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The Record

December 2022

Vol. 2022/4



The English Reformed Church
Begijnhof 48, 1012 WV Amsterdam

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**Friends of the English
Reformed Church**
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Letter from Lausanne

Dear Friends,

As I write this we are approaching the end of what has been called the season of mellow fruitfulness and it is becoming clear to me that the shops are already in Advent and Christmas. Outside the air is damp, the Alps have seen their first snow and the nights are getting longer and colder. In the darkness we can hear birds beginning to move around, flying south to the warmer air.

Autumn leaves continue to fall but all around are signs that winter is just around the corner. This is a time when we long to be inside in the warmth, when we look forward to comfort food and comfortable beds. It's time to look forward too, to the brightness of Christmas, the lights of the market stalls displaying potential gifts or delicious drinks and seasonal foods. We look forward to the fun and time spent with friends and family.

It's easy to see on cold, damp, dark evenings why there has always been a mid-winter festival. From earliest times people needed that break in the midst of the darkest months of the year. They had to remind themselves of the light that they had lost and hoped they would see again before too long. Blazing Yuletide logs, trees dressed with lights and shining gifts and decorations. Good food together with family and friends gathered around helped to mark the middle of winter and shone some hope into the darkness, reminding them all that spring would surely arrive in due time. It was no mistake that the Christian Church took ownership of this season of light to celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace and the King of light and love, Jesus Christ.

Most of us love it all, apart from the odd Scrooge-like humbug who has it in for the rest of us just for daring to enjoy ourselves. Well, that's not strictly true is it? What about those who've lost loved ones? What about those who will pass their first advent and Christmastide without a much-missed child or partner or parent.

In this present climate of austerity for many of us, how does it feel not to be able to afford to give those you love all the nice things that they are used to? What about those tragic scenes on our television screens of a war on our doorsteps and reminders that there are many thousands of people who will not see their homeland this side of Christmas and who worry for those they have left behind.

So yes, let's look forward to sharing the bright lights of mid-winter, Advent and Christmas with those we love and let's be grateful for the peace and security that we are privileged to have. But in our joy and in our delight at all this coming season can bring, may we not forget to share some of that light with those who are fighting their way through dark times.

Gillean

(Interim Moderator and Minister of the Scots Kirk Lausanne)

Consistory Report

In September the Congregational survey was reviewed and as a consequence thereof it was decided to continue with the weekly letter and streaming of the services.

In the meantime Maurice Winter and Robert Brunn joined our congregation, John Cowie left as locum and Graham McGeoch is the new locum through the Christmas period. Thijs Glasz is moving to Germany and thus stepping down as Elder and Ingrid Sorensen is going to transfer the responsibility for the welcome desk as she will be moving to France early next year. The Consistory is very grateful for all the work done by Ingrid and Thijs.

Consistory is still looking for a concert manager. Fortunately, Richard Zook has stepped into the breach to temporarily assume this role.

Consistory is also now looking for new Elders and in accordance with internal rules is asking the Congregation for suggestions.

Finally the mission plan for the International Presbytery has been approved by the Church of Scotland which means we will start looking for a new minister very soon.



Consistory needs new elders

We are currently looking for new elders to join Consistory. This December we ask you to think of anyone who could be a valuable addition to the Consistory. You can nominate someone by writing their name down and putting your nomination paper in the designated box in the Church. Or send an email to scriba@erc.amsterdam

The International Presbytery meeting in Budapest

The International Presbytery met in Budapest, from 7-9 October 2022, hosted by St Columba's Church, with Rev. Laurence Twaddle as Moderator. Thijs Polstra and Andreas Decker attended the meeting.

From the items on the agenda I would like to highlight the item "11/22.10. Planning Committee Report and Discussion of Presbytery Mission Plan (Rev Derek Lawson)"

The International Presbytery (IP) Mission Plan has in the meantime been approved by the Faith & Nature Forum of the Church of Scotland thus allowing the ERC, in line with earlier passed regulations of the most senior body of the Church of Scotland - the General Assembly, to call a non-Church of Scotland minister and thereby allowing the ERC to start the process of calling a new minister at the beginning of December and end the long vacancy following the departure of our dear Pastor Dr. Lance Stone. Due to other regulations this process cannot start before that date.

As you may remember, all this is due to the fact that, due to the ongoing restructuring activities (taking place in many Churches), the Church of Scotland imposed on the International Presbytery a target of 5 FTEs (full time equivalent Church of Scotland Ministers) while there are currently 12 FTEs - similar cuts are taking place in Scotland.

Andreas Decker



Budapest,
and Danube
River.

The Scottish Mission of St Columba was founded in Hungary in 1841.



Music Notes

How delightful it's been for the choir to sing in services in the church with people this fall! We look forward to a real Advent/Christmas season with all the much-loved services and music. Because of Christmas falling on a Sunday this year, the first Sunday of Advent comes as early as it possibly can, on the 27th of November. By the time you read this, you will have already heard the choir's ringing in (singing in!) of the season. But not to worry! There will be plenty more opportunity.

This year's Carols by Candlelight, our annual service of Nine Lessons and Carols, will be on Friday, 16 December at 20:00. This is the perfect service for you to invite your friends and family to attend, with our beautiful church, decorated for Christmas and warmly lit by candles, forming the backdrop for a splendid evening of traditional music and the Christmas story - and not forgetting the refreshments afterward! What better way to fill the church with our friends and celebrate the joyous season!

And speaking of our friends, the choir will again be providing music for the annual Joint Carol Service with our good neighbours from around the Spui: the Lutheran, Catholic, and Mennonite communities. This is always a delightful service, this year held on Sunday afternoon, 18 December at 16:00 in the Singel Kerk.

That morning we will also be singing in our own church service, making our musical contribution to the Sunday school's Nativity Play. And immediately after the service we'll all go out onto the Spui for some carolling - yes, YOU too!

And then there is, of course, Christmas Eve if you still haven't had enough of our splendid choir! Note the dates on your calendar, bring your friends, and come ready to sing!

Make a joyful noise!

Richard

Finance Report

January – September 2022, Amounts in €

Income

Donations	57.729,08	75.868,98	-18.139,90
Collections	16.447,83	0,00	16.447,83
Church hire	14.554,60	12.534,80	2.019,80
Church hall	10.291,00	0,00	10.291,00
Concerts	5.038,80	2.007,00	3.031,80
Weddings	800,00	0,00	800,00
Church shop	0,00	0,00	0,00
Flowers	0,00	0,00	0,00
	104.861,31	90.410,78	14.450,53

We are almost at the end of the calendar year but at the beginning of Advent – the Christian calendar year. I have so far reported two quarters of financial deficits and the third quarter is no different. We still have a EUR 15.797 deficit at the end of the third quarter of this year. This deficit is 65% less compared to the same period in 2021.

Our total income till the third quarter of this year is 16% higher than the third quarter 2021. This is mainly due to the income from the Church Hall which was closed or not used in 2021. The income is however almost 13% less than budget. Our giving (donations and collections together) this year is so far less than for the same period last year when we had more corona restrictions.

Our total expenditure has fallen by 12% in the same quarter compared to 2021. The fall is mainly due to the vacancy of a minister. Yet our total expenditure is higher than our income despite the fall.

However, observing the results of the Mulanje Mission Hospital concert which took place in October (EUR 12.175), I am confident that during our preparation for and celebration of Christmas we will do our best to end the year in surplus. On that note, I would like to congratulate the MMH Concert planning team for a splendid result and express my compliments to all those who attended and or donated to make it a financial success.

Donations can be made to:

English Reformed Church
ABN AMRO Bank. IBAN: NL44 ABNA 0547 6235 50

Charles Vanderpuye, Treasurer

In Memoriam



Marjorie van der Vaart-Howell:

Marjorie has been appreciated for her friendliness and loyalty

She also enjoyed being a church guide and showing visitors around in church.



Gerard Meijer:

Gerard was for a long time active in the church, for instance at the time when the new organ was built. He also worked for many years for Greenpeace. He spent the last 2 years in a nursing home where he was admitted following a brain haemorrhage.

Christian Education

The Bible study continues, led by Rev Graham McGeoch. There are live meetings at the Manse, but you may also join via Zoom. A hybrid meeting! We meet on the first and third Wednesday of each month. All are most welcome!

Contact Peggy Krol or Graham McGeoch (at the Manse)

Christmas concert:

the GRANDSTAND Classic choir.

On Sunday December 11th, at 14:30 hrs. With works by Bach, Vivaldi and Christmas carols from all over the world.

For an overview of all concerts please go to www.erc.amsterdam

Letter from Malawi

Dear Brethren, VOTE OF THANKS

Greetings from the Management and Staff of Mulanje Mission Hospital in Malawi

The management and staff of Mulanje Mission Hospital would like to thank you for the material, financial and spiritual support you have given and continue to give to Mulanje Mission Hospital. This is indeed a true brotherhood in Christ.

At the recent concert in aid of Mulanje Mission you have raised many Euros towards the acquisition of an operating microscope for the eye clinic. This is a huge contribution to the community we are serving at Mulanje Mission Hospital.

Please extend our sincere thanks to the congregation and all the people who took part in the concert and who contributed towards this project.

On behalf of the management and staff, I wish you an early Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2023.

Once again, greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you for your financial support.

We look forward to a continued good relationship.

Pearson Soka

Principal Hospital Administrator

Mulanje Mission Hospital

Cooking at 'de Kloof'

Cooking at de Kloof is very much up and running again this year. There's been increasing interest from new volunteers- so much so that I have not recently had to make monthly requests by email to the long list of previous cooks!

The number of meals we make has also increased to 60 or more, as de Kloof accommodates people more safely.

It's a great way to meet new people whilst creating something nutritious for the homeless.

Many thanks to Sarah Nauss for her consistent help.

Giles



A Christmas prayer, by Gillean MacLean

Life and Work December 2022

*God of the blue month
of the turquoise, the tanzanite
and the blue Zircon*
the month of dark nights and frosty dawns.*

*We worship you;
the promise.*

*People look east
for the rising of the star of Love,
Saturn and Jupiter aligning in hope
to a waiting world.*

*We welcome you;
for the melting of frozen hearts
the drying of tears
the portent of peace
the light piercing the darkness
and the hope.*

*Hope is a candle
once lit, burning forever
circling out to warm and heal
a world in pain.*

*You welcome us;
to the birthing of justice
the subjugation of power
the arrival of love
the Word of Life in the face of an infant
and the blessing.*

*Blessing and honour
glory and power to bind all wounds.
We will walk your way.
Amen*



**some of the semi-precious stones associated with the month of December*

MMH Benefit Concert - 8 October, 2022

Brass instruments and chamber music?

I did not really know what to expect. But I trusted Richard's judgement that we had a very promising ensemble coming to play for us and raise funds for Mulanje Mission Hospital.

And what a special night it was!

From London, Connaught Brass: five young and very talented musicians, filled the church with their music. An interesting repertoire, from chamber music to opera. We not only enjoyed their musical skills, but also the humour in their performance.

About 80 people attended the concert. Many donated more than the ticket-price, some making substantial donations after hearing the concert and the aim to buy a microscope for the ophthalmologist operating at the newly built Eye Clinic.

The amount raised was 12,175 euro, and Wilde Ganzen topped this up to buy the microscope!

We are very grateful to Connaught Brass for their performance. Items of Malawian woodwork were gifted to them.

We were happy to meet and thank Jumbo and Matthijs representing Ferrandou Musique. Their foundation paid for the travel expenses and provided accommodation for the musicians. In France, Ferrandou provides space, tranquillity and lodgings for musicians like Connaught Brass, making it possible for them to practice, develop and grow. In London, this is not so easy, having to rent a studio space and pay for every 15 minutes you use it.

The venue owned by Ferrandou is located in Tauriac, in the Gironde, in the south-west of France.

Thank you all! Zikomo kwambiri!

Sascha Sizoo

Connaught Brass:
Harry, Chris, Robyn,
Aaron and Aled



Letter from Edinburgh

Dear Friends,

It was with great pleasure that Gill and I returned to the ERC for two months in September. It reminded us of so many of the facets that had made our years in Amsterdam such a pleasure. We again enjoyed the warm welcome, the breadth of the community and the obvious delight in worshipping together, the wonderful music, not to mention the lovely building in the Begijnhof and being able to live in the manse in Jan Willem Brouwersstraat once more.



There were a number of highlights, the baptism of Anniek's baby Madelief during the service on October 30th was a delight, as was the invitation to Gill to sing with the choir again and be included in the choir festival at the Waalsekerk. We were glad to be present at the moving Remembrance service at the Nieuwe Ooster Begraafplaats on November 12, especially poignant this year when we know of the suffering and destruction which continues in Ukraine. I enjoyed my daily walks with our dog Molly. She didn't enjoy dodging the bikes which abound in Amsterdam but came to love her freedom to roam in the Beatrixpark.

We rekindled friendships over coffees and some splendid meals. We also hosted a number of gatherings at the Manse, including the lively bible study on Wednesday evenings. We apologise that we didn't manage to visit more people,

but we do hope to come back again next year.

This post Covid period has not been an easy one for anyone. The members of Consistory have done a great job of maintaining and guiding the congregation since Lance left, and many others have stepped up and supported them. We have all learned how to offer worship online to those who can't come in person. However, it is not the same as coming together in person and so it was a blessing to see many people gathering on Sunday mornings as a community in Christ's name to celebrate and praise God.

There are some interesting challenges ahead - but I am sure that they will continue to be met with prayer, imagination and commitment to the Gospel. Worship and the welcome in Christ's name will continue.

We wish you every blessing and hope that we will meet again soon.

Yours,

John and Gillian Cowie

ERC Women's Fellowship

In early October the Women's Fellowship committee got together to discuss how we could revitalize our Women's Fellowship going forward. In that meeting we have re-envisioned our focus on our core purpose: to be Rooted in Christ, Strengthened by God's Word, Grow in God's Presence and Flourish with the Holy Spirit.

We are now centering our gatherings this year in four quarters, in alignment with the seasons of the year, and we gather together in fellowship to explore these topics. Our theme this quarter is Rooted in Christ, the topic is different each meeting.

In each session, we share a Potluck meal together and afterwards, we start with a short devotional in which we share Bible verses connected to the topic of that week, explore them together with an inspiring and lively discussion, share one another's burdens and pray together. The meetings have been inspirational and encouraging to us.

So if any of you ladies are longing to deepen your faith with God or wanting to weave your life more closely with the Lord Jesus, then please come and join us.

We meet up every two weeks, but in December we will only be meeting on Monday, 5 December because of all the Christmas activities. Our topic will be: What are God's promises?

In the New Year (2023) we will be meeting every 2nd and 4th Monday of the month and our first meeting in January will be on Monday, 9 January.

If you have any questions or would like to join us, please see Je Hart, who is so gracious to host us or me, *Peggy Krol*, and I will add you to the mailing list.



Children's book by Lance Stone

Dear Friends,

Pastor Lance Stone and his daughter Robin have for the third time, produced a wonderful children's book, which would make an excellent Christmas present.

We will soon be producing the 36-page, richly illustrated book about Lila's encounter with the magpie, and what it led to.... The front page of the book is printed below.

The book will only cost 12 euro (postage not included), and it is Lance's wish that all proceeds will be for Mulanje Mission Hospital.

If you want to order the book, please send us

- your name, address and telephone number so that we can send you an invoice or Tikkie
- specify if you want to pick up the book in church or if you want us to send it to you by post (postage costs are not included)

With the warmest thanks to Lance and Robin,

Bram & Sascha Sizoo (sascha.sizoo@erc.amsterdam)





Prepare the Way FOR THE LORD

Advent & Christmas activities and services

Friday 16 December 20.00 Carols by Candlelight

Sunday 18 December 10.30 Sunday School Nativity

11.45 Carolling on Spui Square

16.00 Joint H4H Carol Service

Saturday 24 December 17.30 Family Service

Christmas Eve 22.30 Evening Service

Sunday 25 December 10.30 Christmas Day Service

Welcome, Reverend Graham McGeogh!

"I am your locum minister. Let me introduce myself. I am originally from Scotland, although for the past few years, I have lived in Brazil. I grew up in Glasgow and I have been a Church of Scotland minister for more than 10 years. After being encouraged into ministry by my local minister and church, I served churches in Glasgow, Lisbon (Portugal) and Edinburgh. A few years ago, a university in Brazil invited me to return to Brazil to teach Theology & Religious Studies. This is now my day job. In addition to working at the university, I am involved in a civil society initiative to create a university in a favela (shanty town) in the city of Rio de Janeiro. I am also an active member of the International Presbytery of the Church of Scotland, helping to train ministers and readers in the presbytery.

I have lived and worked in Africa, Europe and Latin America. I met my wife in Brazil, and we married in Brazil before moving to Europe. Telma studied in the UK, Portugal and Germany, and now works on a UN/USAID funded refugee resettlement project on the Brazil-Venezuelan border.

We live on a small island, with no cars, amongst fisherfolk and informal street sellers in the city of Rio de Janeiro. We enjoy eating the tropical fruits from our small garden - bananas, mangoes, grapes - and making juice with the tropical berries -



pitanga, acerola and jabuticaba. Our son enjoys playing football with our neighbour, who was a professional footballer.

We are delighted to have the opportunity to be in Amsterdam for a few months. I miss parish ministry, and a locumcy is 'the next best thing'".

The Food Run



'Did you always want to do something for charity but didn't know how?

If you own a car and have 2.5 hours available once a month on Thursday morning, you could do the Food Run with Joe Alibasah, who set it up seven years ago; for a 7/365 pick up roster in collaboration with Ekoplaza and respective charities.

If you are a couple, and would do that together, you can do that too.

Email joehenes@yahoo.com

Telephone 06 242 777 53

Nativity Play

On Sunday, December 18th, children of our Sunday School will take part in the Nativity.

This will take place during our Sunday Service.

Come and enjoy!





Membership matters

Baptism

30 October 2022

Madelief Nells Joan Pascoe

—



In Memoriam

Marjorie van der Vaart-Howell

January 14 1924

June 24 2022

—

Gerard Meijer

May 10 1946

November 3 2022

Next edition of The Record will be printed and put on the website in March 2023.
Send your contribution to Sascha.Sizoo@erc.amsterdam

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English Reformed
Church Amsterdam

A congregation of the Church of Scotland and
the Protestant Church of The Netherlands (PKN)