from the situations of conflict.
- 8.3. Because circumstances of an Article 17 separation can vary greatly, the guidelines for financial compensations can seem unfair and onerous under certain circumstances. The rationale for them is also unclear. In addition, for a church undergoing transition, the burden of the financial compensation can restrict its ability to return to health.
- 8.4. There ought to be some post-separation process that allows the denomination, the church, and pastors to learn from the (sometimes unpleasant) experience; this to help us develop better practices in extended pastorates, separations, and transitions.
- 8.5. We suggest these observations be taken up with the Healthy Church Task Force for their consideration and perhaps for consultations with the Pastor Church Resources.

- 8.6. The Healthy Church Task Force and the Synodical Deputies were also asked to take note that it would be good to have a point person in place who, when incidences arise, could guide us through the process and who could provide better guidance on the rules.
- 8.7. Churches were encouraged to consider sending overtures for Classis consideration regarding these matters.

The Advisory Committee was thanked for its work.

Executive Session was Lifted.

9. Ferry Yang release from ministry and his appeal to Synod.

The Chair provided Classis with some history and recent developments concerning Rev. Ferry Yang, Former minister at Neerlandia CRC.

- In March 2015 Rev. Ferry Yang resigned from his position at Neerlandia. He returned to Indonesia.
 - In the fall 2015 Classis meeting Classis approved his release from ministry according to Article 14-b of the Church Order. The Synodical Deputies concurred.
 - Ferry Yang sent an appeal from this decision to Synod. CIC received the appeal documents and sent the Synodical Office a response, outlining the circumstances that led to the action of Classis. Synod appointed an Advisory Committee to deal with the matter. Synodical Deputy Bert Slofstra and Classis delegate William Delleman were asked to speak to the advisory committee.
 - Synod upheld the appeal, which implies that the action of Classis in October 2015 is null and void, and Rev. Yang remains a minister of the CRC with his credentials residing in Neerlandia CRC.
 - We will not know the grounds for the Synod decision, since the decision was taken in executive session.
 - The Stated Clerk has sent correspondence to Dr. Yang via email and registered mail to request his intentions with regard to continued ministry in the CRC. A response deadline of July 15, 2016 was given.
 - It was noted that Rev. Yang is not eligible for call at this time. The ruling only reinstated his status to that of an ordained minister of the CRC.
 - Classis has been in contact with Ms. Dee Recker (Synodical Services) and Ms. Kathy Smith (Calvin Seminary, Church Order expert). We are confident that CIC is pursuing this matter in the correct way.
10. Credentials Committee **Mike Van Dyk**, member of the Credentials Committee, reported that the credentials are in order.
 11. Closing. **Leon Johnston** closed in prayer.
 12. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 PM with thanks from the Chair