

## **Regulations of Classis Niagara of the Canadian Reformed Churches**

### ***Article 1: Region***

The churches of Attercliffe, Bluebell (PA), Dunnville, Grassie, Lincoln, Smithville and Tintern belong to the classical district of Niagara.

### ***Article 2: Delegation***

Each church shall delegate a minister or an elder, or, in the absence of a minister, two elders (Article 44, C.O.). In the case of small churches, a deacon may also be delegated (Article 39 C.O.).

### ***Article 3: Meetings***

a) A classis shall be convened at least once in three months, unless the convening church, in consultation with the neighbouring church, concludes that no matters have been sent in by the churches which would warrant the convening of a classis (Article 44, C.O.).

b) If one or more churches deem it necessary that the next classis be convened earlier, or at the most, fourteen days later than was determined by the last classis, the convening church is obliged to accede to such a request, if made by at least two churches.

c) Classis is open to all visiting church members. If classis decides to deal with a certain matter in closed session, only office bearers within the classical district are allowed to attend, unless a classis rules otherwise.

### ***Article 4: Convening Church***

One of the churches (in alphabetical order) shall be appointed to convene the next classis. It is the duty of the convening church to:

a) send the churches a notice of convocation seven weeks prior to the date of classis, requesting them to submit matters for the agenda to the convening church five weeks prior to the date of classis, and to announce the date of classis to their congregations as soon as possible;

b) 1. Draw up a provisional agenda, of which three copies shall be sent to each church.

2. Ensure that those who submit reports and proposals shall submit sufficient copies for every office bearer, but, as to appeals, only one shall be sent out for each delegate. All reports, appeals and proposals shall be submitted four weeks prior to the date of classis. Copies received by the convening church on a later date shall be sent to the churches as soon as possible.
3. Include in the provisional agenda, in case of an examination by classis, the text of the sermon and also the Scripture passages for examination in Old and New Testament exegesis;
  - c) notify Synodical Deputies, if their attendance is required by the Church Order for a certain matter on the agenda (Articles 5. A. 1. B, 11, 71, C.O.);
  - d) examine the credentials of the delegates before the constitution of classis;
  - e) prepare in advance an attendance list, in alphabetical order of the churches, for the signatures of the delegates;
  - f) add to the letter of convocation a request that the churches inform the host church whether lodging is needed for their delegates.

## ***Article 5: Appeals***

### 1. Contents & Admissibility of an Appeal

a) Article 31 of the Church Order states: “If anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to the major assembly; and whatever may be agreed upon by majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proven to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order.”

b) Such an appeal must be presented to classis in writing. In formulating his appeal, an appellant is free to seek assistance from any third party he wishes, including his own consistory/council. To be declared admissible, the appeal must contain at least the following elements:

1. A rendition of the decision(s) of the consistory/council that has given rise to the complaint.
2. The complaint(s) raised by the appellant and the response of the consistory/council to this complaint(s).
3. An explanation of the complaint(s) of the appellant, with grounds and (if applicable) with evidence.
4. A clear request for classis to judge that the appellant has been wronged in a particular decision(s) of the consistory/council.

c) An appeal is not admissible if:

1. The matter is not finished in the minor assembly (CO 30).
2. The appellant has not notified his consistory of his appeal to classis and supplied his consistory with a copy thereof by the same cut-off date as classis submissions.
3. The appeal has not been submitted to the convening church by four weeks prior to the

convening of classis.

4. The appellant is no longer a member of a Canadian/American Reformed Church or one of its sister churches, unless the appeal is a complaint against the decision of consistory/council which resulted in the appellant's excommunication.

d) Exceptions to the above need to be clearly explained in the appellant's submission and will remain subject to the judgment of classis.

## 2. Dealing with an Appeal

a) It is the appellant's responsibility to ensure that all relevant materials (including any correspondence from consistory/council or other ecclesiastical assemblies) have been submitted along with the appeal. Lack of necessary information may lead to a denial of the appeal.

b) The consistory/council involved in the appeal will receive opportunity to indicate if, in their view, the appeal does not contain all the relevant information for classis to arrive at a proper judgment. The consistory shall be specific in identifying the missing information. Classis may decide that the appeal cannot be admitted until the missing information is supplied by the appellant (at a subsequent classis).

c) Classis shall judge the appeal based on the information contained in the appeal. Classis may seek clarification of certain information from the delegates of the consistory/council against whose decision the appeal is launched but those delegates shall not submit new information. As a rule, those delegates shall refrain from addressing the appeal unless asked by classis to do so.

d) The decision of classis must contain the following elements:

1. A rendition of the decision(s) of the consistory/council that has given rise to the appeal.
2. A summary of the complaint of the appellant
3. A summary of the answer of the consistory to these objections.
4. Precisely formulated considerations on which the decision of classis rests.
5. A clear judgment on the appeal.

## ***Article 6: Officers***

Each classis shall appoint the following officers:

1. A chairman who presides over the meeting, chosen from the ministers by rotation (Articles 35, 44, C..O);
2. A vice chairman, who replaces the chairman when necessary, and writes the Press Release;
3. A clerk, who writes the Acts, takes care of correspondence, files all documents and sends them to the church taking care of the classical archives. He shall also send one copy of the Acts of Classis to the churches.

## **Article 7: Agenda**

Items on the agenda shall ordinarily appear in the following order:

1. Opening on behalf of the convening church
2. Report of the examination of the credentials by the delegates of the convening church (Article 32, C.O.)
3. Constitution of classis
4. Appointment of officers
5. Adoption of the agenda
6. Question period ad Article 44, C.O.
7. Proposals from the churches (Article 33, C.O.)
8. Correspondence
9. Reports
10. Appointments
  - a) Convening church for the next classis
  - b) Date of the next classis
  - c) Suggested officers for the next classis
  - d) committees
  - e) delegates to the Regional Synod (at the last classis before this Synod) (Article 44, C.O.)
11. Inviting Fraternal delegates and observers to the next classis
12. Personal question period
13. Censure according to Article 34, C.O.
14. Adoption of the Acts
15. Approval of the Pres Release
16. Closing

Note: Examinations have priority in the order of items on the agenda.

## **Article 8: Motions**

All motions shall be duly seconded and submitted in writing when requested.

## **Article 9: Appointments**

a) Treasurer

1. The treasurer is required to propose to the September classis a certain amount per communicant member per year, as much as is necessary to reimburse the expected expenses.
2. He shall reimburse expenses incurred by the delegates, the convening church, classical committees and church visitors All such claims must be in writing, and must be signed. Other expenses shall be reimbursed only by the decision of classis.
3. Compensation of lost wages shall be made by the delegating assembly (e.g. classis to regional synod).
4. At each September classis, the treasurer shall submit a written statement of receipts and reimbursements of the previous year, and also a list of total expenses for each classis and of church visits.

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5. After the September classis, the treasurer is required to send an invoice to each church of Classis Niagara stating

- a) the total amount of the classical assessment for classical expenses;
- b) the time period which the classical assessment covers;
- c) the dates on which the various instalments are due; and,
- d) the address to which payments should be sent.

b) A church for auditing the books of the treasurer

A written report on the audit of the books shall be given at each September classis, by the church of which the treasurer is a member.

c) A church for taking care of the archives

The following documents shall be kept in the archives:

1. The Acts of General and Regional Synods;
2. The Acts of Classis;
3. The Form of Subscription, signed by all the ministers within the classical district;
4. The reports of all the church visits;
5. All incoming correspondence and copies of outgoing correspondence; and
6. A conveniently arranged index of matters present.

It is the task of this church to record any change to the Regulations, and make updated copies available to the churches.

d) A church to inspect the classical archives

A written report shall be given at each September classis by the nearest church.

e) Church visitors

It is the duty of the church visitors to visit each church once every year, and to report in writing to classis their findings and actions. They shall not make public in their report difficulties which could be solved, noting only the fact that certain difficulties were resolved.

f) A committee for the arranging of examinations

g) Examiners (Articles 4, 5 C.O.)

It is the duty of the examiners, when they give the assignments to the examinees, also to supply the convening church with the text for the sermon proposal, and the Scripture passages for the examinations in Old and New Testament exegesis.

The following time table shall be kept for the examinations of candidates for the ministry:

Preparatory examination

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1. Sermon proposal        | no time limit                                     |
| 2. Exegesis Old Testament | 25 minutes for examiner; 10 minutes for delegates |
| 3. Exegesis New testament | 25 minutes for examiner; 10 minutes for delegates |

Peremptory examination

- |                    |               |
|--------------------|---------------|
| 1. Sermon proposal | no time limit |
|--------------------|---------------|

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2. Exegesis Old Testament	25 minutes for examiner; 10 minutes for delegates
3. Exegesis New testament	25 minutes for examiner; 10 minutes for delegates
4. Doctrines and Creeds	25 minutes for examiner; 10 minutes for delegates
5. Church History	20 minutes for examiners; 5 minutes for delegates
6. Knowledge of the contents of Holy Scripture	15 minutes for examiner; 5 minutes for delegates
7. Ethics	15 minutes for examiner; 5 minutes for delegates
8. Diaconiology	15 minutes for examiner; 5 minutes for delegates
9. Church Polity	15 minutes for examiner; 5 minutes for delegates

The candidates to be examined shall submit copies of the sermon proposal to the examinees, the Deputies of Regional Synod, and the delegates of each local consistory, two weeks prior to the examination.

The following time table shall be kept for the examination of students who desire to speak an edifying word (Article 21, C.O.):

1. Sermon proposal	no time limit
2. Doctrines and Creeds	25 minutes for examiner; 10 minutes for delegates

h) A church to administer the Fund for Needy Churches

1. The administrating church shall appoint a committee of at least three for the practical administration of the Fund.

2. Churches requesting assistance are to apply to the committee, stating the reasons for their request.

3. Needy churches are to seek concurrence from classis via the Fund, before committing to significant expenditures, such as are usually associated with the calling of a minister, or the acquisition of buildings, since such expenditures can be expected to affect the assessment.

4. With the application, the needy church shall submit to the committee their financial statement and budget, including the amount of support needed.

5. The administrating church shall serve classis with advice, submitting all the necessary information.

6. The administrating church shall send a quarterly invoice to each church of Classis Niagara, stating:

- a) the total amount of the classical assessment for Needy Churches;
- b) the time period which this classical assessment covers;
- c) the dates on which the various instalments are due; and,
- d) the address to which payments should be sent.

8. Annually, the administrating church shall arrange for an independent audit of the financial records of the Fund, and submit the report to classis.

### ***Article 10: Classis Contracta***

Approbation of calls of ministers, approval of second calls, and issuing of certificates of release (Articles 4,5 and 9, C.O.) Can be done by a Classis Contracta, in the case that the set date for the next regular classis is inconvenient.

A church requesting the Classis Contracta shall convene it. The two neighbouring consistories shall be required to send delegates, and the other churches shall be invited to send delegates. The convening church shall extend this invitation at least three weeks prior to the date set for this Classis Contracta. The classical treasurer shall cover the expenses of such a Classis Contracta.

***Article 11: Changing regulations***

A classis can only change these regulations when the consistories have had the opportunity to discuss the proposed changes.

Adopted: March 19, 2003

Amended: March 21, 2012