

Agenda for the Meeting of

# Classis Alberta South & Saskatchewan

of the Christian Reformed Church in North America

March 8, 2024

Emmanuel, CRC



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## VISION STATEMENT

**Classis Alberta South & Saskatchewan is a regional group of Christian Reformed Churches dependant on the Holy Spirit, striving to function together as one body in Christ, share in worship, promote evangelism, diaconal ministries, and nurture through mutual accountability.**

**Chair:** Rev. Mathew VandenHeuvel

**Vice Chair:** Rev. Henry Veldboom

**Clerk:** Nelly Eyk (Stated Clerk)

**LODGING:** Please see the attached 'Accommodation Policy' ([page 7](#))

**TRAVEL:** Please see the attached 'Travel Policy' ([page 6](#))

**FIRST TIME DELEGATES:** Please read the **Covenant for Officebearers** prior to the meeting and be ready to sign it at the Meeting of Classis. ([page 8](#))

**8:30 AM Delegates arrive and share a time of fellowship**

**9:00 AM Classis is formally constituted in a time of worship.**

**1. Welcome to delegates and visitors by the Chair**

**2. Classis is called to Order:**

- 2.1. Credentials & Roll Call –Credentials will be confirmed, Stated Clerk will conduct Roll Call.
- 2.2. First-time delegates must sign the Covenant for Officebearers in the CRC ([page 8](#))
- 2.3. Classis is declared to be constituted.
- 2.4. Seating of advisors

One ordained Minister or Commissioned Pastor leading each work of Classis (currently Indigenous Christian Fellowship of Regina, U of C Campus Ministry,) will be designated as an advisor to Classis. (Oct. 2008, Item 6); Treasurer, Peter VandenDool; Stated Clerk, Nelly Eyk; and Regional Pastor, Martin Boardman.

**3. Review/revise and approve the AGENDA**

#### 4. Time Schedule

##### March 8, 2024

Opening devotion and prayer 9:00

Classis 9:30 – 12:00

Lunch 12:00 – 1:00

Classis 1:00 – 6:00

Dinner 6:00 – 7:00

Classis 7:00 – 9:00

#### 5. Committee Appointments

5.1. Credentials Committee: **Bethel, Saskatoon; Emmanuel, Calgary.**

5.2. Nominations Committee: **River Park CRC; First CRC, Taber.**

5.2.1 Nomination for Chair of Classis Interim Committee. Gary Van Leeuwen

5.3. Overtures and Communications committee: **Iron Springs, Nobleford.**

5.3.1 River Park CRC overture 'Task Force to Shape a Gentle Pathway'

5.3.2 River Park CRC Communication 'Expressing Our Concerns'

5.3.3 River Park CRC Communication 'Unity without uniformity'

5.4 Expense Vouchers: Peter VandenDool, [treasurer@classisabss.ca](mailto:treasurer@classisabss.ca) (page9)

#### 6. Classical Administrative Reports: Received for information unless noted otherwise.

6.1 **Classical Ministries Committee:** All meetings were Via Zoom . See minutes on website.

6.1.1 **Motion:** that only churches who are giving over 80% of their classiscal ministries shares are eligible to request expense vouchers for delegates to classis meetings.

**Motion to approve the work of the Classical Ministries Committee**

6.2 **Classis Stated Clerk Report:** as per report attached.

**Motion to approve the work of the Classical Stated Clerk**

6.3 **Classical Treasurer's Report Peter VandenDool**

6.3.1. Presentation of the 2023 Financial Balance Sheet Auditors report Attached.

6.3.2. Auditors for the 2023 Financial report are John Kolk ( Iron springs CRC) and Landen Stronks ( Iron Springs CRC )

**Motion to approve the work of the Treasurer**

- 6.4 **Classical Ministerial Leadership Team: Rev. Rick Roeda** (report attached)
  - 6.4.1 **Motion by Medicine Hat CRC to Approve Job Description For Commissioned pastor.**
  - 6.4.2 **Examination of Joel Hamm for Commissioned pastor.**
- 6.5 **Classical Safe Church Coordinator: Judy Heim** (report attached)
- 6.6 **Calgary Campus Ministry Team: Adrian deLange** Reporting Celebrating 20 Years.
- 6.7 **Faith Formation: Chris Vanderberg** (report attached.)
- 6.8 **Medicine Hat College Chaplain : George Koopmans reporting.**
- 6.9 **Youth Champion:** (no report)
- 6.10 **Regional Pastor: Martin Boardman** (Report attached.)
- 6.11 **Classical Prayer Coordinator:** Allan Kirkpatrick (No report)
- 6.12 **Church Visitor team reports.**
  - 6.12.1 Team # 1 – Medicine Hat, Regina and Saskatoon
  - 6.12.2 Team # 2 – Covenant, The Road, River Park and The Lantern
  - 6.12.3 Team # 3 – Emmanuel, Maranatha (Calgary) and High River
  - 6.12.4 Team # 4 – Burdett, Iron Springs, Brooks Taber First
  - 6.12.5 Team # 5 – Granum, Maranatha (Lethbridge), and Nobleford
- 6.13 Oversight committee for Allan Kirkpatrick (Brian Kuyper reporting)
- 6.14 Oversight committee for Maranatha (Calgary) CRC (Paul Verhoef reporting)

**7 Denominational Agencies/Visitors Reports**

- 7.1 Council of Delegates: **Debbie Karambowich** reporting
- 7.2 World Renew: **Chidi, of Church & Community Engagement Team Canada** (Via Zoom from Saskatoon)
- 7.3 Resonate Global Missions:
- 7.4 ReFrame: **Nate Wright reporting and presenting.**
- 7.5 **CRCNA: Zach King, CRCNA General Secretary; and Roshani Morton, Director of Advancement (Canada) ( report attached ) both Presenting and Addressing**
- 7.6 The Kings University: (see attached report)
- 7.7 Diaconal Ministries Canada: (see attached report) Deacons Luncheon together
- 7.8 Indigenous Christian Fellowship: **Bert Adema** (Report Attached)



- 7.9 The Ministry to Seafarers: (report attached)
- 7.10 Calvin Seminary (report attached ); **Shawn Brix, reporting and presenting**
- 7.11 Redeemer University ( report attached)
- 7.12 Thrive (report attached)

## **8 Reports from Advisory Committees**

- 8.2 Credentials Committee
- 8.3 Nominations Committee
- 8.4 Overtures Committee

## **9 Closing**

- 9.2 Closing remarks by the chair, and vice-chair
- 9.3 Motion to adjourn.
- 9.4 Closing prayer and doxology

## **10 Fall Classis meeting to be held at Granum CRC on October 25, 2024.**

## 2024 TRAVEL POLICY

When travel is required for Classis business, the onus is on the individual to make a cost effective and practical choice when considering transportation.

The following options are available;

1. Personal Vehicle: With shorter trips, using your own vehicle is generally the best option. Classis pays mileage as established annually by the CRA. 2024 rates are \$0.70/km for the first 5000 km and \$0.64/km thereafter. (Rates are reviewed annually)
2. Carpooling: When possible and as with your personal vehicle, carpooling is often a logical, convenient and cost effective option. CRA rate apply
3. Car Rental: On longer trips (over 300km return) a car rental is best. Some rental firms will drop the vehicle at your home or pick you up. Review your insurance for proper coverage.
4. Bus Charter: At times the Classis will arrange for a bus charter to accommodate a larger number of travellers. When a charter is made available, the Classis will only pay mileage to and from the point of bus origin or stopover. Again the carpooling guideline applies.
5. Air Travel: When distances are excessive, such as for our churches in Saskatchewan, air travel is both a time saver with an often reasonable costs when considering the distance.

If there are questions as to what may or may not be reimbursed, contact the Classis Treasurer for preapproval at:

[treasurer@classisabss.ca](mailto:treasurer@classisabss.ca)

January 2024

## 2024 ACCOMODATIONS POLICY

When accommodations are required for Classis business, the policy of the Classis is to rent single room accommodations. It is expected the individual will make a cost effective and practical choice.

The Classis Interim Committee will ordinarily make accommodation arrangements when multiple rooms are required for a Classis meeting. When this is the case, details will be made available in advance of the meeting.

The following options are available;

1. Hotels. Single hotel rooms are the preferred choice of Classis
2. Shared hotel room Both parties must agree to shared accommodations. This is an acceptable option.
3. You are free to arrange your own accommodations at your own expense.

If there are questions regarding this policy please contact the Classis Treasurer:

[treasurer@classisabss.ca](mailto:treasurer@classisabss.ca)

January 2024

## 2024 MISCELLANEOUS POLICIES & GUIDELINES

1. Tipping: Try to keep "meal tipping" reasonable at around 15%

## Covenant for Officebearers in the CRCNA

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We, [the undersigned], believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God, which proclaims the good news of God's creation and redemption through Jesus Christ. Acknowledging the authority of God's Word, we submit to it in all matters of life and faith.

We affirm three creeds—the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed—as ecumenical expressions of the Christian faith. In doing so, we confess our faith in unity with followers of Jesus Christ throughout all ages and among all nations.

We also affirm three confessions—the [Belgic Confession](#), the [Heidelberg Catechism](#), and the [Canons of Dort](#)—as historic Reformed expressions of the Christian faith, whose doctrines fully agree with the Word of God. These confessions continue to define the way we understand Scripture, direct the way we live in response to the gospel, and locate us within the larger body of Christ.

Grateful for these expressions of faith, we promise to be formed and governed by them. We heartily believe and will promote and defend their doctrines faithfully, conforming our preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living to them.

Along with these historic creeds and confessions, we also recognize the witness of *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* as a current Reformed expression of the Christian faith that forms and guides us in our present context.

We also promise to present or receive confessional difficulties in a spirit of love and fellowship with our brothers and sisters as together we seek a fuller understanding of the gospel. Should we come to believe that a teaching in the confessional documents is not the teaching of God's Word, we will communicate our views to the church, according to the procedures prescribed by the Church Order and its supplements. If the church asks, we will give a full explanation of our views. Further, we promise to submit to the church's judgment and authority.

We honor this covenant for the well-being of the church to the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

# Classis Alberta South And Saskatchewan

## 2024 EXPENSE VOUCHER

c/o Peter Vanden Dool  
 Box 576  
 Picture Butte, AB T0K1V0  
[treasurer@classisabss.ca](mailto:treasurer@classisabss.ca)

Date:

Church & Person: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Cheque Made out to: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City / Town: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Details of Expense: \_\_\_\_\_

Expenses:	Travel: _____	KM's @	0.70	\$	-
	Other: _____			\$	-
				\$	-
				\$	-
		GST		\$	-
	( * KM rate effective Jan 1 '24 )	Total Expenses:		\$	-

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Please attach receipts when possible

Expense Approval: \_\_\_\_\_

Paid by Cheque # \_\_\_\_\_

## Churches of Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan

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Alphabetical by Church Name

Church	Pastor(s)
Bethel CRC (Saskatoon)	Vacant
Brooks CRC	Vacant <i>Credentials: Rev. Dirk Miedema; Rev. Martin Boardman</i>
Burdett CRC	Rev. Rick Roeda <i>Credentials: Rev. J. Cameron Fraser</i>
Covenant CRC (Calgary)	Rev. Matt Vanden Heuvel
Emmanuel CRC (Calgary)	Rev. Dan Roukema; <i>Credentials: Rev. Case Vink; Rev. Pieter L. Hendriks, Rev. Martin Mobach</i>
Granum CRC	Rev. Henry Veldboom
High River CRC	Rev. David Swinney <i>Credentials: Rev. Derek Van Dalen</i>
Iron Springs CRC	Rev. Paul Droogers
Lantern Community Church, The (Calgary)	Rev. Ed Top; <i>Credentials: Rev. Layne Kilbreath</i>
Maranatha CRC (Calgary)	Vacant:
Maranatha CRC (Lethbridge)	Vacant; <i>Credentials: Rev. James D. Zondervan</i>
Medicine Hat CRC	Vacant <i>Credentials: Rev George Koopmans</i>
Nobleford CRC	Rev. Gary Van Leeuwen <i>Credentials: Rev. Frank Lanting</i>
River Park Church (Calgary)	Rev. Adrian de Lange; Pastor Harrison Cho <i>Credentials: Rev. Paul Verhoef; Rev. John VanSloten; Rev. Cari Fydirchuk; Rev. Allan Kirkpatrick</i>
Road Church, The (Calgary)	Rev. Rich Braaksma; Pastor Jacqui Mignault; Pastor Heather Cowie
Sonlight CRC (Regina)	Rev. Gerhardt Venter <i>Credentials: Rev. Charles Kooger; Pastor Bert Adema</i>
Taber First CRC	Rev. Brian Kuyper

## **OVERTURE – Task Force to Shape a Gentle Pathway for Those Departing the CRCNA**

### **BACKGROUND**

In our current tumult, many of those connected to the CRCNA are discerning that it is time to leave: members, officebearers and whole congregations. This overture is born out of lament that our unity in Christ is breaking and out of a desire to love well those who have discerned it is time to leave. Not only are many discerning it is time to leave, they are being forced out of the CRCNA. Written and verbal communication in many circumstances is summarized as “if you don’t like it, leave”. This overture, inspired by some ideas from Rev. Cedric Parcels, asks that Synod 2024 appoint a task force to provide support especially for the pastors and the congregations who depart the CRCNA.

### **OVERTURE**

The Council of River Park Church overtures Classis Alberta South and Saskatchewan to overture synod to appoint a Gentle Pathway Task Force for the purpose of providing support for those departing the CRCNA, with the focus primarily on supporting both congregations and pastors who have discerned a need to leave the CRCNA.

This task force would consider how, if at all possible, to do such things as:

1. Equipping the CRCNA to pray for one another with both conviction and kindness.
2. Allowing ministers departing the CRCNA to remain in the CRCNA Pension Plan.
3. Supporting CRCNA staff if they discern a need to leave their employment without having a new position to enter.
4. Inviting CRCNA Ministries, Agencies and Institutions to engage in discernment with their own stakeholder groups regarding how best to reshape their formal relationship with the CRCNA so as to best flourish in their mission.
5. Providing support with the help of Pastor-Church Resources (Thrive) for congregations and ministers in their discernment about departure from the CRCNA.
6. Establishing ways for congregations and ministers departing the CRCNA to collaborate as they determine if they could remain connected after departing.
7. Providing support for any collective group of congregations working to establish a new, independent denominational structure.
8. Considering how, if possible, to support the CRCNA community experiencing a sense of loss by way of professional counselling opportunities.
9. Other tasks may come up in the discernment of the task force or in feedback from congregations or individuals. The task force would need to discern if these are helpful and doable.
10. By doing all of these things in order to shape a Gentle Pathway toward separation, hopefully minimizing any discerned need for litigation for property or funds in the body of Christ.

### *Grounds:*

1. We are seeing multiple signs that congregations and ministers are discerning the need to leave the CRCNA. We desire to not coerce unity and also desire to love those who are departing the CRCNA, whatever their reasons.
2. The tasks named above, and others to be discerned by the Task Force, are complex enough to require a focussed team to work through the challenges.
3. A Task Force with diverse denominational connections and support from the Office of the General Secretary is best equipped to shape this Gentle Pathway for those discerning the need to leave.

## APPENDIX

### Who is finding the CRCNA to be a challenging denomination? The example of two congregations

*First Byron CRC of Byron Center, MI* – First Byron CRC is a vibrant congregation with a membership of 1398 persons. In December 2023, the elders of First Byron CRC sent a letter to their congregation informing the congregation that they have established a “Denominational Discernment Committee.” For rationale, the elders write, “First Byron CRC and the CRC denomination have been misaligned on critical issues for many years.” They speak about fundamental disagreements around women in office, social justice, and the sinfulness of homosexual desire, among other topics.

The elders of First Byron CRC lament that the PCA and OPC have ended their fraternal relations with the CRCNA. In addition, they name that the CRCNA’s membership in NAPARC (the largest gathering of conservative Reformed denominations in the United States) was terminated in 2001 as a result of the CRCNA opening the offices of elder and minister to women.

*Emmanuel CRC of Calgary, AB* – Emmanuel CRC (Calgary) is also a vibrant congregation with a membership of 527 persons. In April 2023, the council of Emmanuel CRC sent a letter to their congregation providing an update on their local process with respect to the topic decisions of synod “related to homosexuality as addressed in the Human Sexuality Report and ‘confessional status’ of Q&A 108 of the Heidelberg Catechism.” The council focuses on discerning a local path forward for Emmanuel CRC, a congregation that has diverse views on the topic of same sex marriage.

Equipped with feedback from listening circles and book groups, from surveys and congregational meetings, the council of Emmanuel CRC gathered to discern a pathway forward that seemed best to them and the Spirit as they guided the congregation. They prioritized the unity of their local congregation, respecting the leadership of those who hold office. In the end, the motions adopted by the council of Emmanuel CRC put them in direct tension with the challenging decisions of Synod 2022.

### Who is finding the CRCNA to be a challenging denomination?<sup>1</sup>

A brief read through of various CRC-related social media places provides a glimpse of the many others who are currently struggling with whether or not they want to stay connected to the CRCNA. Those who are wrestling with this question cover the whole range of theological perspectives on a whole range of theological and ethical topics (same-sex marriage; women in office; critical race theory; political alignment; gun ownership; binationality; and more). For those interested in listening in to a wider CRCNA conversation, here is a sampling of the social media and web-based ways where members of the CRCNA talk (not always civilly) across lines of difference:

- CRC Voices Group (<https://groups.io/g/crc-voices>)
- Toward CRC Canada on Facebook (on Facebook)
- The Network (<https://network.crcna.org/>; in many cases, the comment section reveals tension)
- The Banner Magazine (on Facebook; in many cases, the comment section reveals tension)
- The Christian Courier (<https://christiancourier.com/>)

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this next sections, we do not provide further links or quotes to ‘prove’ our statements that many are struggling with remaining in the CRCNA. To do so feels like ‘airing dirty laundry’ in public. And we trust this is fairly common knowledge. For this section, a curious person is invited to simply read through the various social media spaces listed. If that is not sufficient to verify our current reality, we would suggest putting a question out to the CRC Voices Group and on the Toward CRC Canada Facebook page, as these two places have a responsive audience.



We do not know who will leave.

Many of our CRCNA churches have lost members. It is hard to know how to love and support members who discern the need to leave the CRCNA. Some leaving are life-long CRCNA individuals and families. The experience for some is traumatic. Some have been – or maybe currently are – officebearers. Their departure may be challenging for the local congregation. Some are ministers, entering into ministry expecting to serve in the CRCNA for their entire life, but discerning an inability to stay. And, as noted above, some who are leaving are entire congregations – both on the conservative end and the progressive end. Even some moderate churches wonder if they simply need to depart what feels like a tumultuous denomination, unable in the current moment to collaborate around a common mission.

### **Shaping a More Gentle Path for those who Discern They Must Leave**

On the other hand, there are many in the CRCNA who wish we could remain united even given the many differences. A phrase often used has been “unity without the need for uniformity.” Indeed, the original author of this overture wishes we would all slow the process down and take time to listen more carefully to one another, asking the Spirit to help us discern a way to live into our God-given unity in Jesus.

But a coerced unity is not a healthy unity.

And the evidence suggests that some – perhaps many – are discerning a need to leave the CRCNA. Why is this happening now? We may each list very different reasons for this situation. We may place blame on different communities for our current turmoil. Listening in to our social media spaces, it might even be the case that we consider others within the CRCNA as enemies, battling over the CRCNA.

But Jesus calls us to love even our enemies. How much more should we love those in our own covenant community?

When we put these two pieces together – a desire not to coerce unity and a desire to love those who are leaving – it is the wisdom of this overture that synod should form a task force to give shape to a gentle path for those who discern they must depart from the CRCNA.

### **Potential Aspects of a Gentle Path for Those Discerning to Leave the CRCNA**

In February 2020, Rev. Aaron Vriesman published an article in *The Banner* entitled “LGBTQ-Incompatible Means Gracious Separation is the Church’s Best Option.”<sup>2</sup> In social media conversation that followed on what was at the time a public Facebook page, Rev. Paul Verhoef asked the online community, “What do you imagine that separation to look like?” While there were many clarifying responses, we would like to focus on the response of Rev. Cedric Parsels.<sup>3</sup> In his response, Rev. Parsels named seven things:

1. “not to act out of hostility or animosity”
2. “agreeing that we will no longer fight for the levers of power in the denomination”
3. “agreeing that we will not enter into litigation for church property and funds”
4. “praying for one another”
5. “safeguarding ministers’s pensions”
6. “helping each other to organize independent denominational structures”
7. “making professional counselling resources available to those who need help processing or adjusting this loss”

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.thebanner.org/columns/2020/02/lgbtq-incompatible-means-gracious-separation-is-the-church-s-best-option>.

<sup>3</sup> Posted by Rev. Cedric Parsels in response to an article posted by Carla Morris on March 2, 2020.

This overture considers this response of Rev. Parsels to be a good start to naming some of the ways to shape a gentle path for those who are discerning it is time to leave the CRCNA.

While it would be the work of the task force to shape this path with more detail, it may be helpful even in this overture to consider further some of the suggestions above.

#### *How to Pray for One Another in a Helpful Way*

Some participants in Synod 2022 and Synod 2023 expressed afterwards that worshipping together was quite a complicated spiritual, emotional and social dynamic. How can I sing songs of praise together when I just listened to thirty minutes of people arguing that our church should be under discipline? How can I pray about unity when someone just stood at the microphone and professed to believing something that I consider fully unbiblical?

Another example of the complication of praying together and for one another can be seen in the prayer initiative leading up to Synod 2022. Classes were invited to join Colin Watson in prayer together, but not everyone felt able to pray with one another. When Classis Minnkota and Classis Grand Rapids East were put in the same prayer group, Classis “Minnkota declined to be part of a small prayer group that also included members of Classis Grand Rapids East.”<sup>4</sup>

Given this situation, it is not a simple question to ask: “How can we equip one another to pray in ways that are both integrous to our own convictions and kind to one another?” And yet, throughout the New Testament, we are commanded to pray continually – including (but not limited to) praying for one another (James 5:16), praying for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44) and praying for those who are committing sin (1 John 5:16).

It would be helpful for a task force to equip us to pray well, both with conviction and kindness.

#### *Safeguarding Ministers’s Pensions – and Also Providing for Gentle Pathways for CRCNA Staff*

As mentioned above, most ministers in the CRCNA imagined themselves serving in this denomination until their retirement.

But what if their congregation has discerned a need to leave the CRCNA? What does that minister do? That minister may so love their congregation – and vice versa – that the two desire to remain together. But if the congregation desires to shift to a new denomination not in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRCNA, the minister is forced to choose between leaving the congregation or leaving the CRCNA pension plan. This makes their decision more difficult.

Or what if a minister in their final years of ministry discerns they must leave the CRCNA in this current moment? Maybe they simply want to join a denomination that aligns more closely with their theological convictions (i.e. women in office or gay marriage). But if they leave, they lose the CRCNA pension plan’s support for a post-retirement final move – and they had plans to move to the city where their grandkids live. This makes their decision more difficult.

Could a task force find a way for ministers who depart the CRCNA to opt in to remaining with the CRCNA pension plan? That would be a gentle and kind gift in these current times.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.thebanner.org/news/2022/02/prayer-meeting-challenge-ahead-of-synod-2022>.

But we would also ask that the task force to consider how to support CRCNA staff (ministry staff, agency staff, institutional staff) who may be discerning it is time to leave their employment with the CRCNA. Is it possible to provide loving support for CRCNA staff who are discerning it is time to leave their employment? Some may find other positions and simply shift from one to the other. But what about those who simply need to leave in this complex time – could we provide a few months of financial support?

#### *No Longer Fighting for the Levers of Power in the Denomination<sup>5</sup>*

If one pays attention to the conversations over the last years about the CRCNA, the word ‘power’ comes up often. Indeed, we have worked to shape a new policy around abuse of power. And accusations of ‘abuse of power’ are on the rise. Some believe that denominational staff or leadership have misused their power. Others believe the synod and synodical delegates have misused their power. As one gets down to more local conversations at a classical level or local church level, the concerns about use of power only multiply. On the above social media spaces – and particularly in the ‘like-minded’ spaces – accusations of misuse or abuse of power are incredibly common.

So what are the ‘levers of power’ in the denomination?

Are we talking about positional leadership and the related power found in CRCNA staff positions or Council of Delegate members? Are we talking about the power of synod to enforce discipline at a local level or make ‘unprecedented’<sup>6</sup> decisions? Are we talking about the relationship of Calvin Theological Seminary and Calvin University to the denomination? How about who gets to be delegated to synod? If there are CRCNA ministries, agencies or institutions who desire a greater independence from the CRCNA, is the synod-appointed board seen as a ‘lever of power’?

We would trust – and pray – that a task force composed of a wide variety of well-connected CRCNA members would be able to identify the vast concerns around the ‘levers of power,’ and with the Spirit’s guidance, determine how to diminish the battle of these levers.

At a minimum, we imagine ministries, agencies and institutions need to be given freedom for discernment. This discernment should not simply be the work of the COD or a particular board of governors, but should include a wider list of stakeholders, especially those who do the work of the ministry, agency or institution.

#### *Not Entering into Litigation for Church Property or Church Funds*

It may be complicated to ask congregations or the denomination to not enter into litigation. If there is real and destructive “abuse of power” in the local congregation, litigation may be the only way for those without power to be heard.

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<sup>5</sup> Again in this section, we do not provide further links or quotes to ‘prove’ our statements that there are many accusations of abuse of power currently being leveled. To do so feels like ‘airing dirty laundry’ in public. And we trust this is fairly common knowledge. If the person reading this has need to verify the reality of this claim, we would again suggest putting a question out to the CRC Voices Group and on the Toward CRC Canada Facebook page, as these two places have a responsive audience. In addition, writing current and former members of the Classical Ministry Committee in Classis Alberta South and Saskatchewan would give them opportunity to provide ample evidence.

<sup>6</sup> “Unprecedented” is used here because this is the word used by Rev. Paul DeVries when he chaired Synod 2023. At one point, he simply conceded to a delegate asking a question from the floor, saying something like “We have already acknowledged that the decisions of Synod 2022 were unprecedented.” The curious reader is welcome to watch the last few days of Synod 2023 to find the exact quote.

But, related to the above, there are “levers of power” that a task force could minimize.

In the late 1990’s and early 2000’s, when churches discerned it was time to leave the CRCNA because of decisions around women in church office, the CRCNA discovered the complications of some of our historical precedents and local church bylaws. We discovered that some church bylaws give full power to those who are staying connected to the CRCNA. If 90 percent of a local congregation wants to leave the CRCNA, should the 10 percent who desire to remain in the CRCNA get everything? Some bylaws – and some Church Order precedents – gave this impression. And thus...litigation happened in what felt like unfair situations.

A task force could be helpful here as well. Could the task force make recommendations that would allow for a more gentle pathway to separation?

Here is an example. What if a church is not all on the same page, and 90 percent want to leave but 10 percent want to remain. And that local church has a bylaw that the classis gets to decide which group gets all the assets (or alternatively, that whichever group aligns with decisions of the CRCNA gets to keep all the assets). In this case, a motion adopted by synod simply stating that the group with the largest percentage has priority in receiving the church assets, but should provide reasonable support to the smaller community if they decide to set up a new congregation.

These are very complicated matters. If we do not consider them carefully, though, we may end up with multiple appeals to synod and massive amounts of litigation, harming the Church’s witness to the world. A task force is the right tool to consider ways to provide a more gentle, wise and kind pathway for those who have discerned they need to separate from the CRCNA.

#### *Providing Support for Organizing Independent Denominational Structures*

As Rev. Parsels noted, departing churches may wish to collaborate. Could those remaining in the CRCNA provide support for what new independent denominational structures might take shape? We also imagine that there may be a benefit for departing ministers to collaborate. Some may want to ‘depart together’ into a new denomination.

In both of these cases, the task force, perhaps with support from the Pastor Church Resources part of Thrive, may be able to equip congregations and pastors for this discernment – but also help those congregations or churches stay in contact with those in a similar situation.

- There may be a whole group of congregations that want to shift to the PCA.
- There may be a whole group of congregations that want to shift to the RCA.
- There may be a whole group of congregations that want to collaborate nationally.

The task force may be able to support healthy communication between congregations ready to depart – so that they do not need to navigate these challenging decisions alone.

#### *Providing Professional Counseling Resources as People Work through a Sense of Loss*

Churches, pastors, officebearers and members may all be considering leaving the CRCNA. Some of these have been CRC their whole lives. Others perhaps found the CRC, joined, and discovered that this particular theological community felt more like ‘home’ than ever before. Departing a community that they love is painful.

What about providing professional counselling for those who are experiencing a strong sense of loss? Could group counselling be made available? Could Pastor-Church-Resources help shape services of

lament? While there are surely questions of cost and scope, finding a way to mourn with those who mourn is an act of Christian love. We wonder if the task force might be able to consider these things.

## COMMUNICATION – Expressing Our Concerns with the Current Trajectory of the CRCNA

Sisters and Brothers in Christ Jesus,

As the Council of River Park Church (Calgary, AB, Canada), we believe that River Park Church is a congregation of people loved by God the Father as we follow Jesus our Lord with the support of the Holy Spirit, participating as one body composed of many parts in the life and work of the Kingdom.

### **Who We Are**

Originally established as First CRC of Calgary, Alberta, in 1952, we have been through many shifts and changes. One thing is consistent: we are a community that loves to follow Jesus together.

*We are a multiethnic congregation.* Current Christian literature defines a multiethnic congregation as one where no single racial or ethnic group accounts for 80 percent or more of the membership. Even by this definition, there are very few multiethnic congregations in North America. We are one, to God be the glory.

*We are a creating a mosaic community.* This is our vision. It includes more than just multiethnic membership. Being called to create a mosaic community means we are working to become more fully multicultural (yes, this is different than being multiethnic). In addition to being multiethnic or multicultural, we are also a community of diverse genders, ages and socioeconomic situations. We gather with both married and single people, widows and widowers. We already have a diversity in our leadership, in our approaches to mission and discipleship, in aspects of our theological convictions.

*Amidst all this diversity, we are one family in Christ.* Through pursuing our vision at River Park Church – “reaching out, drawing in, creating mosaic community” – God has brought together a wonderfully diverse worshipping community. Some have been CRC their whole lives. Some have recently joined the CRC because they have found River Park Church to be their home. But when we come together, we come as one Christian family.

### **Our Responses to Recent Synodical Decisions about the HSR**

We have tried our best to communicate with synod as decisions are being made. We sent an overture that was on the agenda for Synod 2022, asking that synod not accede to ‘confessional status.’ Our sense was that adopting ‘confessional status’ would harmfully divide the CRCNA. Synod 2022 decided to adopt ‘confessional status.’ In response, we sent an overture to Synod 2023, asking that synod listen carefully to our whole CRCNA community to hear more carefully the impact of this ‘confessional status’ decision. Instead of listening, Synod 2023 adopted a motion to ‘guide into compliance’ those who disagree. We believe this decision to also be unwise and divisive. In addition, the committee responding to this overture did not address our questions about confessional revision gravamen.

### **Expressing our Concerns with the Trajectory of the CRCNA**

In the above ways, we have tried to be faithful in communicating with our covenant community in the CRCNA. We are communicating once more.

Please do not go further down this path of ‘guiding into compliance’ the local church with the heavy hand of classical discipline. There has been no healthy listening; to then bring discipline is harmful.

Please do not add additional restrictions to the gravamen process. We have faithful officebearers who have filed gravamen. They are respected by our congregation and leading well.

Please do not continue to make synodical decisions that negatively impact our local congregation.

*The following communication has been thoughtfully prepared by a high school student from River Park Church. As council, we wholeheartedly support the sharing of multiple perspectives and as such support submitting this to classis. Not all members of our council are in full agreement with all the opinions and views presented. However, we do believe in listening to each other without judgment and coexisting in a community that can respectfully disagree on some topics. As they are the future of the church, it is important that youth and young adults have an opportunity to be heard and as such we endorse bringing this forward.*

## **Unity Without Uniformity**

### **Intro**

My name is Aaliyah Verhoef, I am a grade 12 student at Calgary Christian Secondary School. I attend River Park CRC, the church that I have attended since my birth and where I am a baptized member. As a youth, I am writing this both on behalf of myself as well as on behalf of a handful of the youth who will be the future of our beloved church.

### **Thoughts on the HSR**

Conversations surrounding the Human Sexuality Report and synod have been common in my church and even in my own house. Both of these spaces have been good at inviting everyone's opinions, but I feel that, as a whole, the opinions and thoughts of youth are not paid attention to.

Youth have valuable ideas and opinions that deserve to be heard. We are greatly affected by the church's decisions and yet we are not given the voice or the power to influence them. I understand that many young people are thought of as being uninformed or as only speaking our parents' views. However, as the next generation and the ones that will be stewarding the future of the church very soon, I believe that this is a huge oversight.

I, personally, have many opinions on the issues that the church is currently facing. In the past few years, I believe that Synod has made decisions that have, and will continue to, negatively impact the church. However, although I disagree with the stance that the CRC has taken on many aspects of sexuality (especially their stance on the "unchastity" of homosexuality), my main issue with the whole situation is the way it is being handled.

This conversation has become less of a discussion and more of an argument. We are failing to listen respectfully to others with an open mind and heart.

In this way, the church is setting a bad example.

## **Unity Without Uniformity**

In **John 17:22-23**, Jesus says: "I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." The way I read this, Jesus is calling us to be united. Through our unity, the world will know that God has sent us to spread His Word and His love.

Right now, Christians are so divided on so many issues that the rest of the world is barely able to recognize us as the family that we are meant to be. **1 Corinthians 12:27** says, "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." We are meant to be the Body of Christ and a body cannot function without all of its parts.

The question I pose is this: how do we achieve unity without uniformity? This is what I believe we must do.

River Park Church's vision is "Reaching Out, Drawing In, Creating Mosaic Community". A mosaic is a picture or pattern produced by arranging together small, unique pieces of all different shapes and colours. Similarly, every person is different and beautiful, but it is only together that we can find the true beauty and see the whole picture. There is beauty in difference. There is value in variety. Without unique perspectives and people, a glorious mosaic cannot be created.

It is my belief, one that I share with many people in my community, that it is more important to be united and find ways to respect and care for each other despite disagreement than to hold the same stance on certain issues.

**Matthew 22:37-39** shows Jesus' response when asked which is the most important commandment. "Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'"

Each of us is trying to love God in the best way we know how. We all read the Bible and try to understand and respect what God is telling us to do. Even if we land in different places, we are only trying to love the Lord our God with all our hearts and with all our souls and with all our minds.

When we can recognize this about each other, we will be better able to love our neighbour as ourselves. We must respect each other just as we want to be respected. We must listen to each other's opinions just as we want our opinions to be heard.

This is what it means to live in unity without uniformity. That, despite our differences and disagreements, we can find ways to live in community with each other and love one another as God loves us. This is what I hope we, as the future of the church, will be able to accomplish.



**What I have written above is completely by me. However, this communication isn't only about sharing my opinion. It is intended to be a catalyst so that Synod might listen to more of the youth and young adults in the CRCNA.**

### **Thoughts of Other Youth**

In trying to hear the opinions of other youth, I created a form with 12 questions, 8 of which were meant to gather general information about the respondent. The other 4 are included below, with the responses from a handful of youth. These responses represent a tiny fraction of the people and opinions in our vast and varied community. I feel that it is important that more of these young voices are heard in our church when we are facing such important decisions.

**When you think of the CRC's (or even the church in general) position and response to human sexuality (including homosexual sex, gender identity and sexual orientation) how do you feel about it?**

"I disagree with the stance they have taken, and think that it will do more harm than good, and push people out of the CRC and potentially the church as a whole."

**- Molly, age 16**

"I respect how everyone has their own opinions when it comes to the human sexuality report. I feel strongly that more and more the politics within the church has started to take away from the main purpose of worshiping the Lord. I feel that everyone, no matter how they identify should be able to worship freely. When I think of the CRC church in the state it is in currently it makes me sad to think that we are dividing different groups of Christian people based on what they believe is right, and not sticking with the main idea and purpose of church, which is worshiping the Lord."

**- Allyson, age 17**

"I feel my church personally has addressed it the best possible way for the people of the church. We have decided to become mostly accepting, yet are trying to meet at the consensus of the majority."

**- Aylah, age 17**

"I feel disappointed as I feel that this decision has caused a lot of unnecessary division within the church. Church should be a place where everyone feels welcome, and I believe that as followers of Christ, our most important calling is to love others above anything else. Excluding certain people from the church community is the opposite of loving our neighbours. The church has experienced a long history of corruption, caused by forceful implementation of Christianity, the silencing of certain questions or issues, and the shaming upon sinners. We should learn from the mistakes of the past, and create a welcoming environment for ALL people, because the more people we turn away, the greater stain we put on the church. It proves as a bad example for nonbelievers who are already weary of Christianity when they hear that we shame certain demographics. Why would anyone want to join a community that targets certain

“sinners” and treats their sin as worse than the sins of every other heterosexual member of the church? The big issue with this report is that it claims that homosexuality is a sin, but if this sin is being so harshly punished then what about everyone else’s sins? There is no formula or scale for the way that we should deal with sin. This is because God is the only true judge of sin, as we are ALL sinners. I believe that this is the beauty of a church ; a community of equally sinful individuals figuring out how to pursue relationships with Christ together.”

**- Katie, age 16**

“I feel that the stance the CRC has taken is unfair and does not glorify God. I feel it is not being seen through the eyes of the Lord as it is not including certain people just because of the way they live their lives. God did not teach us to judge others but to love our neighbour as our self and to be accepting people with love in our hearts. In my opinion, it is a misrepresentation of what it means to be a Christian. I feel it was a poor decision and it was not given enough time to be discussed.”

**- Quinn, age 17**

“I have mixed emotions on this topic. Some things I am agreeing with and some things I have not made a complete decision on. I have not explored gender identity sexual orientation as much as I have with human sexuality. I am on more of the agreeing side of that same sex marriage is okay. I'm still figuring this out but I'm not in the middle and I'm not disagreeing but I am not 100% affirming but I'm like 75% affirming for the stage I'm at right now.”

**- Chase, age 15**

“I think that the church should not discriminate against someone based on their gender identity or sexual orientation. Just because you don’t agree with someone else’s position on something doesn’t mean that you are given the right to tell them what they can and cannot do. Especially if they want to be a part of the CRC community but are not being welcomed.”

**- Zoë, age 14**

**How have you experienced conversations about this topic? Have these been difficult conversations?**

“I have had many conversations with my family members and my peers about the idea of the human sexuality report, and have learned from those conversations that every person has a different side to the story and that it is important to listen to all different views of the topic. Some of these conversations have been difficult but I feel very necessary.”

**- Allyson**

“Yes. This has been a big conversation because some of my closest friends hold different opinions on this topic than I do. As we each have the other understand our side of this conversation. I think these conversations have been long and hard as we try to make others understand why this is an important topic for our futures.”

**- Zoë**

“The conversations I have been a part of are filled mostly with hurt. They are difficult in the ways that I see how this report has hurt those around me, and in how I see they are pushing people away from God. However, I have not been a part of difficult conversations in the sense of hearing the other side of the argument firsthand.”

**- Molly**

“I have found the conversation on the topic to feel productive and to give me a deeper understanding of what those around me feel. I have not had any significantly difficult conversations on the topic but I do feel the conversations are only made difficult by those who are uncomfortable about the topic.”

**- Quinn**

“I have been part of these conversations, especially with friends. Some of my friends have different beliefs than I do and are strongly opinionated on these beliefs. sometimes I feel uncomfortable because they have said things that I find offensive towards my beliefs and just casually joke about it. These conversations have been difficult because of the opposite opinions and the way they can get heated instead of staying respectful.”

**- Chase**

“Yes, these conversations are difficult because they do bring up a lot of pain for certain friends and individuals in the community, and these decisions mean a lot to many people as well.”

**- Katie**

“Definitely challenging topics to discuss due to the spectrum of individuals and how close it is to their hearts. We are all trying to make sense of it all and many are stuck in the middle. So yes, it is a difficult yet needed talk.”

**- Aylah**

**In conversations about the topic mentioned above (sexuality in the church), has your opinion been invited or heard?**

“Yes, the people who I have engaged in conversation on this topic have invited me in and listened to my point of view.”

**- Molly**

“I have mostly discussed with my family on this topic and they have been accepting and happy to listen to me when I share my opinion.”

**- Quinn**

“Honestly, it depends on who it is with. Some have chosen to not respect my opinion and tell me that my opinion is not important because it does not align with theirs. I feel very hurt in these communities. With others on the other hand, my opinions are heard and brought into big conversation, and I feel respected in these spaces.”

- Zoë

"Yes definitely. Many people have had the opportunity to share and be heard within my particular church. I think my church has done the best to hear from both sides in order to decide the next steps and stage of the church."

- Aylah

"I feel in some cases my opinion has been invited and I have felt safe to share how I feel without the fear of being judged, but I have also been in conversations where I have felt ashamed for having a different perspective on the topic and have not felt safe to share how I felt."

- Allyson

"In conversations my opinion has been heard but not very much. When this topic is being talked about within my school community I try to stay silent about it because I know in the end it will just become heated and will not be a healthy environment. My opinion is so unheard in other outside of school conversations but I try not to step in too much."

- Chase

"No, as someone who is under 18 my opinion has not been asked for."

- Katie

### **Anything else you would like to share?**

"6 God "will repay each person according to what they have done." 7 To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honour and immortality, he will give eternal life. 8 But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. 9 There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; 10 but glory, honour and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. 11 For God does not show favouritism. **Romans 2:6-11**. I think of this verse in relation to this discussion within the church. It reminds me not to judge others as I am equally as imperfect and shall be judged along with everyone else in the eyes of the Lord."

- Quinn

"My family has put many hours of work and thought into this topic and it has turned me from not caring as much to caring a lot, and I think it is very important for everyone to understand that this is more than just a small little topic to me, my family and my community. It is a big topic that can and will affect the rest of our lives. I believe that this is going to the young and newer generations to talk, listen and discuss. As we talk about this many of us truly and honestly do care about this and it is left to us to think about the effect this can hold on our future."

- Zoë

"Worshipping God has nothing to do with our individual beliefs about sexuality. Communities can remain diverse. I just feel like if we want to grow the earthly

community of Jesus' followers, it will not happen through shame, judgment and disclusion. This will only turn people away from the idea of Christianity.”

- **Katie**

## **6.2 Stated Clerk Report.**

1. Prepared Classical appointment Schedule for January - June 2024 for Bethel Saskatoon, Medicine Hat, Brooks, and Maranatha (Lethbridge), Maranatha (Calgary)
2. Finalized all the arrangements for the Fall meeting of Classis in Burdett CRC, Prepared the Minutes of that meeting, circulated and posted them on the web page.
3. Scheduled the CMC meeting for November 21, 2023, January 11, 2024, and February 1, 2024: prepared the minutes of the same.
4. Shared correspondence from denominational agencies with members of the classis.
5. Responded to correspondence received by concerned individuals within the classis.
6. Maintained all Marriage Applications and licenses for both Alberta and Saskatchewan.
7. Kept Webpage updated with Agenda, Minutes and Credentials.
8. Worked with CRCNA yearbook to keep all the updated information published.
9. Attended Clerk gatherings on zoom, to keep updated on latest synod decisions and staff changes.
10. Shared with Canadian Classical Clerks Agenda, minutes of classical meeting, surveys, and other shared concerns.
11. Prepared the arrangements for the Spring Meeting and the Agenda.

February 1, 2024

To the members of Classis Alberta South and Saskatchewan:

We have reviewed the Financial Statements for the year ended December 31, 2023. In conducting this review, we reviewed bank statements, CRA statements, select invoices, budget and general ledger details. We also interviewed the Treasurer responsible for maintaining the financial records.

It is our opinion that these financial statements are materially correct and fairly represent the financial status of the organization at December 31, 2023.



John Kolk

Member-Iron Springs CRC



Landen Stronks

Member-Iron Springs CRC

**CLASSIS ALBERTA SOUTH & SASKATCHEWAN  
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCHES**

**BALANCE SHEET**

December 31, 2023

<b>ASSETS</b>	<u><b>2023</b></u>	<u><b>2022</b></u>
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Bank Current Account (Chequing)	10,051.76	73,035.25
Term Deposit (Non-Redeemable)	62,418.79	62,418.79
Term Deposit (Non-Redeemable)		0.00
Term Deposit (Redeemable)		0.00
Common Share Account	644.34	411.20
Cash in Transit	31,544.60	28,595.12
GST Receivable	<u>638.01</u>	<u>959.83</u>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<u><b>105,297.50</b></u>	<u><b>165,420.19</b></u>
 <b>LIABILITIES</b>		
Withholding Tax Payable	0.00	0.00
E.I. / C.P.P. Tax Payable	0.00	0.00
GST Payable	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<u><b>0.00</b></u>	<u><b>0.00</b></u>
 <b>EQUITY</b>		
Classical General Fund Balance	165,420.19	217,974.89
Current Earnings	<u>-60,122.69</u>	<u>-52,554.70</u>
Total Capital (Equity)	<u>105,297.50</u>	<u>165,420.19</u>
<b>Total Liabilities and Equity</b>	<u><b>105,297.50</b></u>	<u><b>165,420.19</b></u>

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**CLASSIS ALBERTA SOUTH & SASKATCHEWAN  
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCHES**

**2023 INCOME & EXPENSE STATEMENT**

<b>INCOME</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
Classical Ministry Share	160,206.86	154,852.44
Interest & Other Income	233.14	1,315.21
Campus Ministry Donations	<b>Note # 1</b> 20,041.28	25,080.67
<b>Total income</b>	<b><u>180,481.28</u></b>	<b><u>181,248.32</u></b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Travelling Expenses	12,183.67	23,727.74
Telephone & Office	1,242.74	1,182.62
Catering Services	8,198.04	2,129.00
Professional Fees		0.00
Books & Supplies		0.00
Insurance	885.00	838.00
Interest & Service Charges	145.00	0.00
Honorarium	19,500.00	18,750.00
Conferences & Speakers	5,155.00	3,015.29
GST Exp.	1,153.77	1,476.12
Prayer Co-ordinator	0.00	0.00
Calvin Seminary		
Ambrose University	0.00	0.00
Knox College	CMLT	
CPE Clinical Pastoral Edu		
Youth Conferences & Speakers	0.00	0.00
Faith Formation	0.00	0.00
Classical Safe Church Ministry	0.00	0.00
Miscellaneous Expense	800.00	0.00
Medicine Hat Campus Ministry	20,000.00	20,000.00
Campus Ministry Expenses	<b>Note # 2</b> 161,340.75	152,684.25
<b>Expenses Total</b>	<b><u>230,603.97</u></b>	<b><u>223,803.02</u></b>
Qualified Donee's	<b>Note # 3</b> 10,000.00	10,000.00
<b>Qualified Donee's Total</b>	<b><u>10,000.00</u></b>	<b><u>10,000.00</u></b>
<b>Total Disbursements</b>	<b><u>240,603.97</u></b>	<b><u>233,803.02</u></b>
<b>Income or Loss</b>	<b><u>-60,122.69</u></b>	<b><u>-52,554.70</u></b>

**CLASSIS ALBERTA SOUTH & SASKATCHEWAN  
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCHES**

**(Notes to Financial Statements)**

**INCOME**

<b>University of Calgary Campus Ministry</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
Campus Ministry Classis Support	141,299.47	127,603.58
Campus Ministry Donations	10,160.03	14,850.17
Campus Ministry - Resonate Global	9,881.25	10,230.50
<b>Note # 1 Total Income</b>	<b><u>161,340.75</u></b>	<b><u>152,684.25</u></b>

**DISBURSEMENTS**

<b>University of Calgary Campus Ministry</b>		
Chaplain Salary / Housing Allowance / Benefits	107,546.87	103,406.67
Pension / C.P.P. / E.I.		
Leader Grants	30,207.00	25,470.64
Campus Ministry Programming	7,518.84	8,553.61
Conferences & Training	6,883.77	5,838.82
Campus Miscellaneous	1,099.99	0.00
Telephone & Office	1,030.99	1,242.40
Book Allowance	724.56	874.20
Mileage	2,099.65	3,483.03
Hospitality	3,229.08	3,814.88
Campus Committee Expense		0.00
Emerging/Student Leader Grants	1,000.00	0.00
<b>Note # 2 Total Disbursements</b>	<b><u>161,340.75</u></b>	<b><u>152,684.25</u></b>
<b>Income or Loss</b>	<b><u>0.00</u></b>	<b><u>0.00</u></b>

**Qualified Donee's**

CRWM Canada Salaam Project	10,000.00	10,000.00
<b>Note # 3 Disbursements</b>	<b><u>10,000.00</u></b>	<b><u>10,000.00</u></b>

# CLASSIS ALBERTA SOUTH & SASKATCHEWAN CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCHES

## Budgeted Expenses for 2023

	<u>Budget 2023</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>difference</u>
<b>1 Campus Ministry</b>			
Calgary Campus Ministry	139,797.00	141,299.47	1,502.47
Medicine Hat Campus Ministry	20,000.00	20,000.00	0.00
<b>2 Demomination</b>			
Stated Clerks Gathering ( January )	500.00	0.00	-500.00
National Gathering ( Spring )	3,950.00	5,155.00	1,205.00
Vibrant Congregations Discernment Process ( 2 )	1,000.00	0.00	-1,000.00
Youth Ministry Champions Retreat	1,000.00	0.00	-1,000.00
<b>3 Resonate Global Mission (Salaam II Project)</b>	10,000.00	10,000.00	0.00
Classis Support			
<b>4 CMLT</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00
Student Support			
<b>5 Classis Expenses</b>			
Classis Meetings - March & October	5,000.00	17,233.81	12,233.81
Classis Committee Expenses	1,000.00	1,242.74	242.74
Safe Church Coordinator	500.00		-500.00
Regional Pastor	1,000.00	3,147.90	2,147.90
Prayer Co-ordinator	0.00		0.00
Interest/GST/Insurance/Miscellaneous	0.00	2,983.77	2,983.77
<b>6 Honorariums</b>			
Regional Pastor	6,500.00	6,500.00	0.00
Classis Clerk	6,500.00	6,500.00	0.00
Classis Treasurer	6,500.00	6,500.00	0.00
<b>Total Classical Expense:</b>	<b><u>203,247.00</u></b>	<b><u>220,562.69</u></b>	<b><u>17,315.69</u></b>
income	160,440.00		
actual expenses	220,562.69		
amount spent above income	60,122.69		

Classis Ministerial Leadership Team (CMLT) Report for Classis Alberta South and Saskatchewan  
Written for Classis scheduled for March 8, 2024

Dear members of Classis ABSS,

I continue to grow in my knowledge and work as a member of the CMLT and working at filling the big shoes of my predecessors. I have been doing my best to stay up to date with our students and help them where I'm able. I've had some great conversations with our students and thankful for the work they are doing. I do find it a privilege to honor to serve on this team as I have benefited greatly from it when I served in previous Classis's.

Please continue to hold these people and their families in prayer.

The students:

Here are the people that the CMLT is attending to:

Brian Kuyper – a Doctorate of Ministry Student at Fuller Theological Seminary online and in person in California, while serving as pastor at First Taber CRC. He is in his 4th year. He has finished the in-person portion of the program with a couple of online classes to take this winter and Spring. Next year hopefully he will begin writing his project.

Joel Hamm – a pastor of a church in Hoosier, SK, and an elder at Medicine Hat CRC. Rev. George Koopmans, together with CMLT, have supported Pastor Hamm in a learning plan oriented toward Commissioned Pastor ordination which he finished this Spring. He plans on being examined at the Spring Classis meeting.

Paul Verhoef – a Doctorate of Ministry Student at Calvin Theological Seminary, while serving as the CRC Chaplain through our Calgary Campus Ministry. Paul is hard at work spending some time in Michigan for in-person courses.

Rich Braaksma -- a Doctorate of Ministry Student at Calvin Theological Seminary, while serving as the CRC Pastor at the Road Church and Resonate Global Mission.

Carolyn Wadsworth—working through the process: Master of Theological Studies through Tyndale University's online program started this winter. Her ultimate goal is to write. She currently serves in home missions working as a nurse in a pregnancy care clinic and as a consultant for pregnancy care clinics across the country.

Thanks be to God,

Rev. Rick Roeda CMLT of Classis ABSS

**Safe Church Coordinator Report**  
**Classis Southern Alberta/Saskatchewan**  
**March 2024 Classis**

Greetings to the churches of Classis ABSS!

As your Classis Safe Church coordinator, I have the opportunity to learn from others in this role from across Canada. This is very valuable as it provides information as to what others have experienced and how we can use that information to help us avoid the same situations and take good practices and incorporate them for our use. One thing I would encourage all churches to do is to ensure that your insurance is up to date and that your coverage is adequate. We have heard that some churches thought they were covered but in fact were not or did not have the appropriate amount of coverage. Working with your insurance company to find out what they require of your church would be a good way to make sure you are in alignment with them and prevent any gaps in coverage. Keeping proper records is also a very important part of this process. I would urge you to find out what your insurance company requires in this area as well.

The denomination has also hired a new person, Julia Rathbun to work alongside Amanda Benckhuysen to assist us in our efforts to make our churches safer places for all.

As always, I am available for any questions at the Safe Church email [safechurch@classisabss.ca](mailto:safechurch@classisabss.ca)

Your support, prayers and encouragement is appreciated.

Judy Heim

## FAITH FORMATION MINISTRIES REPORT – Classis Match 2024

This report highlights resources available to churches in their keeping their covenantal promise to members, seeking and growing as faithful hearers and doers of the word.

[The Faith Practices Project](#) offers opportunity to dive into spiritual practices or disciplines to transform living out one's faith. A [faith practice](#) habit can increase awareness in discerning the Holy Spirit's leading, work to cultivate Christ likeness and increase our love for God and one another. We acknowledge the faith practices of Bible reading, prayer, and church attendance. Others include service to others, remembering and wondering about the goodness of God, celebrating God and His gifts to us, practicing justice and mercy, practicing hospitality, being generous with God's gifts to us, gratitude for God's goodness and practicing Sabbath rest to tend to our souls. [View a sample](#) of the "Faith Practices" booklet available to congregations through Faith Alive.

Weekly [Faith Formation Tips](#) from Thrive can simply be cut and pasted into the church bulletin, added to your online church newsletter or your social media account. There is a new set available for the 2020-2024 church year but past years are also available. Special seasons of the church year are also highlighted and reflect on the faith practices from the Faith Practices Project, as noted above. These tips are sent to the churches on a weekly basis. Please check with your church admin if you would like to have them available to your church members.

For pastors and worship planners, resources are available to create [a worship service or series](#) on these faith practices: specifically listening, celebrating, prayer, wonder, remembering and service. There are also ideas for organizing intergenerational activities related to these same faith practices at the same link.

Finally, do you love to listen to podcasts while driving in your car, jogging trails or when out for a walk. The [Open to Wonder Podcast](#) explores faith and asks how faith is formed in our every day living. It is designed for pastors and ministry leaders find ways to encourage others to talk about faith and faith practices. Guests share stories of their own faith and faith practices. You can subscribe [here](#).

Thrive continues to offer a [monthly email](#) to congregations offering practical ideas for ministry, recommended resources, updates on upcoming event and more. More resources can be accessed at [Faith Formation | Faith Formation | Christian Reformed Church \(crcna.org\)](#).

If you or your congregation have faith formation challenges or are looking for ways to strengthen faith building in your congregations, [regional catalyzers](#) are available to provide support and coaching to equip and encourage.

God's continued blessings on you and your church ministries.

Blessings,  
Chris Vanderberg

## Medicine Hat Campus Ministry Committee Report November 17, 2023

On Thursday evenings Pastor George organizes a time of worship with the Medicine Hat College students. Committee members Michelle Witrow, Mike Wind, and Grace Miedema joined the group on November 17 at 5.30 for a light supper (wraps, corn chips, and day-old baked goods from a very thoughtful local bakery). The emerging ministry leader, an international business student, provided the music for singing some praise songs and Pastor George led a lively discussion on being salt and light in our world. The students shared various Bible passages as they shared their understanding of our calling. The group had younger and mature students, International students, and others who had grown up around Medicine Hat.

There was excitement about the courses of study they were on, as well as nervousness about getting the work done. Pastor George is available during the school days for a pastoral conversation, almost any time. Relationships, fears, homesickness, and many more issues deep in the hearts get shared in the Interfaith Centre.

A new program the chaplain is using to reach the unchurched is Alpha. Regular students are encouraged to bring seeking friends so they can grow and marvel at the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit together.

Pastor George expressed concern about losing contact with the students over the summer. He is hoping that support for the ministry will grow so he can devote himself to this mission full-time.

Regional Pastor Report  
Rev. Martin Boardman

The regional pastor is part of Pastor Church Resources, which is now part of *Thrive*. In *Thrive*, nine ministries have joined to equip and encourage congregations more than ever before.

In the past, a Regional Pastors conference was held every two years. This, of course, was interrupted by the pandemic. This past November, *Thrive* offered a new format for the conference.

Instead of just the Regional Pastors and Specialized Transition ministers gathering for a conference. The regional pastors became one track in a larger Pastors' conference that *Thrive* hosted.

"Strengthened for the Call" was held November 14-16 in Albuquerque, NM

This event offered CRC pastors and chaplains a safe place in which to gather for support, encouragement, learning, worship, and fellowship. Rev. Dr. Mary Hulst spoke on strength through spiritual habits, and integrated sessions explored various topics relevant to pastors, regional pastors, and chaplains.

The key verse for the event was "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." (1 Kings 19:7b) Participants were reminded of the importance of a nap and a snack (which is exactly what Elijah needed). With a focus on the well-being of pastors, we looked at the gift of sleep, the rhythms of a weekly Sabbath, and the need for self-care, especially in the areas of nutrition. A further reflection of 1 Kings 19 looked at our perspectives and purpose as we saw that we are all part of a larger story, that we have a purpose, and we are not alone, but we are replaceable.

Participants were left to consider and answer the following questions:

God invites me to cultivate the gift of rest by

God invites me to cultivate the gift of food by:

God invites me to consider the gift of perspective by:

God invites me to cultivate the gift of purpose by:

Good resources were shared through the regional pastor sessions, some of which will be useful in future visits with the pastors of our classes. I look forward to connecting with the pastors in classis. I would encourage the church councils to remind their pastors of the availability of the regional pastor for times when they have challenges or opportunities.





Dear Classis Leaders of the Christian Reformed Church:

Greetings in Christ's name. In our classis communication last fall, we mentioned Jesus' parable of the wheat kernel in John 12:24: *"Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds."* In this parable, Jesus was talking about himself, his death, and his resurrection, but it is also a call for church leaders to continually be in a posture of surrender and burial so that God can plant and cultivate. To that image, we would like to add Psalm 126:6: *"Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them."*

It is hard to imagine that in a few short months farmers will be planting in today's barren and frozen soil. Scattering seed is always an act of faith--that the soil will warm, the rain will fall, and the sun will shine. As leaders we also scatter seed--the seed of the gospel--on soil that often looks tough and unreceptive. Yet, the same God who brings spring after winter promises us he will nurture and grow the seed. May God give you hope in his harvest.

On behalf of the CRCNA and its agencies (ReFrame Ministries, Resonate Global Mission, Thrive, World Renew, and the justice and reconciliation ministries in Canada), we want to share a few updates with you at the beginning of 2024:

### **Bivocationality**

More and more pastors in the CRCNA have multiple sources of employment as a way to support themselves and enhance their ministries. In fact, many CRC pastors are working in two ministry vocations, sometimes called "covocationality" (for example, institutional chaplains serving as church planters). All indications suggest that this trend will increase in the future.

In its discussion of the report of the Bivocationality Task Force (Agenda for Synod 2023, p. 285-314), synod encouraged classical student funding committees *"to treat those who are in or anticipating bivocational or other nontraditional ministry arrangements in the same manner as those who are in or anticipating full-time arrangements"* (Acts of Synod 2023, p. 966). More information will be forthcoming about other synodical assignments related to the support of bivocational pastors this spring. If you haven't already started, please prioritize conversations with your bivocational pastors, including your student funding committees, as mentioned above.

### **Synod 2024**

The Office of General Secretary is giving time and attention to planning for Synod 2024. A number of suggestions have been received regarding making more time available for discernment and decision making on important issues (some of which were deferred from Synod 2023). With the oversight of the Council of Delegates and within the boundaries of our guiding documents, we will make every effort to balance expediency and diligence in Synod 2024. Your comments can be directed to [scottdevries@crcna.org](mailto:scottdevries@crcna.org). Don't forget the **March 15** deadline to submit overtures and communications for Synod 2024.

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Grand Rapids MI 49508-1407  
616-241-1691

3475 Mainway  
PO Box 5070 STN LCD I  
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905-336-2920

[crcna.org](http://crcna.org)

## Updates

- In fulfillment of Synod 2023's instruction to *"to develop resources and tools...to equip congregations for pastoral ministry with and to our LGBTQ+ members and neighbours"* (Acts of Synod 2023, p. 1023), the Office of General Secretary has posted [a video](#) and a letter to the classes and churches for their use and discernment. You can find these resources at [crcna.org/SexualityResources](https://crcna.org/SexualityResources). Please encourage churches to use this succinct and pastoral statement about our denomination's position on same sex sexual relationships along with the requested resources.
- Ministry Shares remain a vital aspect of our covenant relationship, enabling us to collectively advance God's kingdom. Whether it's supporting smaller congregations or spreading the gospel globally, these shares empower us to do God's work together. The pledge process for the 2024-2025 ministry year has begun. Please encourage churches in your classis to prayerfully discern what they can pledge, and to get their pledges in as soon as possible. For valuable resources, including videos and infographics, please visit [crcna.org/MinistryShares](https://crcna.org/MinistryShares). Jeff Bolt in the USA ([jbolt@crcna.org](mailto:jbolt@crcna.org)) or Roshani Morton in Canada ([rmorton@crcna.org](mailto:rmorton@crcna.org)) are also available and willing to join your classis meeting to discuss the significance and impact of this important program.
- Canadian ministry leaders are [invited to attend](#) "Stories & Strategies: Strengthening the CRC in Canada", a video conference that will be held on January 27, 2024 (11am-1pm ET / 8-10am PT). This will be a time to listen to your stories, share some stories that we have heard, and highlight resources that our CRC ministries have available for you.
- Stay tuned for additional items that will be shared with you and congregations in your area in the next few months. This includes a report from the Task Force on Church Order; updates to the Church Order, Manual of CRC Government, and official positions; and updates on other synodical tasks.

As we begin 2024, we are reminded that we do not make the seeds, nor do we make them grow. Through the Spirit's power, God calls us merely to plant and nourish the seeds (1 Cor 3:6), and then to trust him to make them grow. Planting is an act of faith. May the God of the harvest give you the strength to plant well in this new ministry year.

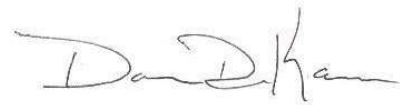
Your partners in ministry



Rev. Dr. Zachary King  
General Secretary



Rev. Al Postma  
Transitional Executive Director, Canada



Dan DeKam  
Director, US Ministry Operations

## Report to Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan of the Christian Reformed Church: Winter 2024

Greetings from The King's University! We are incredibly thankful for the growth that we experienced in our incoming class of students this past fall. We had an 11.5% increase in the number of new students this year compared to last year. This growth helped us to recover some of the enrolment decline we experienced in the latter stages of the pandemic and we are grateful for the 820 students who studied at King's this fall.

This past November, King's launched *40 Days of Prayer*, a special effort designed to encourage students and employees to recentre and reprioritize. Creating intentional time and place for personal and public prayer was central to this 40 day initiative, and there were several on-campus opportunities to pray with others. "It's a fundamental part of faith. It's one of the ways we commune with our Creator. When we gather as a community to pray for one another and believe in God's ability to do the impossible, anything is possible," says Cora-Lee Conway, Dean of Students. Prayer prompts were available, but the general focus for 40 Days of Prayer was to pray for members of King's community, our communities of Edmonton, Alberta, and Canada, and the world as a whole. "We can only plan and control so much, but our Christian faith is the DNA of everything we do — and it's rooted in that place of prayer," says Amanda Duenk, Spiritual Growth Coordinator.

Dr. Cassidy VanderSchee, Assistant Professor of Chemistry, was recently awarded research grants from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) for two separate projects. The \$152,500 NSERC grant was awarded for VanderSchee's research into metals present in the Athabasca oilsands. Athabasca is a major site for mining and oil extraction activity and during the extraction process, toxic substances are stored in tailings ponds until they can be remediated. The most common contaminants are naphthenic acids followed by metals such as vanadium. VanderSchee seeks to understand how these two substances interact and affect toxicity.

VanderSchee is also a co-applicant on a larger interdisciplinary research team which received a \$376,000 SSHRC grant. The team is identifying social determinants of lead poisoning in historical British colonial populations in the Caribbean. By studying both modern and historical populations, including British royal navy grave sites, they hope to determine whether there are correlations between social determinants such as age, sex, and ancestry, and lead exposure levels. VanderSchee's own role on the project is to determine the concentration of lead deposits in the bone. The data will be measured at the University of Alberta and then processed at King's campus. King's students are key to VanderSchee's research and seven students have already spent time in the lab creating samples, analyzing them using spectroscopic techniques, and processing the data. King's students Erin Pederson (4th-year Chemistry) and Rio Bouwers (5th-year Chemistry) had the opportunity to present their research at the 2023 Canadian Chemistry Conference and Exhibition in Vancouver this past June. "I couldn't do this by myself," says VanderSchee. "Research is done in teams. For students, it's a great chance to experience the research process. As a past King's student myself, doing research was what helped me decide my career path. I am excited to complete the circle and provide students with the same research opportunities I had access to."

This fall, the King's community was invited to enjoy public lectures hosted on-campus on the first Tuesday evening of each month. So far this year, Dr. Mark Sandle, Professor of History at King's presented *War. What is it good for?* in which he reflected on his research on the human experiences of WW2. Cheryl Whiskeyjack, executive director of the Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society in Edmonton, discussed how one can demonstrate allyship in an age of appropriation, pretendians, and social polarization. More lectures are planned for winter/spring 2024. If you are unable to attend the lectures in person, they are also available on Apple Podcasts and Spotify. More information can be found at [www.kingsu.ca/quandaries](http://www.kingsu.ca/quandaries).

We have an upcoming Open House on March 16, 2024. It's a perfect opportunity to discover the unique and highly recognized programs that set King's graduates apart. Take a tour of campus, talk with an admissions counsellor, and meet faculty and staff who are ready to answer your questions. If you won't be in Edmonton on the 16<sup>th</sup> to look around, we welcome visitors to campus at any time. Whether you are a prospective student, an alum who wants to see what's changed, or a supporter who is curious about what's happening on campus, you are always welcome. Contact [admissions@kingsu.ca](mailto:admissions@kingsu.ca) to arrange your visit.

Thank you for the continued prayers and support that we receive from the churches in Classis AB South/Saskatchewan. We are grateful for your continued partnership. So much of what we are doing with our students at The King's University is only possible with the continued support from our community.

In His service,

Melanie Humphreys, PhD  
President

January, 2024

## **Winter Classis Report**

### ***Greetings to our partners in ministry!***

On November 14, 2023, Regional Ministry Developer for Eastern Canada, Mark Vanderwees, opened up his inbox and read the following email:

*“Hey Mark; Just wanted to let you know that I had my first “cold call” from a person requesting assistance. The deacon training that you provided was very helpful. Based on the training, I compiled a list of questions, points, and resources to prepare for the call. Because of the training, the call went well and I was able to help. Thanks, Alan” (Classis Toronto Deacon)*

The training that Alan is referring to is the **“Helping Without Harming in Church Benevolence”** workshop that was newly developed this past fall, based on the book with a similar name written by Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert. Last year, Mark led this training in over 9 churches with approximately 139 attendees; mostly deacons, a few pastors, and even some congregation members!

Another workshop participant shared that she liked being able to identify if a situation was *relief* or *recovery* and she found comfort in being able to ask professionals for help during the initial crisis response. “While we looked at the section called ‘Building on Assets’, I loved looking at it from the ‘glass is half full’ perspective rather than our current habit of only focusing on the individual needs. The scenarios were very helpful and I liked collaborating with other deacons in the area to learn about the supports and resources available to us as churches. We would love to have Diaconal Ministries back to lead us in some other workshops, like the Deacon 101 and Developing Benevolence Guidelines.”



This is why we continue our work with deacons across Canada in the areas of [community engagement](#), service & [justice, benevolence](#), and [stewardship](#). We offer deacons practical and relevant training so they can love their churches and communities better. It is our sincere hope and desire that your church has been impacted by the work that we do.

If you are unfamiliar with who we are, you can read our [full history on our website](#). Believe it or not, our roots go back to the 1950s! In the early years, deacons formed local and regional “conferences” which met to share experiences and resources, develop workshops and training events, and find ways to assist each other and their congregations. In these early years, World Renew (CRWRC at this time) worked closely with diaconates on both sides of the border. Over the years, these conferences expanded and contracted. In 1998, some Canadian deacons along with representatives from Home Missions (now Resonate Global Mission) and CRWRC began dreaming about pooling their diaconal experiences, resources, and training materials into an “umbrella” organization which would oversee the training of deacons right across Canada. It was an exciting time and, after a few more years of discussions, the boards of the existing conferences jointly approved the formation of a new national in 2001: **Diaconal Ministries Canada was officially constituted!** Diaconal Ministries Canada is funded by a ministry share model that was agreed to by Canadian deacons in the 1960s and recommitted to in 2001. (Note: These are different from Denominational Ministry Shares and Classis Ministry Shares. Read more on our website about this [HERE](#).)

Another vital program of Diaconal Ministries Canada is our [NewGround program](#) (formerly called *Operation Manna*). **NewGround Sunday** is designated as the first Sunday in May each year: in 2024 it falls on **May 5th**. NewGround helps deacons and churches love their community through financial grants, coaching, and resourcing. ***We hope you'll reserve this date and support this ministry as it has impacted numerous communities across Canada over the past 35+ years.*** Check out our past and present Partner list [HERE](#).

If your church or deacons ever have any questions or concerns or need assistance in any way, they are encouraged to reach out to us - see our staff listing on the next page. Deacons are also encouraged to visit our [website](#) and start browsing our resources and tools there.

May God bless each one of you in your ongoing ministry!

Respectfully submitted,



**ron vanden brink**

National Director, Diaconal Ministries Canada

[rvandenbrink@crcna.org](mailto:rvandenbrink@crcna.org)

Encl (1)

## Diaconal Ministries' current Staff, Board, and Diaconal Coaches

### **Staff:**

Ron Vanden Brink, *National Director*; [rvandenbrink@crcna.org](mailto:rvandenbrink@crcna.org)

Chris Tollins, *Office Assistant*; [ctollins@crcna.org](mailto:ctollins@crcna.org)

Bea Vlieg, *Financial Assistant*; [bvlieg@crcna.org](mailto:bvlieg@crcna.org)

Rachel Vroege\*, *Regional Ministry Developer (Western Canada)*; [rvroege@crcna.org](mailto:rvroege@crcna.org)

Mark Vanderwees, *Regional Ministry Developer (Eastern Canada)*; [mvanderwees@crcna.org](mailto:mvanderwees@crcna.org)

Karla Winham, *NewGround Coordinator*; [kwinham@crcna.org](mailto:kwinham@crcna.org)

Kathrin Veenstra, *Fundraising Coordinator*; [kveenstra@crcna.org](mailto:kveenstra@crcna.org)

Erin Knight, *Communications Coordinator*; [eknight@crcna.org](mailto:eknight@crcna.org)

\*On sabbatical until April 1, 2024; please reach out to Ron Vandenbrink or your Classis Diaconal Coach

### **Board Members & Diaconal Coaches (by Classis):**

Classis	Diaconal Coach(es)	Board Member
Alberta North	Erika Repka; <a href="mailto:erika_nyland@hotmail.com">erika_nyland@hotmail.com</a> Marg Hoogland; <a href="mailto:marghoogland@gmail.com">marghoogland@gmail.com</a>	Jesse Edgington
Alberta South/Sask.	Jean DeBeer; <a href="mailto:jeandb3@gmail.com">jeandb3@gmail.com</a>	Grace Miedema
British Columbia NW	David Hornor; <a href="mailto:hornpipe2022@gmail.com">hornpipe2022@gmail.com</a>	Cindy Verbeek
British Columbia SE	Gary Veeneman; <a href="mailto:gtveeneman@shaw.ca">gtveeneman@shaw.ca</a>	Liz Tolcamp
Eastern Canada	Chris Smid (ON churches); <a href="mailto:smiddy_c@yahoo.ca">smiddy_c@yahoo.ca</a> Rene Wall (Maritimes); <a href="mailto:wallrm@hotmail.ca">wallrm@hotmail.ca</a>	Peter Van Harmelen (Chair)
Hamilton	Alicia Hamming Navarette; <a href="mailto:alicia.hamming@gmail.com">alicia.hamming@gmail.com</a>	Marcia Mantel
Huron	Fred Vander Sterre; <a href="mailto:fvandersterre@gmail.com">fvandersterre@gmail.com</a> Jane Vander Velden; <a href="mailto:janevandervelden5318@gmail.com">janevandervelden5318@gmail.com</a>	Mary Blydorp
Lake Superior	Teda Heerema; <a href="mailto:tedaheerema@gmail.com">tedaheerema@gmail.com</a>	Yvonne Schenk
Niagara	Mark Vanderwees; <a href="mailto:mvanderwees5@gmail.com">mvanderwees5@gmail.com</a>	<i>vacant</i>
Ontario Southwest	John Klein-Geltink; <a href="mailto:john.kleingeltink@gmail.com">john.kleingeltink@gmail.com</a> Anita Plat Kuiken; <a href="mailto:aplatkuiken@crcna.org">aplatkuiken@crcna.org</a>	Jeff Robinson
Quinte	Bill Groot-Nibbelink; <a href="mailto:bill.grootnibbelink@gmail.com">bill.grootnibbelink@gmail.com</a>	Rose Saller (Treasurer)
Toronto	Carol Sybenga; <a href="mailto:sybenga@rogers.com">sybenga@rogers.com</a>	Jeff Fernhout





# Annual Report about 2023

*to our*

## Supporting Churches & Friends

Adapting to the post-COVID 19 world marked the activities of Indigenous Christian Fellowship in 2023. While a few activities resumed inside ministry spaces, the sustained higher demands for hospitality and other services required staff and volunteers to respond creatively and graciously. For example, in the past the ministry would host 40 to 70 people for the Wednesday noon Soup and Bannock meal or the Saturday Family Breakfast. In 2023, average participation for these meals exceeded 100 persons, greatly surpassing the ministry's 'in-house' seating space, so serving beverages, snacks, and meals 'to go' continued.

A few interesting numbers about program services in 2023 include:

- Hospitality (coffee, tea, porridge and snacks) was provided almost 6,200 times on weekday mornings.
- Soup and bannock meals were enjoyed by 3,894 diners on Wednesdays including more than 700 deliveries to mobility challenged people.
- Family Breakfast meals were served to more than 5,300 on Saturday mornings; including almost 700 deliveries.
- Through the weekly Community Sharing Time held on Thursday afternoons, people were blessed with free clothing, shoes, small appliances, furniture and other household items.
- Volunteers continued to repair bikes; 59 were distributed to youth and 14 to adults. Youth were also provided with a helmet and a lock.
- Volunteers from Bread of Life Lutheran, Sonlight CRC, Christ Lutheran, Eastside United Church and the ICF community prepared more than 21,360 sandwiches for adding to the food bags distributed by Trinity Lutheran church.
- Christmas 2023 was marked by the invitation to community members to register for Christmas presents. People were invited to come to the ministry on Wednesday, December 21<sup>st</sup> to gather their presents. 169 gifts were given to members of more than 60 families. In addition to the presents, people were given generous food hampers.

A significant initiative in 2023 was the development of the ministry's Ceremonial Garden. The large house and garage in the lot adjacent to the ministry had been condemned and demolished. Beginning in early spring, work began to clean up debris and landscape the property for drainage. An 8' wall was built on the perimeter of the property connecting the ICF main building and the next door funeral home. Two passage gates and a larger 16' two piece gate were installed. Ben Ironstand painted a mural on the exterior of the north wall and Jamie Reynolds painted murals on the exterior southern walls. A fire place and 10 raised garden beds were installed. Indigenous perennial plants were planted including saskatoons, sour cherries, raspberries, strawberries and herbal plants. A large crowd attended the Celebration and Dedication of the Ceremonial Garden held on Friday, September 29<sup>th</sup>. In 2024, mural will be painted on the interior walls.

On behalf of the Council, staff and community of Indigenous Christian Fellowship, thank you for your continuing prayers and support!

Bert Adema, ICF Executive Director



# Photos of life at ICF in 2023



Ceremonial Garden Construction



Harry F. likes Marie's art work!



Council: Georgina, Bert, & Glenda



Ben Ironstand finishing north wall mural.



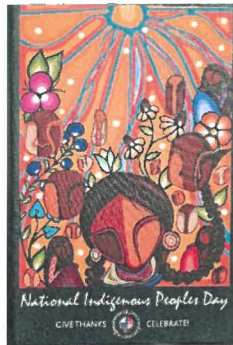
Ceremonial Garden Celebration



Setting up for Community Sharing Time – summer and winter!



Volunteers and staff.



National Indigenous Peoples Day 2023

*Everyone is invited to pray for the ministry of ICF. Financial support for ICF can be done through cheques mailed to the ministry (3131 Dewdney Avenue, Regina, SK S4T 0Y5 or by e-transfers sent to [support@icfregina.ca](mailto:support@icfregina.ca) (Please include your email address in the comment section!) Thank you for your prayers and support!*





## **The Ministry to Seafarers**

401 East Waterfront Rd.

Vancouver, BC, Canada, V6A 4G9

Phone: 604-253-4421

Email: [crcvanportchaplain@gmail.com](mailto:crcvanportchaplain@gmail.com)

[www.ministrytoseafarers.com](http://www.ministrytoseafarers.com)

### **CLASSIS REPORT: Spring 2024**

1. Yesterday we had a few groups of seafarers come from one ship that was here in the port for just one day - an MSC container vessel. On board were Ukrainians, Filipinos, Indonesians, Romanians, and more. One of the Ukrainian engineers, after shopping downtown, came back to spend a couple of hours relaxing at our centre. We chatted a fair bit, and he really enjoyed his time here. When he was ready to go and I (Gary) was preparing to transport him back to his ship, I offered him my hand. He responded by saying, "Where I come from, when we have had a special time and want to say goodbye, we do this" - and proceeded to give me a big hearty hug. I haven't had many hugs from seafarers; in fact, that might have been the first. It certainly gave an impression of his appreciation for our service.
2. Another great Christmas of gift giving, as we delivered more than 1500 gifts to ships at terminals and at anchorage. We now collaborate gift giving with Lighthouse Harbour Ministries, who operate seafarers' centres on the North Shore and at Fraser Surrey Docks. This helps to avoid duplication. Seafarers continue to be encouraged by the gifts - their joy is very obvious. Thanks to many churches and individuals for helping to make this special programme possible.



3. Ship traffic through the Port of Vancouver continues to be down. The last figure I read was that grain traffic was down 23.5% last year. Final stats are still pending from the Port Authority, but the traffic and cargo volume is definitely lower than previous years. This has meant fewer ship visits, but it has also allowed us to make longer visits and more return visits.

4. In that regard, our ship visit stats are as follows.
- a. I personally visited 458 ships in 2023, averaging about 38 visits per month. This was a decrease from 518 visits in 2022. The decrease is primarily due to 4 factors. First, some extra travels I made throughout the year, such as my trip to Manila last February. Second, labour issues, particularly the ILWU strike in July. The third factor has been the downturn in ship traffic. And fourthly, our number of ship visits increased significantly during the Covid season. My total visits in 2019, for example, were 463, so nearly the same as last year. By 2020 that number had jumped to 524 visits, and total visits by our partnership had increased by over 25% in 2020. Essentially, during Covid our focus was almost solely on ship visits and services on board ships.

Throughout this year I have also been focusing on making longer visits and more return visits when possible, in order to give more time for sharing and interaction with seafarers who want and need to chat. I have found this extremely rewarding, as it gives more opportunity for a seafarer to share, who might not immediately be as open.

- b. Total ship visits by all of us working in partnership in 2023 was 1,607, down from 1,778 the previous year – again for similar reasons. Some other years, by comparison:  
2019 – 1418 visits  
2020 – 1815 visits

Total visits to our centres:

2023 – 7,286 centre visits. There were 5,299 visits to the Roberts Bank Centre, and 1,987 visits to the Waterfront Centre. Compare this with previous years and you can see the impact of Covid, and slow but steady increases since then:

2022 – 5262 total centre visits  
2020 – 4,001  
2019 – 13,718  
2028 – 15,034

- c. Finally, in terms of transportation, in 2023 we gave a total of 1,034 rides to seafarers: 537 at our Waterfront Centre, 462 at Roberts Bank, and 35 from Port Moody. In previous years:  
2022 – 883 total rides  
2020 – 825 total rides  
2019 – 3,455 total rides

5. Gary's sabbatical plans were adjusted slightly, but still happening. He will be off Jan. 25 – March 20 for the initial 2 months. Then he plans to be away again for more travels through the bulk of June.

6. In Gary's absence, the Lord has provided a great intern – Ashu Biswal. Ashu is finishing his final course at Regent College and has served as intern at First CRC Vancouver. He is being oriented through January and will serve as intern in Gary's absence.

Respectfully submitted,

John Bandstra, Board Chair

Gary Roosma, Chaplain



# Canadian Church Relations Liaison Report



## A New Degree in Mental Health Counseling

The World Health Organization noted that approximately 450 million people around the globe struggle with mental health issues. In fact, it is now the leading cause of disability worldwide. Calvin Theological Seminary's new Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (MCMHC) is a direct response to this growing need. Launched in September 2023, the professional and theologically grounded degree offers coursework in religious and theological foundations, clinical counseling, and clinical practice. Graduates from the program might consider using their knowledge and gifts to serve as a clinical mental health therapist, a clinical mental health counselor, an addiction counselor, a behavior counselor, or in other mental health roles.

Students who enroll in the MCMHC program will be able to complete the 60 credit hours required for the degree by studying on-campus, online, or a combination of the two. The clinical practice portion of the program includes three formative contextual learning opportunities to gain insights, mentoring, and experience in the field.

Dr. Danjuma Gibson, professor of pastoral theology and director of the new program notes, "This degree program is committed to preparing students who feel called to aid and assist the millions of people around the world who suffer from a variety of mental illnesses."





## **Canadian Tuition Parity**

Where can your Canadian loonie stretch to become \$1.34 or more? At Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS)! Through a strategic collaboration with supporters, CTS is now able to accept tuition dollars paid in Canadian funds (CAD) “on par” with the American dollar (USD)!

Parity is a potential game changer for Canadian students, and is a clear indication of the seminary’s commitment to the church in Canada. Referring to the new parity initiative, Canadian student David Vandokkumburg said, “For my wife and I, this feels like a significant burden lifted. Each of our careers require masters-level studies, and so to create a solution that will reduce the total amount of debt we face is a huge relief.”

The Canadian tuition parity initiative, coupled with the \$1.5 million in scholarships that CTS provides to students each year, means that over 90% of CTS students now graduate without having to take on any additional debt while in seminary.



## **Hearts Exchanged**

With the Truth and Reconciliation commission's report, and with the confirmation of hundreds of unmarked graves on the grounds of former residential schools in Canada, we've all been reminded of our calling to be ambassadors of reconciliation between Indigenous peoples and the rest of us who call Canada home.

To that end, Calvin Seminary has been working with Mike Hogeterp (former Director, Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue), Adrian Jacobs (Senior Leader for Indigenous Justice and Reconciliation in the CRC in Canada), and Cindy Stover (Justice Mobilizer for the CRC in Canada) to offer a lifelong learning course at Calvin Seminary. The mini three-week course, Truth, Reconciliation, and Exchanging Hearts: A Canadian Model, will be offered in the summer of 2024 as a continuing education opportunity for pastors and other interested leaders.

Watch for more details to follow soon!

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## **Empower: An Apprenticeship Model for Ministry Preparation**

The best way to become equipped for vocational ministry is through taking courses at a seminary, right? Sometimes. But in other cases, an apprenticeship model fits an individual’s life situation and ministry goals better.

Empower is a new path that Calvin Seminary has developed as an option for those pursuing a Master of Arts in Christian Leadership (MACL). Rather than taking courses to earn their degree, students work with a team of three mentors — faculty, vocational, and personal — to develop competencies for ministry. The team coaches the student through a designed learning path, taking into account the student’s prior experience, individual strengths and growth areas, ministry context, vocational goals, and more.

Check out more at [www.calvinseminary.edu/empower!](http://www.calvinseminary.edu/empower!)

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## **I Want to Serve You!**

From my home office just east of Peterborough, ON, it’s my privilege to continue strengthening partnerships between CTS and local churches, pastors, and ministries across Canada. Let me know how I can serve you!

Pastor Shawn Brix  
Canadian Church Relations Liaison,  
Calvin Theological Seminary  
srb08@calvinseminary.edu  
705-875-3566



# Winter Classis Report 2024

January 8, 2024

## Greetings from Redeemer University!

As the first semester of the 2023-24 academic year is now complete, there is so much to be thankful for. God has continued to be faithful! Campus visits, concerts and external events have strengthened our community presence and allowed many the opportunity to visit us and see first-hand the wonderful things God is doing in and through Redeemer University.

## Enrollment

Redeemer currently has 1052 students enrolled, including 553 students living on campus—a record number. Redeemer campus continues to be a place of spiritual discipleship and formation for so many students.

## Appointment of VP Strategic Initiatives

Redeemer recently welcomed Heidi de Vries '05 on staff as legal counsel and vice president of strategic initiatives. Heidi was recognized for her accomplishments in 2022 as the recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Award. She brings over a decade of legal and strategic leadership experience from her time in municipal government administration and will play a key role in the development of Redeemer's next strategic plan.

## Emerging Public Intellectual Award

The Albert M. Wolters Centre for Christian Scholarship recently selected Dr. Felipe do Vale to receive the 2023 Emerging Public Intellectual Award. The award is sponsored by several major Christian institutions, including Redeemer, and is intended to promote and encourage excellence in Christian scholarship by supporting emerging academics working at Christian colleges and universities who speak out of their Christian perspective to make substantive, credible contributions



for big public questions. Currently, do Vale's work explores what it means to be human and ordering our lives around our love for God. The centre will present the 2023 award to do Vale at the World and Our Calling lecture on January 24, 2024.

## Youth Conference Partnership

Looking ahead, Redeemer is excited to host the Gospel Coalition Canada's first-ever youth Conference, The Light Has Come, taking place June 7-8, 2024. It is our prayer that hundreds of youth will re-encounter Jesus, experience his unconditional love and be reminded of who they are in Christ.

The student experience at Redeemer is enhanced by the support of the Christian Reformed Church. You play a critical role in strengthening and increasing Redeemer's ability to prepare the next generation of Christian leaders through higher education that is rooted in the Reformed Christian tradition. Each and every day, your financial and prayerful support is felt by all those who come onto campus. For this, we are exceedingly grateful. I pray that God continues to bless the CRC as it seeks to diligently participate in Christ's redeeming work.

In Christ,



David Zietsma, PhD  
President, Redeemer University



# Thrive

## Classis Alberta South/Sask Playlist

Liz Tolkamp, Regional Connector

Winter 2024

### Who is Thrive and what do we do?

Thrive launched in July 2023. We are now one of four agencies of the CRCNA. If you are curious to know more about each agency and its role within the CRCNA, this recent article in the Banner explains the different agencies and how they can support you and your ministry. **Who We Are and What We Do**. To learn more about Thrive, visit our website [www.crcna.org/thrive](http://www.crcna.org/thrive) and subscribe to our newsletter (follow the link located on the web page banner).

### What songs shall we sing?

Recently, Katie Roelofs, worship specialist for Thrive, had the privilege of leading a team of worship leaders, pastors and theologians that vetted the CCLI Top 100 worship songs for 2024. The result is a document that will help your church make wise decisions from a distinctively Reformed lens about what you invite your congregation to sing each week in worship. **There's a lot to unpack here**, but we hope that you take the time to give it a read - especially if you serve a church as pastor, worship ministry director or coordinator, or serve on a worship team.

### Wondering how to navigate challenging issues?

Built around listening circles, spiritual disciplines, and good decision-making processes, Next Steps will help you and your church clarify core issues, generate trust, and honor God, as you engage challenging decisions or controversial issues. Next Steps is adaptable enough to help you with whatever stage you're at with these issues: learning about them, discerning or deciding how to proceed, or announcing decisions and finding a way now to live together. **Click here for more information** and/or to schedule a conversation to discuss whether and how Next Steps might fit your church.

### Looking for a new pastor?

There are a number of resources available for churches in search of a pastor and Thrive is here to assist your church as you navigate the process. This article, **Looking for a New Pastor**, offers perspective on the journey and resources as you travel it.

### Nurturing Belonging; Hospitality, Theology and Disability

This past fall Thrive hosted an online conference focused on disability advocacy. The event, **Nurturing Belonging: Hospitality, Theology and Disability**, is helpful for all church leaders, regardless of whether or not you consider yourself a disability advocate. The training covered theological and practical content that will help your church be a place of healing and belonging for people with disabilities. **The recordings** are now available and can be viewed altogether or one speaker or panel at a time.



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