



# MINUTES - Part 1, Saturday

## CLASSIS HAMILTON

of the CRCNA

Saturday, February 22, 2025, 9:00 AM to 3 PM

(Including 2 hours of Listening Circles)

**Final**

Hosted by Hagersville Community CRC, Hagersville, ON

([Agenda](#) and [Addendum](#))

(See also the [Addendum](#) and [Minutes of Tuesday](#), February 25, 2025)

<b>Officers of Classis:</b> Chair: Anthony Elenbaas Vice Chair: Ken Benjamins Stated Clerk: Ed W. Visser	<b>Synodical Deputies:</b> None Required
<b>Reporter:</b> (see <a href="#">RoP</a> Section 7.1) Mount Hope Community, Mount Hope	<b>Ballot Advisory Team:</b> (see <a href="#">RoP</a> section 7.7) Host Church - Hagersville Community
<b>Credentials Advisory Team:</b> (See <a href="#">RoP</a> Section 7.4) Maranatha, York Meadowlands Fellowship, Ancaster	<b>Overture Advisory Team:</b> (see <a href="#">RoP</a> section 7.3) Grace Community, Ancaster Immanuel, Simcoe <a href="#">Advice for Overture Advisory Teams</a>

1. **Welcome and Opening Prayer** **Vice-Chair, Ken Benjamins**
  
2. **Devotions & Sharing of Ministry,** **Host church**
  - a. We begin with some singing
  - b. **Pastor Steven Eckersley** welcomes us to Hagersville Community CRC and delivers a devotion based on 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, about how the body of Christ has many different parts of different function and honour. This is just like the human body with all its diversity and difference, yet the body is one.

The family in which Steven grew up was a blended family—different backgrounds, different personalities, and different ways of seeing the world. At times, these differences caused division, making it difficult for them to get along. But when they did come together, it was something truly beautiful. Laughter and joy filled the house, and for those moments, they were one, despite their differences.

Who can fathom the patience God has with us when we, as His children, point fingers, get frustrated, and disrupt the family of faith with our petty disagreements? Why do we struggle so much to experience unity? The Bible describes unity as both good and pleasant (Psalm 133:1) and calls us to be of one mind and spirit (Philippians 2:2). Yet, even in the early church, believers struggled with division. This reminds us that unity is not something that happens naturally or easily—it must be pursued intentionally.

But what is unity? Too often, we think unity means complete agreement on important

matters. However, what if unity is less about uniformity and more about togetherness? What if unity is about making space for each other, learning to walk together despite our differences, like the many parts of one body functioning together?

Unity is oneness, not sameness. God has called people from all over the world—people with different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives—to belong to His one Body. That means unity in the church does not mean an absence of disagreements; rather, it means staying together even when we don't see eye to eye. This requires humility and gentleness as we pursue the unity of the Spirit in peace. We must stand firm in our convictions while avoiding judgment and contempt toward those who see things differently. True unity is found in our shared identity as brothers and sisters in Christ.

The pursuit of unity is a high calling. It is a way to proclaim the supernatural love of Christ in a world desperate for love and reconciliation. Yes, we will stumble. We fail in unity just as we fail in abiding in Christ, striving for holiness, and loving our enemies. But our failures should not become excuses to stop trying. Instead, we press on, trusting in the Spirit's help to do what we cannot do on our own.

Christian unity is not about achieving our idealized vision of the church, but about displaying the redeeming and sanctifying love of God. Today, as we engage in Listening Circles—perhaps on difficult topics where we don't all agree—let us not allow disagreement to destroy our unity. Families fight and bicker, but that doesn't mean they cease to be family. The same is true for the church.

Unity is not the absence of conflict but the presence of love that binds us together despite it. And that kind of unity is worth fighting for. Steven leads us in prayer.

- c. **Davis Miedema**, Chair of Council, shares about the congregation's excitement of being in their new, old building. They hope to continue in the rich stream of history of this place. They hope to be faithful and listen to the plans that God has for them. God has given them a very positive attitude and has answered many of their prayers. Through three and half years of pastoral vacancy and all through COVID, God provided worship leaders every Sunday, with volunteers to make everything work and take care of each other. And now they're blessed to have Pastor Steven and his family – it's been just over one and half years that he's been with them. They have monthly "soup Sundays". They've met many of the previous parishioners and heard their stories of faith and sacraments, weddings, events. They have monthly prayer gatherings, Coffee Break, monthly elders meetings with Pastor Steven for prayer and encouragement, and mutual accountability. They work alongside community organizations, such as the food bank, the abilities centre, community Bible Studies, community yard sale for local charity. The church building is also used by the Pregnancy Centre. The new building has given them an elevator (great for seniors and differently abled folk) and a fellowship hall which they hope to use for all kinds of community events, and the building is right on main street - great visibility, will get a digital sign for promotion. And that's just the beginning of many other wonderful opportunities for service. We are asked to pray for them that they will be a light to the community of Hagersville. [Classis shows appreciation with applause]

### 3. **Prayer for the Host Church**

**Ken Benjamins**

4. **Call to Order & Instructions for the Day**

**Chair pro-tem, Anthony Elenbaas**

- a. Guests Welcomed - Shawn Brix Calvin Seminary, Al Postma Executive Director CRC in Canada, Roshani Morton Director of Advancement CRC in Canada, Sean Baker with Thrive (who is organizing our Listening Circles), Willemina Zwart SOCO, Samantha Vos ministry at Stoney Creek Mountain, and Gina Taylor member of the CIC and of First CRC, Hamilton.
- b. **Delegates Registered** as shown in the chart below (with seven first time delegates\* who signed the Covenant of Officebearers. They are asked to stand and are welcomed).

Congregation	Deacon	Elder	Minister
Bethel CRC, Waterdown	N/A	Tess Tigchelaar (absent with notice)	John Glasbergen, (Elder)
Calvary CRC, Flamborough	Ben Boekestein alt. Richard Vandenberg	Jan Vander Hout alt. Nick Groen	Benj Vander Meulen, (Elder)
Calvin CRC, Dundas	Paul deGroot	Jerry Noordam	Ken Benjamins
Ebenezer CRC, Jarvis	Fred Zandstra	Darryl VanBentham	N/A
Faith CRC, Burlington	Julie Pyper*	Jillian Langendoen*	Cara deHaan
First CRC, Hamilton	Nella Sandrock* alt. Lisa Nightengale	Jules de Jager	N/A
Grace Community CRC, Ancaster	Dan Hagen	Rob Fluit	Mark Verbruggen
Hagersville Community CRC	N/A	Davis Miedema alt. Jake Elgersma	Steven Eckersley
Hope CRC, Brantford	Ben Koerssen*	Dave Guichelaar alt. John Hensen	Doug Nieuwstraten
Immanuel CRC, Hamilton	Clarence Beeksma	Arthur Bosua*	Anthony Elenbaas
Immanuel CRC, Simcoe	Bert Stam*	Mark Vandervliet alt. Joss deGroot	Ernie Rauwerda, (elder)
Maranatha CRC, York	Bryan VanBentham*	Jerry Haanstra	N/A
Meadowlands Fellowship CRC, Ancaster	Val Kloet alt. Kevin Ritske	Ed Witvoet	Everett Vander Horst
Mount Hope Community CRC	Doug Nagtegaal	Doug Dekker	Joel Bootsma
New Hope Church, Hamilton (emerging church)	N/A	N/A	N/A

5. **Constitution of Classis**

- a. **Delegates stand** to signify their agreement with the Covenant for Officebearers.
- b. **Classis is Declared Constituted**

6. **Approvals**

- a. A motion *that Classis approve the Consent Agenda with items on addendum* is ... **ADOPTED**  
**Note:** with this Rev. Ken Benjamins is approved as the counselor for Calvary CRC, Flamborough
- b. *That Classis approve the Agenda with today's addendum* is ... **RULED**

7. A request from the floor **that those at the head table be introduced** is ... **GRANTED**

- a. **Anthony Elenbaas**, co-pastor at Immanuel Hamilton, moving to Orillia in March.
- b. **Ed Visser**, Stated clerk, in his 3<sup>rd</sup> year
- c. **Ken Benjamins**, Vice Chair of Classis today, and president of the CIC

8. A request **that those nominated for delegation to Synod be introduced** is ... **GRANTED**

9. **Voting for Delegates to Synod 2025** (this process continues throughout the morning)

- a. Chair introduces the process, expectations ...
- b. The names of those available are listed on page 4 of the addendum. **Steven Eckersley** is added as a **Minister** nominee, and **John Brinkman** as **Deacon** nominee
- c. **At the end of the morning the final results are:**
  - i. **1<sup>st</sup> Minister Delegate: Ken Benjamins**      **1<sup>st</sup> Minister Alternate: Mark VerBruggen**
  - ii. **Elder Delegate: Adrian Guldenmond**      **Elder Alternate: Rob Brouwer**
  - iii. **Deacon Delegate: John Brinkman**      **Deacon Alternate: NA**
  - iv. **2<sup>nd</sup> Minister Delegate: Doug Nieuwstraten**      **2<sup>nd</sup> Minister Alternate: Steven Eckersley**

10. **CIC and Stated Clerk Reports**

- a. **Classis Interim Committee Report** (CIC) **CIC Chair: Ken Benjamins**
  - i. Ken briefly describes the definition and purpose of the CIC.
  - ii. **From Hope CRC**, *“The Council of Hope CRC, Brantford, requests that Classis Hamilton approve the upcoming retirement of Rev. William Koopmans, effective June 2025, due to age, and communicate this decision of Classis Hamilton to the Synodical services office.”*
  - iii. **Recommendation: At the request of the Council of Hope CRC, Brantford, and with the provisions of Church Order article 18 & supplement, Classis Hamilton approves the retirement of Rev. William Koopmans, due to age, effective June 30, 2025** is..ADOPTED
  - iv. **Chair gives words of gratitude for William’s service**; *“William has served in many ways and well beyond the bounds of the local church. He has served the denomination in many ways in critical roles that have helped shape denominational life. He has served*

*faithfully and well. Anthony has worked with William in ecumenical work which is another piece of the work that has been his heart for the church, seeking very much the church unity that Steven was speaking about earlier today. In fact many of the things Steven was talking about are laid out in our Synodical Ecumenical charter and William has served the church in that regard as well. So we dismiss William with great thanks and gratitude for the way he has served the church.”* The delegates from Hope CRC, Brantford are asked to convey our thanks to William.

- v. Ken Benjamins leads a **prayer of thanks**.
- vi. Ken reviews some items on the [CIC Report](#), in particular,
  - (1) Hayden Regeling was contacted and is willing to serve as director/member on the CIC **proposed for approval at the AGM May 2025**
  - (2) that changes in the pulpit supply structure can happen (if desired) through overtures or request via credentials. That is, the schedule can be changed, but that requires action by Classis upon request of the churches. This is raised now because of the number of pastoral vacancies, and if those increase, we may encounter more scheduling difficulties.
  - (3) Gathering event in Houston; we have all 10 participants secured. Organizers are aware of the list. (Organizers will add an additional 5 from Classis Hamilton).
  - (4) Do we address the annual signing of the Covenant for Officebearers? Like other related questions in light of Synod 24, we've decided to wait till after our Facilitated Listening Circles.
  - (5) In Addition, we've also made arrangements so that Meadowlands Fellowship's Overtures can be handled in time for the March 15 deadline for Synod, and Classis Quinte's Communication to all Canadian Classes by arranging for a second meeting of Classis.
- vii. **Overtures Received and CIC's Proposals** (from the addendum, pg 3, item 8)
  - (1) Classis Hamilton has received **two overtures** from Meadowlands Fellowship CRC, Ancaster, and one **other matter** for consideration from **Classis Quinte**.
  - (2) However, at the October 2024 meeting of Classis the Chair stated, ***that it might be best if we wait with the overtures until we've had our guided discussion in our February meeting, and that churches take the results of that discussion for any overture to the following meeting.*** Art. 22, iv, (3).
  - (3) It's clear that overtures asking for a change in a practice or policy of Classis, could be delayed till a subsequent meeting of Classis. However, the overtures from

Meadowlands are **meant for Synod 2025**. Classis needs to accede or not accede to them, so that they can be submitted to Synod on or before the **deadline of March 15**. [If Classis accedes to an overture then it is sent to Synod as belonging to Classis. If Classis does not accede to an overture, then Meadowlands may submit it to Synod on its own]

- (4) Since a two hour facilitated session of Listening Circles is scheduled to begin at 1 p.m. on **Feb. 22, 2025, CIC proposes that,**
- (a) **a second, shorter, meeting of Classis** be held during the **evening of Tuesday, Feb. 25, 2025**, at Meadowlands Fellowship CRC, Ancaster (they have been asked and agreed to host). Delegates from Feb. 22 will be the delegates for Feb. 25. The doors open at 7 p.m., and the meeting starts at 7:30 p.m. Our meeting will be no longer than 2 hours, likely less. The **only items on the agenda** are the following two **overtures** and the **material from Classis Quinte** (further explained below)
- (i) [2025 Overture –Reorganize the CRCNA as two distinct Christian Reformed Churches, one in Canada and one in the United States \(U.S.\)](#)
- (ii) [2025 Overture - Prohibit concealed handguns at all ecclesiastical assemblies](#)
- (iii) [Ecclesiastical gathering of Canadian Churches](#) (Classis Quinte)
- (b) **Recommendations from CIC:**
- (i) ***That Classis Hamilton hold a second meeting on Tuesday, Feb, 25, 2025, starting at 7:30 p.m., at Meadowlands Fellowship, with the same delegates & credentials as on Feb. 22, with only 3 items on the agenda: two overtures from Meadowlands, and the material from Classis Quinte is***  
... **ADOPTED**
- (c) **Regarding the material and 4 requests from Classis Quinte,**
- (i) **Quinte states, “In summary, Classis Quinte requests all Canadian Classes to:**
- 1) *Pray for the planning of this gathering*
  - 2) *Recommend an office bearer for the steering team [first zoom meeting Feb 27, 2025]*
  - 3) *Send communication about potential agenda items*
  - 4) *Be prepared to nominate 4 delegates, later this year”*
- (ii) **CIC recommends**
- 1) Prayer (i) is always right, and the other matters (iii) & (iv) will be taken up by CIC for further processing for the May meeting of Classis as appropriate, and,
  - 2) ***that the churches send names of nominees to the stated clerk. CIC will select an officebearer for the steering team which is to meet by zoom on Feb 27, 2025*** is ... **RULED**

[The stated clerk had explained *that the CIC is offering this recommendation regarding a nomination as a preliminary move – given that next Thursday is the zoom meeting – to get this one person nominated instead of waiting till Tuesday. If on Tuesday the Quinte matter is voted down, the nominee is not needed – Anthony and Ken concur that was CIC’s rationale*].

viii. Questions regarding the COD nomination are asked and answered - the matter appears later in the agenda.

ix. A motion ***That Classis Approve the work of the CIC*** is ... **ADOPTED**

b. **Stated Clerk’s Report** (on the [Addendum](#) page 2, item 4) **Ed W. Visser**

i. A Motion ***That Classis Approve the work of the Stated Clerk*** is .. **ADOPTED**

ii. Chair offers some nice comments on the work done, including keeping us on the rails, receiving emails, questions and grumps. To which the SC says, “... *I have not experienced anyone in this Classis being grumpy ...*”

11. **Approval of Nominee Mike Bekendam for the COD/CMB** (AGENDA, page 3, item 9)

a. **A question is asked** how nominations come to be since the questioner does not recall receiving an invitation for the churches to submit nominations.

i. The answer is that Mike was nominated by outgoing COD/CMB member, William Koopmans. As outgoing member he was asked by the COD/CMB to make a nomination.

ii. William Koopmans also reported to Classis October 2024, that his term was completing and that there was opportunity to make nominations.

iii. The CIC also came up with a nomination, but that person was unavailable.

iv. All nominations move through the CIC and placed on the agenda for Classis.

v. Beyond the CIC attempted nomination and William’s nomination, no additional nominations were received.

b. **From the floor:** “*Given the contentious times in the CRCNA, and not being aware of any call to the churches for nominations,*”

i. it is **MOVED & SECONDED to table this nomination to give the churches an opportunity to present any other nominations** [Chair reminds us a motion to table is not debatable]

ii. after the voice vote is not decisive, a show of hands **17/15 determines the motion is ...**

**DEFEATED**

c. A motion ***that Classis approve the nomination of Mike Bekendam for COD/CMB*** is ...

**ADOPTED**

## a. From Grace Community CRC, Ancaster

*Grace Community (Ancaster) CRC would like to request that the CIC consider a different option than having a Saturday Classis meeting in February.*

*We appreciate that the Saturday meeting was instituted so that a wider variety of office bearers might be able to attend. We understand that a weekday meeting made it impossible for some. However, we have not found the Saturday meeting to be helpful. Too many people have commitments on the weekend which makes attendance difficult. (This is especially true for teachers who serve on Council).*

*We would like the CIC to consider replacing the Saturday meeting with a shorter, weeknight meeting that would begin and end at set times (for example: 7:30-9:30 pm). This meeting could dispense with long opening devotions, church sharing, etc. (Those can still be done in the fall and spring meetings). Let it be a meeting where we attend to the business of Classis which needs to be done. Two hour "listening circles", reports from agencies, etc. do not make for an attractive meeting on a busy Saturday in the winter.*

*It would be our wish to see this change happen for the February 2026 meeting.*

## i. Credentials Advisory Team's Advice to Classis:

We are generally in agreement with the request from Grace church, although we would take issue with the negative tone directed toward listening circles and the reports from our ministry partners. ***We recommend that classis consider scheduling a one-time midweek evening meeting in February 2026, and that this "experiment" be reviewed by the CIC for its effectiveness as well as efficiency.*** We note the following factors which could prove challenging:

- Midweek evenings are also busy, as ministry leaders volunteer in various capacities.
- Church buildings are often used for evening programming, and so it may be challenging to find a church that is able to host an evening meeting.
- Even by relegating ministry reports to the other two meetings (May and October), two hours will likely be too short. Three hours (7-10 PM) may be better.
- It is at the February meeting that overtures to synod are considered. The discussion of these overtures is often lengthy, and ought not be rushed.

ii. A recommendation ***that Classis consider scheduling a one-time midweek evening meeting in February 2026, and that this "experiment" be reviewed by the CIC for its effectiveness as well as efficiency*** is ...

DEFEATED

**Note:** Questions from the floor had prompted the chair to say if adopted, this decision would take precedence over the previous decision of having three consecutive February Saturday meetings. We had two, and the new decision would eliminate the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday meeting.



b. **From Immanuel CRC, Simcoe**

*Sharing some good news: Pastor Derek Bouma has agreed to become Immanuel's Specialized Transitional Minister commencing next July. This blessing and an influx of newcomers excites us. Many of the newcomers come to us as refugees. Immanuel's DNA is one of being there for each other – a perfect fit to help meet the needs of these newcomers. They, in turn, bring a vibrant and dynamic faith helping us regain a trust that God has a hope and a future in store for Immanuel.*

i. **Credentials Advisory Team's Advice to Classis:**

As a committee, we celebrate with Immanuel the news of Rev. Bouma's upcoming season of ministry among them, noting with thanks the good work done in his recent time at Bethel CRC in Waterdown. We recommend that classis offer up a prayer of thanks and blessing for the Spirit's guidance in the season ahead.

[Prayer will follow the first report in the next section]

13. **Classis Counselor Reports:**

- a. **Bethel** CRC – Anthony Elenbaas (who is stepping down) asks **Derek Bouma, STM** to report. Everett leads our prayer for Bethel, Immanuel and Derek.
- b. **Ebenezer** CRC, Jarvis - Jack Kerkof's report (he is not present) is given by **Darryl VanBenthem**, to the effect that the search for the next minister is ongoing, they are reviewing potential candidates for the position and they will report as things progress.
- c. **Immanuel** CRC, Simcoe - Doug Nieuwstraten (nothing additional to add)
- d. **Maranatha** CRC, York - Joel Bootsma, Anthony reports that Peter Kranenburg is their interim
- e. **Calvary** CRC, Flamborough - Ken Benjamins (approval via Consent Agenda)

14. **Classis Ministries Reports** (no written reports submitted)

a. **Candidacy Committee**

**Cara De Haan**

- i. oral report
- ii. Peter Kranenburg gives his thanks to Classis for funding support for his seminary studies.
- iii. Cara leads our prayer

b. **Campus Ministry Committee**

**Anthony Elenbaas**

- i. Full report coming up in May meeting
- ii. My term (Anthony Elenbaas) is up on the Campus Ministry Committee as of this meeting of Classis—I am also taking a call elsewhere.
- iii. In light of that, the CMC **recommends that Mark Verbruggen be approved as a new pastor member of the Campus Ministry Committee** is ...

**ADOPTED**

- c. **Classical Home Missions Committee** **Michael Bootsma**
- i. oral report; given by **Joel Bootsma** who is now chair, Michael is stepping down
  - ii. **Samantha Vos** shares some of the work she's doing at church planting in Stoney Creek Mountain.
  - iii. **Joel** leads our **prayer**

15. **Calvin Seminary** (PowerPoint presentation) **Shawn Brix**
- a. 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year
  - b. Changes in programming, additions, new formats in learning, partnerships
  - c. New support initiatives, accepting Canadian Tuition Dollars at par - almost 40% savings (Canadian donors who have set up an endowment)
  - d. Scholarships, 4<sup>th</sup> floor residence, Forum expanded into digital format
16. **Sean Baker**, introduces himself and the ministry that takes much of his focus. He outlines some of the issues in the churches that have brought about Listening Circles.
17. **Stated Clerk** gives some introductory instructions for the mechanics of starting Listening Circles which begin after lunch.
18. **Adjournment:**
- a. **Ken Benjamins** leads our prayers for lunch and the Listening Circles
  - b. **We are dismissed for Lunch**
  - c. **Following lunch and before our Listening Circles**, Classis decides the **destroy the ballots** of the day, to **thank the staff providing refreshments, lunch and a place to meet**.
  - d. **Before leading our prayer**, Ken Benjamins offers generous and kind words for the excellent service, work and person of **Anthony Elenbaas**. This is Anthony's last time with us. He is leaving Immanuel CRC in Hamilton to serve Living Hope CRC in Orillia, ON.

## Two Hour Session of Listening Circles

19. **Next Meeting of Classis (Tuesday, May 27, 2025)**
- i. **Agenda Materials** ..... Due, **April 15, 2025**
  - ii. **Credentials** ..... Due, **May 6, 2025**
  - iii. **Addendum Materials**..... Due, **May 13, 2025**
  - iv. **Classis** ..... **Meets May 27, 2025**, Hosted by **Immanuel CRC, Hamilton**

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### Just Around the Corner (in 2025)

- Agenda Materials**                      Due ... September 16, 2025
- Credentials**                              Due ... October 7, 2025
- Addendum Materials**                  Due ... October 14, 2025
- Classis**    **Meets October 28, 2025**. Hosted by **Immanuel CRC, Simcoe**

*Ed W. Visser*