

ORIENTATION PAGE FOR DELEGATES TO CLASSIS BCNW

Welcome to our classis meeting! Whether you are an experienced or a first-time delegate, please familiarize yourself with this orientation page.

Be sure to check out the “Meetings” tab on the Classis BCNW website, www.classisbcnw.ca, for classis meeting resources (some of which are mentioned below).

Classis

A classis is a group of churches within a geographical area that comes together to seek, discern, and submit to God's will, offer one another mutual support and accountability, find ways to live out a collective calling in the region, and allow for a healthy and sustained connection to the wider denomination. There are 49 classes in the CRC: 11 in Canada, 37 in the United States, and one with congregations on both sides of the border.

A classis is a major assembly that has the authority to deal with matters that concern its churches in common and its decisions are binding on the churches in its region. The classis has the same authority over the council as the synod has over the classis. Classis BCNW consists of two delegates from each member congregation – normally a pastor and either an elder or a deacon. (In the CRCNA classes normally consist of three delegates from each member congregation: a pastor, an elder, and a deacon. For reasons of distance, Classis BCNW has its member churches send two delegates.)

The executive of classis consists of a president, vice-president, recording secretary, and the stated clerk. The executive rotates among the pastors of member churches and is appointed for each meeting by the Classis Ministries Interim Committee (CMIC) prior to the meeting of classis.

Duration of Classis Meetings

Classis meets twice a year: the first Tuesday and Wednesday of March, and the first Tuesday and Wednesday of October. (Tuesday: 1:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.; Wednesday: 8:30 a.m. to whenever we are done – usually around mid-day or early afternoon.) Ordinarily a workshop of some kind is held on the Tuesday evening.

The Classis Registration Form

All delegates are required to complete a Classis Registration form (available online on our classis website, <https://www.classisbcnw.ca/meeting/classis-registration-form.cfm>). This form will collect lodging, meal, and transportation information. If you are billeted by a member of the host church, be sure to advise your host of any food allergies you may have.

If you choose to use a hotel/motel, reimbursement is not supplied. You will have to seek reimbursement from your home church. If classis puts you in a hotel room because not enough billets were found, classis will then cover the hotel costs. In case of exceptional or reasonable circumstances a lodging expense may be approved by classis.

What to Expect at a Classis Meeting

- First time delegates are to sign the Covenant for Office Bearers.
- The Classis Agenda will, ordinarily, be in the hands of church councils one month prior to the

actual meeting date of classis. It may also be found on our classis website.

- Delegates may be requested to serve in the following capacities:
 - Prayer: for the ministries of classis, or for the concerns of classis or individuals.
 - Pre-advice Committee: Pre-advice committees review expenses, overtures, and credentials and come with recommendations regarding the same to the floor of classis. From time to time an overture of such significance may be forwarded to classis that it will require an advisory panel to meet ahead of the actual meeting of classis. For this and other reasons it is beneficial for the stated clerk and the CMIC to know who will be delegates well ahead of time.
- Though there is a degree of flexibility, classis abides by its own *Rules of Procedure (ROP)* and the rules of the *CRCNA Church Order* in conducting its meetings. The *Classis Rules of Procedure* can be found on our classis website. *Church Order* is determined by synod and is held in covenant by all Christian Reformed Churches.

What Classis Expects of its Delegates

- Be on time for all sessions of classis. Remain at classis until the meeting is formally adjourned. Delegates need to inform the chair or stated clerk if you must leave early, and give good reason to be excused. Dress code is business casual.
 - Thoroughly familiarize yourself with the classis agenda. The assumption is that the agenda has been discussed at the delegates' local council meeting.
 - Listen carefully to the discussions and deliberations and be prepared to make contribution with words of advice, encouragement and/or questions.
 - Delegates are expected to share the thoughts of their council on any particular agenda item but are not obligated to vote according to their council's wishes. Classis is a *deliberative* body and the freedom needs to remain for delegates to vote on the basis of the best information or perspective presented at classis.
 - Refrain from speaking until the chair acknowledges your turn to speak. The delegates privilege of the floor is at the discretion of the chairman. A delegate may speak one to three times on any particular agenda item but no more than that. Do not repeat comments or observations that have already been shared.
 - Be aware that classis is a deliberative body and may make decisions from time to time that you do not necessarily agree with. Strong objection to a decision of classis may be voiced by stating your objection. If you wish to have your objection recorded, you will have to submit a written statement (within 24 hours) indicating your objection and reason(s) why.
 - Report to your church council the decisions made at classis.
- **Overtures**
 - An overture is a request for action made by an assembly to a higher assembly, or by an individual to their council.
 - A council may overture classis. A classis may overture synod. Individual members of churches may only overture a classis or synod after first overturing their council and respective classis. A council may only overture synod after first overturing classis. Only when overtures are not acceded to, do individuals, councils, and classis appeal by overturing a higher assembly.
 - Guidelines for the formatting & presentation of overtures to classis may be found in Appendix 1 of the Classis Rules of Procedure (<https://www.classisbcnw.ca/meeting/meeting-documents.cfm>).