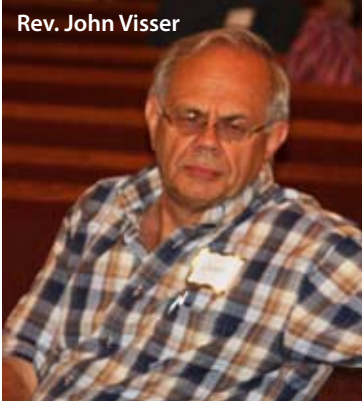


NEWS

Belleville Church Granted Stay on Suspending Pastor

Rev. John Visser



GAYLA R. POSTMA

Classis Quinte (a regional group of churches) voted to suspend Rev. John Visser, pastor of Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in Belleville, Ontario. But the church applied to the denomination's Board of Trustees for a stay of that action while it appeals that decision to Synod 2012. On Oct. 1 the

stay was granted. (The board acts on behalf of synod [the church's annual leadership meeting] when it is not in session.)

The classis is also appointing an accredited independent assessment team to evaluate the policies and practices of Maranatha's healing ministry.

It is Maranatha's healing ministry that is at the heart of the dispute. Members concerned about the healing ministry raised several issues, including lack of confidentiality (see *Banner*, October 2011).

A team of church members primarily from outside the classis assessed the ministry and reported to classis that Visser was guilty of breaking confidentiality and abuse of office, which are grounds for deposition in the CRC.

Also at stake is the possibility that the classis and the denomination could be named in potential future lawsuits filed against Maranatha.

Following the September 13 classis meeting, Rev. John Suk, pastor of Cobourg CRC, said, "This is hard. It was done prayerfully."

Of the classis decision, Visser said, "Obviously I'm disappointed but I have confidence in the appeal process that the issues at stake will be clarified."

The appeal will go through the denomination's Judicial Code process. The Judicial Code is part of the Church Order of the CRC to ensure just treatment of those involved in judgments and decisions of the church.

—Gayla R. Postma

Structure Review Underway

The Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture of the Christian Reformed Church's administrative work has begun its work.

Synod 2011 (the church's annual leadership meeting) instructed executive director Rev. Joel Boot to convene the task force following last spring's resignations of the denomination's two top executives.

The task force includes Boot, Rev. Scott Greenway, and Kathy Vandergrift (from the Board of Trustees); Rev. Jul Medenblik, president of Calvin Theological Seminary; Ida Mutoigo, director of CRWRC-Canada; Jane Vander Haagen, Colin Watson, Terry Vander Aa, Rev. Joel DeBoer, and Peter Meerveld, a consultant who reviewed the structure and culture of the denomination's administration for the Board of Trustees earlier this year.

The task force has convened listening events in the denomination's offices in Grand Rapids, Mich.; Palos Heights, Ill.; and Burlington, Ontario, allowing task force members to hear the concerns of those working in that culture.

Anthony Diekema, retired president of Calvin College and now a consultant, spoke about the structure at a dinner attended by senior directors and board members of all the agencies.

Diekema, who spoke at a similar event 11 years ago, said that while concerns about the structure have not disappeared, he felt the situation was greatly improved.

He proposed a moratorium on discussions of structure, urging instead an intensive analysis of the culture. "Structure for too long has been a decoy," he said. "It's time to go after the ducks—kingdom culture and servant leadership. . . . The structure is flexible enough."

The Board of Trustees also set aside four hours for a discussion of structure, including presentations by Rev. Peter Borgdorff, James Jones, Andrew Ryskamp, and Rev. William Veenstra. —Gayla R. Postma

EPA Funds 'World's Most Reformed' Watershed

[Plaster Creek] "must be the most Reformed watershed in the world," said Calvin College biology professor David Warners, after tallying the numerous Reformed institutions located along the 26-mile waterway in Grand Rapids, Mich. "But the watershed was unfit for human contact. . . . How could you not do something?"

Plaster Creek Stewards formed in 2006, bringing together Calvin College, the Christian Reformed Church in North America's U.S. denominational building, the West Michigan Environmental Action Council, and a growing number of churches.

Now that group has received a \$58,500 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



Andrea Lubberts, Victoria Proctor, and Andy Ryskamp examine macro-invertebrates in Plaster Creek.

that will allow them to increase their educational outreach, primarily to schools and churches located within the watershed.

Warners said, "If any faith should affect the way we [care for creation], it is the Reformed faith. This is more than an academic pursuit; it gets to our core." 🌱

—Noah J.K. Kruijs