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The Record

June/July 2023

Vol. 2023/2



The English Reformed Church
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www.erc.amsterdam

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Letter from Bochum

Dear ERC Friends,

As Interim Moderator (more about that curious title elsewhere in this newsletter), I've been asked to address a few words to you for this summer issue of The Record.

Summer. One of the few seasons of the year that doesn't have some obvious



liturgical theme to latch onto. In early spring it's either Lent or Easter, Pentecost in late spring, and Advent, Christmas and Epiphany in the late autumn or winter. The obvious focus in these seasons is on theological issues such as self-reflection, unexpected hope, anticipation, joy, the presence of God. But summer? The long haul of Sundays after Pentecost - of which there are always 20 and more - seems like something of a liturgically barren stretch.

Which is, of course, also a Biblical topos. I'm thinking of the 40 years wilderness journeying of God's people in search of their ultimate destination. The Exodus. A long haul. A seemingly barren stretch. The people worrying, hoping, grumbling, questioning, seeking. An increasing number of them appointed to share the load with their leader Moses (Exodus 18). It's a narrative that has always particularly inspired and shaped churches such as ours in the Reformed tradition. And it's perhaps particularly apt for us all at the ERC as we move into a third year still without a full-time minister. A long haul indeed.

Maybe we don't have the in-the-face spectacular signs the Israelites did to announce God's presence with us on our journey - pillars of fire and cloud, manna to feed us from on high. But there's plenty to assure and reassure, even in our less Cecil-B.-DeMille-dramatic search. Inspiring preaching and teaching by a string of excellent locum ministers, a dedicated search committee now appointed and taking up its task of finding the best candidate to present to the congregation. And I've been impressed since taking up my own task at the beginning of April by the vast body of people - yourselves - who share in so many ways in the ministry, outreach and pastoral work of the English Reformed Church in and to Amsterdam.

In closing, the obvious question. The question the Israelites asked Moses time and again, and that every vacant congregation invariably asks. How long still to go? You could summarise the answer as twofold: In God's own

time and in God's caring company. (Most likely in the early months of 2024). Until then, let's enjoy the journey. Not so much as a long haul or barren stretch, but as an ongoing adventure. A journey of (self-) discovery. Summer. Maybe a liturgical season after all.

Best wishes,

James (Jimmy) Brown
Interim Moderator

Coffee Morning

Thank you all who took part in our monthly coffee mornings this last year.

We are now having our Summer Break, so we will not meet in July and August.

On the first Tuesday in September, the 5th, we would like to go somewhere just as we did last year when we went to the Hortus in Amsterdam.

If you can help us think of a possible nice place to go, please contact us.

We wish you all a happy Summertime!

Joke de Bruin and Sies Plokker



Christian Education

The Bible study continues, led by Rev John Bell. 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 John Bell for more information.

Consistory Report

Locums - The Very Reverend Russell Barr and his wife Margaret returned to the ERC in March 2023 after a first stint at locum-ship in 2021 and engaged in several activities, in addition to leading Sunday worship: the biweekly Bible study, Sunday School and a number of pastoral visits. Pastor Russell and Margaret were thanked for their efforts during their last service with us on April 16th. The following locum was Rev. Fiona Lillie, who was with us for the month of May, followed by Rev. John Bell, an old friend of our church (and former minister assistant in the 1970s). We are very grateful to all the locums for sharing their faith with us, for leading worship and for seeing to many of the essential tasks of a functioning, living church.

Minister Vacancy - The church took a number of steps to move forward with the process of finding a new permanent minister for the ERC in keeping with the rules of the Church of Scotland.

First, Consistory initiated a review of the ERC's database of church members with a view to drawing up an Electoral Register. The Electoral Register is a list of individuals (either members or adherents of the ERC) who are entitled to:

- (i) vote for the Nominating Committee (i.e. the committee that will review all incoming applications) and in due course,
- (ii) vote for the sole nominee (i.e. the candidate minister proposed by the Nominating Committee).

Second, Consistory voted on whether or not to depart from the standard policy of the Church of Scotland in relation to candidate ministers in a same-sex relationship according to which candidates who are in a same-sex relationship are not eligible to be appointed as minister. The vote was held twice, according to the rules of the Church of Scotland. On both occasions, the majority of Consistory voted to depart from the standard policy of the Church of Scotland described above. The "decision to depart" implies the possibility that a candidate in a same-sex relationship may be appointed as minister in the current vacancy. It should be noted that such a possibility may or may not materialise.

Finally, a congregational meeting was held on June 4th to elect the 11 members of the Nominating Committee who receive guidance from the Interim Moderator. The 11 elected members of the Nominating Committee are listed on page 6.

The first meeting of the Nominating Committee took place later in June.

New Members - The update of the ERC's database entailed Consistory reaching out by email and by regular mail to all the people who have a connection to the ERC, be they members of the ERC or not. As a result, 8 people came forward and requested to become members of the ERC. Consistory, in cooperation with Rev. John Bell in his capacity as locum for June, are looking into these requests and are liaising with the people requesting membership to make sure that the requests are dealt with in the most appropriate way.

The nominating committee

	Name	Surname	Role
1	John-Harmen	Valk	Convener
2	Mattia	Falcone	Vice-Convener
3	Reuben	Murage	Clerk
4	Bram	Sizoo	Member
5	Jared	Penner	Member
6	Seppo	Stout	Member
7	Veronica	Garcia-Robles	Member
8	Anja	Polstra	Member
9	Giles	Francis	Member
10	Gillian	Walker	Member
11	Elisabeth	IJmker	Member

Church Hall - After a long hiatus during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Church Hall is now back in use. Whilst coffee and tea is not being served at the Church Hall any more (some of you might still remember those times!), before the Covid pandemic the Church Hall was being regularly sublet to various groups (a fair number of them being addiction recovery groups), who would otherwise struggle to find affordable meeting space in the centre of Amsterdam.

From that perspective, the Church Hall provided societal value to the city of Amsterdam and was thus part and parcel of the church's outreach efforts. During the June Consistory meeting, the situation of the Church Hall was reviewed. It became apparent that more and more groups are coming back to the Church Hall for their meetings, which is good news indeed.

While the Church Hall still operates at a deficit, the fact that more groups are coming back and making use of the Church Hall is a good step forward to ensure the financial viability of the Church Hall. Consistory expressed their gratitude to Gillian Walker and Sies Plokker who are doing an excellent job at coordinating all the bookings and keeping the Church Hall running. Many thanks indeed to both of them!

Sunday School - On June 11th, four kids from Sunday School graduated from Sunday School (age range: 4-11) and were admitted to Junior Church (age range: 11 and up). That was celebrated in a joyous, youth-centric service led by Rev. John Bell in which the youth actively contributed to various parts of the service. Many thanks indeed to our youth who is tomorrow's congregation!

Mattia Falcone, scriba

Update from Mulanje Mission Hospital

In the past few months, the equipment bought and staff trained resulted in a huge increase in ophthalmic services in the hospital's catchment area and beyond, even across the border with Mozambique. By 22 March the team had performed 45 eye procedures, and over 200 outpatients were seen in the Eye Unit. With a little more support, 2 more key staff members can be appointed, leading to a fully self-supporting sustainable unit within 2 years.



Tropical Cyclone Freddy brought torrential rains in March, with the equivalent of six months of rain falling in just six days, causing devastating floods and mudslides in Southern Malawi. The hospital's initial response involved emergency aid and relief. This included provision of food and medical care in 7 camps; blankets and mosquito nets and emergency repairs to water sources. Chlorine to prevent water-borne disease was provided throughout the catchment area.

The next phase started on May 15th and will entail: assisting around 400 households with basic building materials, reconstruction of more than 1000 pit latrines to prevent the spread of cholera, typhoid and other disease, construction of new boreholes, assistance to schools with teaching materials and to farmers with basic tools and materials.

The response is now in full swing thanks to the support of many individuals and churches, the Verburg Charity Foundation, Wilde Ganzen, Christian Blind Mission and AFAS Foundation.

Read more about the hospital on its website www.mmh.mw

Bram Sizoo, MMH liaison

Getting a hold of church lingo in a vacancy

Whenever a minister transfers or retires from a Church of Scotland congregation (and ERC is such a congregation), that church has become vacant. There is no full-time minister in place. So a whole team of people are involved in keeping the ministry in all its forms going.

The Interim Moderator - who's that?

Well, the short answer: that's me! James (Jimmy) Brown, recently retired from more than 30 years of English-language ministry in Bochum, Germany. (Though I hope it's not a negative sign that my interim moderatorship began on 1/4/2023, April Fool's Day!) The Interim Moderator is, as the name implies, essentially the person who moderates or chairs meetings (of Consistory) in the interim between the last minister (in your case, Lance Stone) and the next (whoever he or she may be). This involves me travelling on a more-or-less monthly basis to Amsterdam for meetings, plus occasional online meetings in between. And my contact is listed on the weekly worship sheets should anyone have a question that can't be dealt with better locally.



Locums - who are they?

Those with whom regular worshippers have most contact are the so-called locums. Yes, we still use a few scraps of Latin in the church. And a locum, or locum tenens in full, is someone **who holds a post or office on a temporary basis**. In the church, locums provide Sunday worship plus a further day's work during the week. The Interim Moderator is responsible for securing these locums. And so, I'm immensely grateful to my immediate predecessor as Interim Moderator, Gillean MacLean, who arranged such supply up until the autumn, making my task that much easier in that respect.

The Nominating Committee - what's that?

As of the Congregational Meeting held on Sunday, 4 June, the English Reformed Church now has a Nominating Committee at work. I was very impressed at how well attended that meeting was, how long people stayed, and how many people were proposed (and were willing) to serve on the committee. All positive signs of an active interest in the affairs and destiny of the ERC. The eleven people you elected to serve on the

Nominating Committee are listed on page 6.

In a nutshell, the task of the Nominating Committee is to advertise the vacancy, receive applications, vet these, interview the most promising candidates and, ultimately, present from that shortlist one person - a so-called Sole Nominee - for the congregation as a whole to vote on.

Once you've worked your way around the lingo - or ducked under its radar - a vacancy can be an exciting time. It allows congregations to reflect on what their story has been so far, what emphases they see in their mission and outreach, and where they hope their journey will lead them in future.

Well then: goede reis!

Jimmy Brown

Sunday school—call for volunteers

Since the end of the pandemic, Sunday School has been sporadic, due in part to a shortage of teachers. It is important that a Sunday School programme be restarted in September.

The disciples rebuked parents for wasting Jesus's time by bringing their children to him. Jesus said by contrast: "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs."

As they are the future of the congregation, we owe our children the benefit of faith formation. Please give some thought to the teachers influential on your own faith journey, and consider playing such a role for the children of our congregation.

Teachers are needed who can each lead Sunday School (4-11 year-olds), ideally, once a month. A curriculum is available to provide weekly story and activity ideas.

- The time commitment, then, is easily manageable.

Please contact Mattia Falcone or John-Harmen Valk if willing to teach.

The hope is to finalize a plan as soon as possible so that Sunday School can begin in September.



A new editor for The Record

Dear ERC friends,

After editing the Record for a few years (on top of a few years in the nineties - before we left for Malawi), it is time for a handover.

Margaret Davis has volunteered to take over starting with the September 2023 issue. Please send her your contributions, record@erc.amsterdam

Thank you all for your contributions: Ministers, scribes, treasurers, Richard, teachers, Joke, consistory members, fundraisers in Amsterdam or further away, all of you who shared your stories.

A special THANK YOU for Judi, for proofreading and correcting every issue, and for Heleen, for always thinking along and helping out!

Sascha Sizoo-Adema



The ERC choir

The choir sang for us on Sunday June 18th, together with two soloists, for the last time before their summer break. They were sent off with a resounding applause from the congregation.

A special thank you and round of applause was given to Richard Zook for all his hard work with the choir, liaising with the locums, performing and accompanying us on organ & piano, and as concert organiser.

Finance Report

January–April 2023, amounts in euro

<u>Income</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>Change</u>
Donations	21.789,30	26.226,15	-4.436,85
Collections	7.235,95	4.990,00	2.245,95
Church hire	7.049,36	6.317,60	731,76
Church hall	7.159,72	2.534,50	4.325,22
Concerts	<u>2.844,00</u>	<u>861,00</u>	<u>1.983,00</u>
	<u>46.078,33</u>	<u>40.894,25</u>	<u>5.184,08</u>

On face value our income looks to have increased by just over € 5,000 compared to last year. However, this increase is not from increase in our giving but mainly due to income from the Church hall and Concerts which were partly shut down in the first 2 months of 2022 due to covid restrictions.

Donations have dropped even further over the last three years; 18% drop in 2022, from € 32,029 in 2021 to € 26,226 in 2022 and 17% this year, from € 26,226 to € 21,789. Our offering collections also do not make up for the drop in our donations. This development is quite concerning and we have to tackle this together as church members.

Our expenses on the other hand have increased slightly compared to last year April. The last few years, legacies have covered us from deficits even when we didn't have the cost of a minister. But we may not have legacies each year. It is our responsibility to make sure we meet our expenses each year from our giving.

As we head towards recruiting our new minister, our income should be getting to pre-covid levels. I therefore urge all members to do more to support and sustain the mission and worship of our beautiful congregation.

Donations can be made to:

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

Charles Vanderpuye, Treasurer

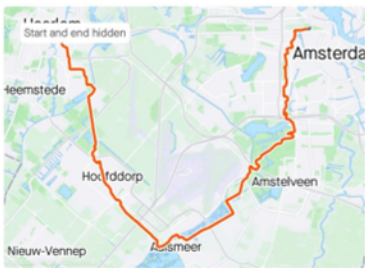
The night of the refugee 2023

What a beautiful night it was, late on Saturday night and then early Sunday morning, the date 28-29 June 2023. Nothing but the clear open skies, and the weather to boot was perfect for a long walk.

The team from the English Reformed Church Amsterdam had gathered in Haarlem for the Night of the Refugee walk and were anxious to get an early start. Get ahead of rush hour was the thought process, and by creating a gap by starting earlier before the rest, and to hold-on for as long as we can. The idea was solid, but less than an hour into the walk the more seasoned/serious walkers started to pass us. The end destination was Amsterdam, and that was still a fair distance away.



Unperturbed by being lapped so early the team pushed on - this walk is in essence a marathon and not a sprint. This year the team was slightly smaller and only consisted of five walkers, but we had a nice blend of experience and enthusiasm. The route took us from Haarlem centre in a U-shape around the southern part of Schiphol and then back up again to the Westergasfabriek in Amsterdam, a total of 40km (some believe it was slightly more than 41km). We had 4 regular stopping points along the way, so there was ample time to relax and get some refreshments, change socks and in general complain about aches and pains.



The team soon discovered that attempting a 40km walk is no mean feat, extremely physical and a massive challenge, and quitting is no option as you simply had to keep going. No one wanted to quit.

During the walk we had lots of time to chat and get to know each other better including the new addition to the team, Silvano. Not only did we get an inspirational motivator and

coach (Silvano being an avid marathon runner), but also a time-keeper and statistician. Silvano ensured that the team stayed focused through the feelings of the blisters and pain. Lessons were learned and lessons were shared. Onwards and upwards. So, here are some of the stats that Silvano gathered of our walk:

- Total time to complete: ~10.75 hours
- Total distance ~40km (43km if you add all the in between walks at the rest stops)
- Continuous walking time: ~9 hours
- Number of steps: ±65,000 steps
- Calories: ±3,500 calories (this equals either 13.5 Big Mac hamburgers or 7.5 Happy meals)

And now for the best part, which was the finish! With a great sense of relief and pride the team finished this epic walk in a record time. For a third straight year the ERCADAM walking club has walked the 40km for refugees worldwide (to go with the 3 previous years of the 10/20km walks).

And with all the support and love we have received the team has raised € 4,313 this time round!

The ERCADAM 2023 walking team would like to send a very heartfelt thanks to all of you who showed your support in whichever way you wished - donating, sending encouraging messages, thinking of us and praying for us - everything helped.

Hoping that next year we can again count on your support!
Thank you all very much,

Gillian, Silvano, Kathi, Peter, Robert



Welcome back, Reverend John Bell

John Bell has been coming to ERC for more than 40 years. But if you are new, you may meet him for the first time this summer.

John worked with the Iona community for 40 years, and retired in 2022.

He is a minister, hymnwriter, author, and broadcaster.

He preached about how special your own voice is, belonging to you and nobody else. Your unique voice.

John certainly uses his voice in many ways, as a preacher, teaching us new hymns, and speaking to audiences worldwide.

We hope John will have a good time as Locum in our congregation and hope to welcome him again next summer!



English Reformed Church Amsterdam

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

Best nurse of MMH



The hospital staff voted and Oliver Banda, nurse on Childrens Ward, was elected Best Nurse of MMH!

Congratulations Oliver!

In the next edition we hope to tell you what makes him an outstanding nurse.



May the Lord guide our steps and strengthen our hearts.
And grant us refreshment of body and mind.



Next edition of the Record

The September edition will be put together by your new editor
Margaret Davis.

Please send your contribution before September 2nd to:
editor@erc.amsterdam

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