



Vanastra Community Christian Reformed Church Profile

50 5th Avenue Vanastra, ON N0M 1L0

1989-present

Church Information

Classical Church Counsellor: Tim Keep

Search Committee Contacts: Jake Dejong, Rob Dekens, and Karen Wynja

vanastraccrcsearchcommittee@gmail.com

Church Profile

Vanastra is a quiet village nestled in the heart of Huron County, surrounded by picturesque farmland and close to several small communities. It is conveniently located just a short drive from the shores of Lake Huron, known for its scenic beaches and outdoor activities.

Originally established as an army base, Vanastra is now home to roughly 625 residents and forms part of Huron County. Vanastra is part of the municipality of Huron East which has a population of about 7,500. The village offers a variety of amenities, including two churches, a recreation centre with an indoor pool, a ball diamond, a curling club, and several industrial businesses.

Residents have access to a range of nearby educational options, including public, Catholic, and Christian elementary and secondary schools. The nearest Christian high school is accessible by bus and located approximately one hour away in London, Ontario. Healthcare services are easily accessible, with two hospitals located within a 10-minute drive, and larger hospitals in urban centres available within about 50 minutes.

To learn more, visit:

www.huroneast.com

www.huroncounty.ca

Vanastra Community CRC is prayerfully seeking a full-time (non–bi-vocational) Lead Pastor, male or female, to serve a small congregation in a rural setting. The Pastor will collaborate with a part-time office administrator, clerk, and custodian to support the life and ministry of the church.

In partnership with the Worship Committee, the Pastor will prepare and lead weekly worship services, ensuring sermons are biblically grounded and relevant, and will administer the sacraments. The Pastor will also work closely with the Council in providing spiritual leadership and participate in an annual evaluation process.

Regular pastoral care is an important aspect of this role, including visiting members in their homes. The Pastor will further support the spiritual growth of the congregation by leading catechism classes, guiding individuals through profession of faith, and facilitating marriage preparation classes as needed.

Church Demographics

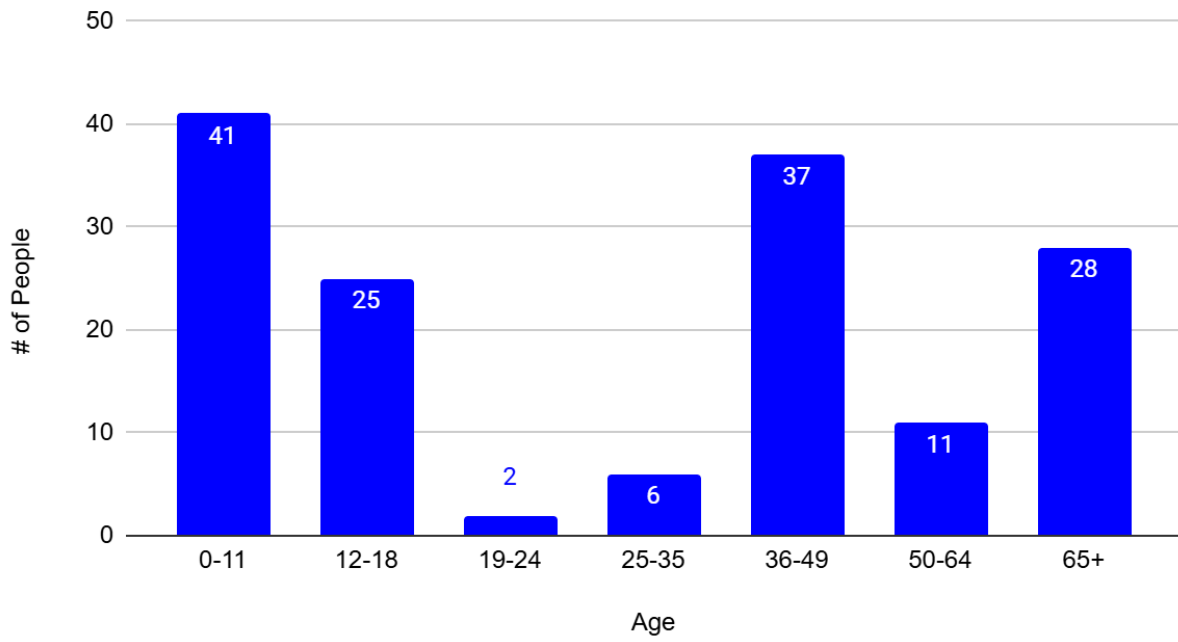
Average Sunday Attendance: 80-100 adults and children

Active Adult Professing Members: 60

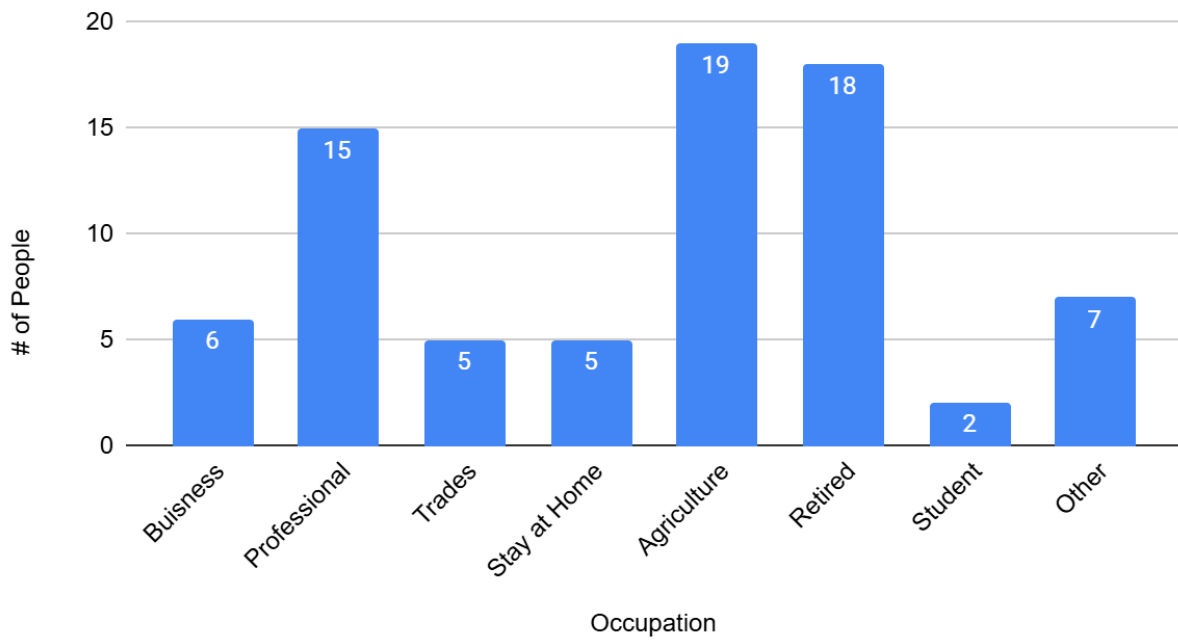
Previous Pastors:

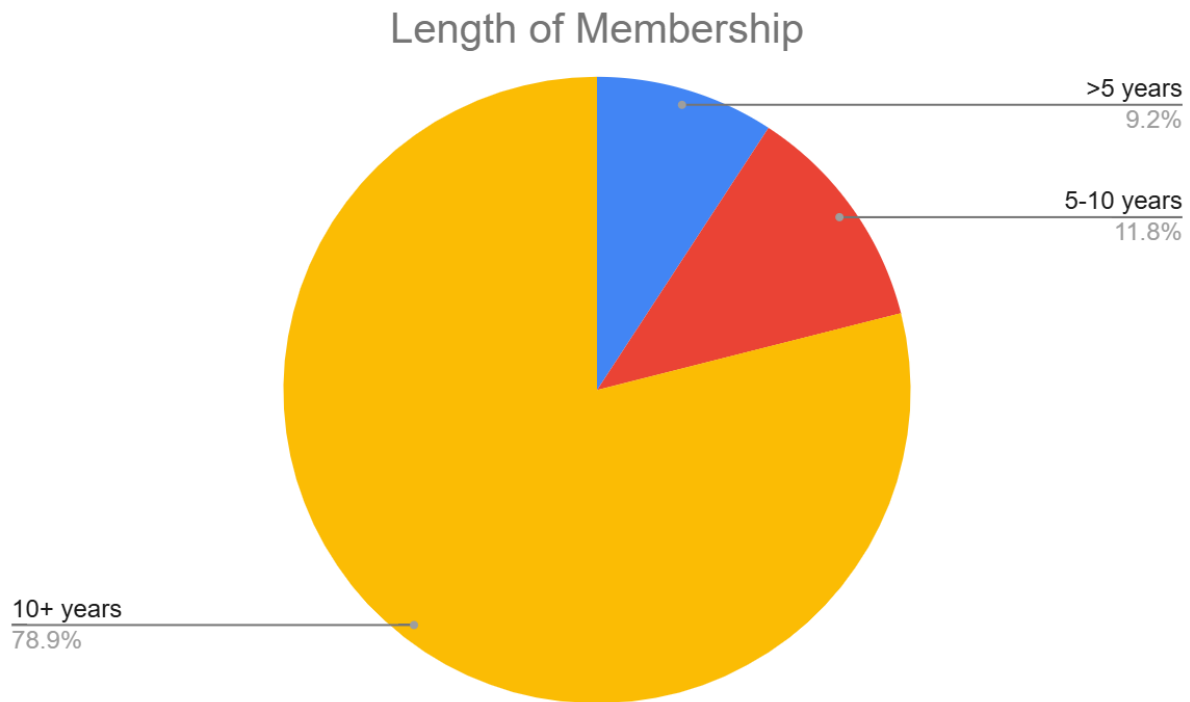
1. Robert Hoekstra 2023-2024
2. Paul DeWeerd 2015-2022
3. Siemen Speelman 1999-2013
4. Craig Cunningham 1995-1998

Age Demographic



Occupation of Church Members





Worship

Members of Vanastra Community CRC engage in worship in a variety of meaningful ways. Services generally follow the Christian Reformed Church order of worship and typically include a children's message. The congregation celebrates Communion together six times each year.

Worship planning is primarily led by the Worship Committee in collaboration with the Pastor. The committee works closely with three music teams, each bringing their own unique style and strengths to worship. They also coordinate with the audio-visual team and connect with various church programs and members to support participation in special services.

Congregational involvement is an important part of worship and may include special music, singing, liturgy and scripture readings, liturgical dance, and drama. Interactive elements—such as Stations of the Cross, Thanksgiving Trees, and carolling—have been well received and are encouraged. In addition, all services have recently been made available through live streaming.

Discipleship Practices

The congregation is deeply engaged in discipleship, with a strong emphasis on nurturing the faith of children and youth. Programs such as GEMS and Cadets are well attended and warmly received, drawing participation from both church families and the wider community. Sunday School and nursery programs are supported by a dedicated team of leaders and volunteers who care for a large and energetic group of children.

Catechism classes for Grades 4–8 are currently led each Sunday by the elder of the day. The Youth Group, for students in Grades 9–12, meets weekly and provides opportunities to participate in broader events throughout the year, including Fall Retreat, All Ontario Youth Convention, Kingdom Bound, and SERVE.

Adult discipleship is also an important part of congregational life. Men's Life meets weekly for Bible study and prayer, and a Thursday evening Bible study is open to all. A coffee social is held every two weeks, offering a welcoming space for prayer, devotions, and fellowship.

In addition, the church hosts a community dinner twice a month. This outreach brings together both congregation and community members to prepare, serve, and share a meal, often welcoming more than 50 attendees each time.

Building and Financial

2025 Annual Budget: \$296,643

Percentage of financial obligations met (last year reported):

Budget – 100%

Denominational Ministry Shares – 100%

Classical Ministry Shares – 100%

Facilities

Vanastra Community CRC is located on an eight-acre property and gathers for worship in a converted school, with a sanctuary addition completed in 2002. The facility is fully accessible and barrier-free.

The building includes several classrooms used for ministry programs, an administrative office, a pastor's study, a nursery, an industrial kitchen, a gymnasium, and a fellowship hall. The property also features outdoor amenities such as a beach volleyball court, ball diamond, soccer field, and a community garden, along with two newly paved parking lots.

The church grounds back onto a community playground and recreation center, providing additional space for connection and activity. Please note that the church does not have a parsonage.

Compensation

Vanastra Community CRC offers a compensation package aligned with the CRC Ministers' Compensation Survey guidelines. This includes a salary with a housing allowance, as well as pension and medical benefits, and contributions to the Canada Pension Plan.

Additional provisions include travel mileage reimbursement, funding and time for continuing education, a sabbatical policy, vacation time, and financial support for attending a minister's retreat.

Church Characteristics

Vanastra Community CRC currently maintains a balanced ministry focus, serving both congregation members and the broader community. Worship services are primarily designed to support and encourage believers, with a blended style of music.

Leadership within the church is provided by dedicated lay leaders working alongside pastoral staff. The Council is made up of five elders and four deacons who each serve three-year terms. Council meets monthly, with additional meetings as needed.

Supporting groups—including Elders, Deacons, and the Executive—also meet monthly in addition to full Council gatherings.

The church seeks to foster spiritual growth through a variety of targeted ministries for different age groups and stages of life. Evangelism efforts are intentional and primarily planned in nature.

The congregation reflects a moderate level of economic diversity and is generally representative of the ethnic diversity within the surrounding community. In responding to needs related to compassion, mercy, and justice, the church emphasizes both congregational initiatives and personal involvement.

Vanastra Community CRC's missional focus is primarily local, while also maintaining some engagement with global missions.

Ecumenical Activities

Vanastra Community CRC is actively involved in interchurch and community-focused initiatives. The church hosts a mobile food bank on-site once a month, partnering with others to serve local needs. In collaboration with several nearby churches, the congregation also participated in the Tuckersmith Resettlement Project, helping welcome families from Syria and Colombia to Canada.

The church engages in shared worship opportunities such as the World Day of Prayer alongside other local congregations. Members also support a Vacation Bible School program led by a sister church through volunteer involvement.

In the past, church leadership has participated in the local ministerial association and supported programs such as Youth for Christ. Vanastra Community CRC has also played a regional role by hosting youth group gatherings for multiple CRC congregations when similar programming was not available in their home churches.

Church Strengths, Passions, and Gifts

Vanastra Community CRC has a unique history as a church plant and has remained deeply committed to its mission of being a light in the Village of Vanastra. The congregation is known for being warm, welcoming, and hospitable. This spirit of hospitality is reflected in many of the church's ministries and outreach efforts.

The GEMS and Cadets programs are significant points of connection with the community, with many participants coming from families who are not members of the church. Community events such as volleyball nights and barbecues are well attended and provide valuable opportunities to build meaningful relationships both within the congregation and throughout the broader community.

The church also maintains strong ties to the community through its Community Dinners, held on the first and third Tuesday of each month. These dinners typically attract approximately 90 attendees, most of whom are residents of the Village of Vanastra. The leaders of this ministry have intentionally fostered meaningful relationships with participants, and many attendees now contribute by helping to prepare and serve the meals.

One of the congregation's unique strengths is its significant number of young families and children. Many of these families are actively engaged in the life of the church and demonstrate a willingness to serve in leadership roles and support the faith formation of younger members. Their involvement brings energy, vitality, and a strong sense of community to the congregation.

Church Struggles and Opportunities

The church has recently experienced a difficult season related to its previous pastoral leadership, resulting in hurt within the congregation and the loss of some members. Despite these challenges, there remains a strong sense of hope, resilience, and determination among those who continue to call this church home.

The congregation participated in a series of meetings with Joan Brady, Mission Catalyst, who helped members clarify their mission, vision, and goals for the future. Through this process, the church has developed a renewed sense of purpose and a shared commitment to healing, rebuilding trust, and fostering healthy, sustainable growth.

In recent years, leadership transitions have contributed to some members moving to other local churches, creating gaps in key ministry areas, particularly music and leadership. The congregation recognizes these needs and is actively seeking ways to strengthen and rebuild these ministries.

While many members are willing to serve and take on leadership responsibilities, the church's relatively small size means that a limited number of people often carry multiple roles, leading to fatigue and stretched capacity. The congregation is also blessed with a

significant number of young children, creating ongoing opportunities for age-appropriate programming, support, and ministry.

Like many churches today, families and individuals face numerous commitments outside the church that compete for their time and attention. As a result, maintaining consistent attendance and engagement can be challenging. Although community outreach events are generally well attended and positively received, they have not consistently led to sustained involvement or regular participation in the life of the church.

Despite these realities, the congregation remains committed to moving forward with faith and optimism, building on its strengths, deepening relationships, and creating new opportunities for ministry and growth within the church and the wider community.

Vanastra Community Christian Reformed Church Mission & Vision

Our Vision: To empower all in their walk with God through hearts, hands and voices.

Our Mission: Through our hearts, we will share God's love and give our support and compassion. This will build a sense of belonging and encourage each other's faith life.

Through our hands we will reach out and touch others through acts of service and hospitality to meet their needs.

Through our voices, we will lift up the name of God in praise and worship and express ourselves to all through Biblical teaching.

Interesting and Challenging Events in Vanastra Community CRC

With our past experience with the previous pastor still in mind, we are currently in a season of uncertainty. Though there is a sense of restlessness and people are feeling stretched, there remains a steady willingness to step up, draw on our strengths, and stay engaged. There is also a growing desire to see a flourishing future for the church. United in hope, we are seeking to trust God as we discern who we are, what we need in leadership, and how we can move forward together in a healthy and sustainable way.

Another interesting and challenging season occurred in 2018–2019 when the church hosted Huron Christian School within its facility for a year while they completed their building project. As the church had previously functioned as a school, it was able to accommodate this arrangement, providing space for approximately 185 students and

staff. During this time, the congregation continued to maintain its regular church programs and worship services alongside the significant added activity and demands of sharing the building.

The 3 most important events in the history of our church:

The first was the acquisition of the new church building in 2002, which provided a dedicated space for worship, ministry, and community life and marked an important step in the church's development.

The second was involvement in SERVE, when Vanastra Community CRC hosted five SERVE projects between 2008 and 2012, and again in 2013. These initiatives were carried out in partnership with Clinton CRC, Blyth CRC, and Exeter CRC, and reflected a strong commitment to youth engagement and community service.

The third was hosting Huron Christian School during the 2018–2019 school year, when the church building was used to accommodate approximately 185 students and staff while the school completed its own construction project. During this time, the church continued its regular worship and ministry activities alongside the shared use of the facility.

Church Goals

Grow as a visible, welcoming, and engaged church presence in Vanastra through worship and spreading the gospel in the congregation and community.

Provide clear spiritual leadership that nurtures healing, unity, and renewed trust.

Reduce burnout by strengthening leadership capacity and more effectively sharing responsibilities across the congregation.

Foster clear, honest, and hopeful communication that builds trust, strengthens relationships, and creates forward momentum.

Increase participation and connection across all age groups while thoughtfully adapting to current demographic realities.

Grow as a visible, welcoming, and engaged church presence in Vanastra through worship and spreading the gospel in the congregation and community.