



The Record

September 2023

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The English Reformed Church
Begijnhof 48, 1012 WV Amsterdam

www.erc.amsterdam

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

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Letter from the Interim Moderator

Dear Friends at (and of) the ERC,

In my summer letter, I was reflecting on desert places, long (perhaps arid) journeying, yet with the sure knowledge of God's presence on that journey. Be it the 40-years' Exodus journey of the People of Israel, or the much shorter journey of the ERC Amsterdam community from one ministry to the next. My own experience since writing that and playing around with these images and ideas, however, has been more like an oasis of sweet waters and luscious fruits than in any sense a desert.

Let me explain. One of my duties – and privileges – as Interim Moderator is to be a calling point for all those who might be potentially interested in applying for ERC Amsterdam but would like to have some informal conversations before committing to such a lifechanging move. So, a fair number of extremely interesting e-mails from extremely interesting people have in the past weeks been dropping into my in-box. Of every single conversation I have had and of every single enquirer I have spoken to I can unreservedly say, I am confident for the future of this congregation.

Once you've got over the anomaly that a Church of Scotland charge should be seeking to call a minister from any other Reformed denomination than the Church of Scotland (Get your head round that one if you can!), the scenario is in fact really exciting. Without divulging any sensitive information, I can still tell you that I have already had stimulating conversations with ministers of half a dozen or more Reformed denominations stretching across half the globe. What is emerging for me in the process is a refreshingly wide picture of the global church, a church looking beyond the national and denominational boundaries we Protestants otherwise so unhealthily cling to.

I don't know if all – or, indeed, any – of the people I've spoken to so far have already applied or plan to do so before the deadline for applications at the end of September, but what I do know is that I don't envy the Nominating Committee their task of having to choose amongst so many promising and talented individuals, each with their own special gifts.

Within the Church of Scotland's International Presbytery, we have chosen this opening up of some of our churches to ministries from beyond the Church of Scotland as a means of ensuring that, despite the shortage of ministers within the Church of Scotland, the worshipping communities we have dotted around Europe and beyond will not only survive but thrive. Amsterdam is the first congregation to go down this road – you are, in a sense, pioneers – and others will follow.

So, am I pessimistic about the future of the Church of Scotland? No!
Am in any way pessimistic about the future of the English Reformed Church? Definitely not!

Am I repeating myself? Probably! For knowing God with us on our journey – be it the present journey of the ERC, our experience of the world’s many churches moving closer to each other, or the journey of faith in general – we surely can “Look forward in faith” as the popular hymn puts it for, with God:

*Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.
The burning sand will become a pool, thirsty ground bubbling springs. (Isaiah 35:6-7)*

I wish us all a blessed onward journey. With God.

James (Jimmy) Brown



4H4 annual outing

Each year the churches around the Spui (combinedly called H4H - De Heilige Vierhoek) organise a joint excursion. This year the Lutherse Kerk has put together a tour along the hofjes in Amsterdam.

If you are interested to join, please contact:
a.woehle@luthersamsterdam.nl.
Costs are €35 per person and coffee/tea, lunch and refreshments are included.

More details about the excursion and the timings can be found in the flyer in church our at the ERC website (www.erc.amsterdam)



Consistory report

Locums

Rev. John Bell stayed with us until the 16th of July and was followed by Rev. Denis Campbell, who went back to Ireland on the 13th of August. From then on Rev. Alan Sorensen is with us to lead worship and see to many of the essential tasks of our Church. Again, we express our thanks to all locums for sharing their faith with us.

Ministry vacancy

The Nominating Committee met for the first time on June 9th. Considering that the ERC has been allowed to call a non-Church of Scotland minister holding a Restricted Certificate of Eligibility under the Admission and Readmission of the Minister Act of 2022, the new minister will be appointed for a period of 3 years, renewable by another 3 years. Subsequently the Nominating Committee met several times and has crafted a congregational profile and a job advertisement, which has been publicised in various media.

Youth Ministry

Announcements for volunteers to teach Sunday School have been placed in liturgy sheets and weekly letters. John-Harmen and Mattia have been working over the summer to prepare for restarting Sunday School soon.

Presbytery elder

We were asked to elect an elder to represent the ERC before the International Presbytery and elected Andreas to continue his good work with the International Presbytery.

Photo Exhibition

The ERC was asked by the UK embassy to host a photo exhibition of the coronation of King Charles III in our church, which in the meantime has taken place.

Finance

In view of rising costs the Consistory keeps looking for ways to increase the income of the church.

Membership

New members: Wendie Shaffer and Guy Parfitt
Baptism: Chloe Wanjiku Murage Parker.

Finance Report

January – July 2023, Amounts in €

<u>Income</u>	<u>2023</u>		<u>2022</u>		<u>Change</u>
Donations	39.914,88		46.365,38		-6.450,50
Collections	14.354,65		11.924,70		2.429,95
Church hire	12.261,18		11.395,80		865,38
Church hall	13.681,20		6.381,00		7.300,20
Concerts	3.506,53		3.098,80		407,73
Weddings	0,00		800,00		-800,00
	83.718,44		79.965,68		3.752,76

Above is the report of our financial income until July. Total income has increased by just over € 3.700 compared to July last year. There is a small deficit of € 500 till July overall. Unfortunately, the total income is so far € 11.270 less than budgeted.

Again, like the first quarter, this income looks to have increased on face value. This increase is yet again not from an increase in our giving but mainly due to income from the Church hall, which is used for the 12-Step programme. The Church hall was shut in the first 2 months of 2022 due to covid restrictions, reflecting the huge increase of € 7.300. In the meantime, the Church Hall expense until July is € 14.868, which is more than its income.

As you can see, donations received to our bank account have fallen sharply by 14%. Of course, all or most of us give an offering on Sundays in church for which we are grateful, yet I encourage all members and supporters to make either regular or one-off donations to our bank account as all such donations or gifts are tax deductible. Thus, one gets a tax refund for the donated amount, a win-win situation. The treasurer can only provide or confirm the total donation details made to the church to the Belastingdienst, if needed, only from the bank received amounts.

I hope you would agree with me that donating to the bank account is the best approach to support and sustain the worship and work of our church in Amsterdam, considering the fact that the tax office shares our contribution with us.

Donations can be made to:

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

Charles Vanderpuye, Treasurer

News from Mulanje Mission Hospital

Arie and Lysanne Glas are Dutch tropical doctors and have been working at Mulanje Mission Hospital since January 2017. The ERC has maintained close ties with the hospital for over 24 years since Sascha and I worked there as doctors from 1999-2003. Arie and Lysannes stay in Malawi will end in the coming one or two years however, and the hospital is currently exploring the possibilities for attracting suitable candidates to take over the hard and responsible work. On Thursday evening 12th October, Arie and Lysanne will give an update on the hospital developments - in person - at the consistory meeting in church. Anyone interested in meeting them and hearing about Mulanje is very welcome to join.

Meanwhile, the latest project to which the ERC - along with many others - contributed can be called a great success story. The eye clinic is now fully operational, and many patients are being given back their eyesight, thanks to the well-trained staff and the high-tech equipment. It must be very rewarding to work in, and benefit from, this new facility, but equally rewarding for donors like yourselves to learn how the raised funds are being used.

Mulanje Mission Hospital is part of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian and was established in 1902 by Scottish missionary Reverend John Chilembwe. It has steadily developed over the years into an excellent and diverse health care unit with trained staff and impressive results. Anyone interested in reading more can visit the hospital website: www.mmh.mw. One of the activities involves the Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, implemented by the hospital's Primary Health Care Unit which is also supported by the ERC. Most of the work was carried out in 10 model villages in the catchment area, but also entailed the support of 19 primary schools and one nursery school through the School Agriculture Programme. The results cover a solar powered irrigation scheme, training farmers to improve their agricultural skills, and setting up beehives and tree nurseries. Indeed, at Mulanje the population may be further with adapting to climate change and sustainability than our communities in Europe are. Let's be inspired by their example!



Who is Who: Reint Huizinga

This year is not a single, nor a double, but a triple jubilee year for Reint Huizinga. He turned 65 years recently, just before his birthday he finished his 30st “Vierdaagse” of Nijmegen and later this year marks the 25th anniversary of his membership of the English Reformed Church.

If you have not met Reint in person, you will have seen his work in church, live or online: a couple of Sundays a month, Reint makes sure that the Bibles and Hymn books are laid out in the pews meticulously and with almost military precision. He also has an important part in the Remembrance Sunday ceremonies in our church.



Reint started coming at the late nineties to the ERC because of the music. He enjoyed listening to Songs of Praise on the television. The combination of English hymns and a beautiful location led him to the ERC. He spoke with Rev John Cowie, minister, and decided to join the church formally, this November 25 years ago.

Reint works at the Salvation Army where he supports two works councils. Before the Salvation Army, he worked at the Sociale Verzekeringsbank (a governmental department that deals with state pensions and benefits), the IND and the Probation services. Reint talked with an extra smile on his face about the period when he was employed as Assistant Cruise Director for Scenic Tours Australia. He worked on river cruises from Amsterdam to Budapest. He loved traveling, using his impressive language skills and assisting travellers who needed special care during the cruise or hospital visits at the shore. He speaks Dutch, English, German and Afrikaans, has working knowledge of French and Swedish and speaks a little Italian as well.

His job for the works councils fits like a glove, he tells me: he loves working with people and he can use his knowledge of the law, which he studied for a couple of years. In a few years Reint will retire. After a “sabbat year” he hopes to work again in tourism as a freelancer, visit a lot of museums and continue to enjoy walking.

Walking plays a big part in Reint’s life. International walking connections brought him to Canada, the USA, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Australia and New Zealand. He completed the International Four Days Marches of Nijmegen (de “Vierdaagse”), a renowned annual walking event, 30 times. In the past Reint walked seven times 4 x 50 km, after that ten times 4 x 40 km in a military group, then eleven times 4 x 40 km as a civilian and the last two years 4 x 30 km, which is even more impressive knowing that Reint has ankle protheses in both feet. At the finish line in Nijmegen this year his sister asked if this would be his final “Vierdaagse”. “The jury is still out...”

The ERC always shared in the joy of the Vierdaagse, having traditional gladioli in church the Sunday after the completion of the Marches.

Service is at the centre of Reint's being. Not only in work, but also in this free time and his church activities. He did volunteer work in the past in the Bijlmer Bajes for Stichting Exodus and he served in the National Reserve Corps of the Royal Dutch Army. In that capacity he still assists at Prinsjesdag (the start of the Parliamentary year), in Amstelveen at May 4 (Dutch Remembrance day), and on Remembrance Sunday in our church. The Saturday before he assists at the Commonwealth ceremony at the "Nieuwe Ooster". He is always happy to take the minister of the ERC (who officiates at the ceremony) in his 22½ year old Citroën Saxo to the cemetery.

About ten years ago, Reint started helping laying out the Bibles and hymn books in the pews. He did not mind coming to church an hour earlier and he enjoyed making a nice pattern of the books in the pews. For Reint it is a decoration of the church in honour of God. Reint has his own approach and the elders on duty happily follow his lead.

During the pandemic, Reint started going to the Waalse Kerk, who kept their doors open. The building is bigger than the ERC, but the number of congregationers quite low. Not before long Reint was asked to help out in the volunteer team of church officers. Although the pandemic is over, Reint still takes his turns in the Waalse Kerk, he cannot "abandon" them. And so it might be the case that Reint comes to lay out the Bibles and hymnbooks in the ERC before he goes to do the koster duties in the Waalse Kerk... Another example of this dedication and determination.

We congratulate Reint Huizinga with these year's milestones and we thank him for all his dedicated work and service!

Heleen Koning
4 September 2023

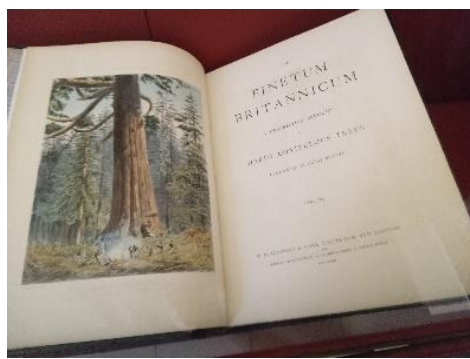


Coffee Morning Expedition



On Tuesday 5 September, 19 people, including our locum minister and his wife, Alan and Judith Sorensen, made their way to Haarlem. Some of us came by train, some by car or taxi and Claire even brought her bicycle with her. With or without walking frames everybody arrived on time – a resilient lot the coffee morning crowd!

We met at the oldest museum of The Netherlands, the Teyler's, for coffee and lovely cakes. If you have not been to this museum yet it is absolutely worth a visit. It is basically an extended curiosity cabinet, which was popular at the time of the museum's establishment. It is a collection of paintings, old books, bones, coins, stones and gems – you name it. We even saw a small cabinet with old pieces of telegraph cables from all around the world. Who would have thought of collecting that?



New in the museum was the enormous house of Pieter Teyler, which has recently been restored. Walking around we had some nice discussions: a painting of a shipwreck off the English coast prompted Maurice to talk about his time as a seaman. And what do you think impressed our minister? He was overheard saying that he had never been to a unisex toilet before, and that this was quite an experience!

Some of us ventured beyond the Teyler's. Janet and Muriel went to the St Bavo church on Haarlem's main square, and Lucy went to the Frans Hals museum, both impressive Haarlem landmarks. At 1 pm we met up again to go on a boat trip around the canals of Haarlem and the Spaarne river. Exactly the right thing to do on one of the hottest days

of the year. Here all the chatting had to stop for a moment, because we were told by the captain to listen to his explanations, which were indeed very informative. Even I, who worked in Haarlem for over 20 years, learned something new.

Enough time to socialize again later on, though, when we made our way to the famous Brinkman cafe on Grote Markt. Here we found some shady tables and were treated to a tasty lunch. All in all a truly wonderful day with a great chance to get to know each other better. Thank you very much Elly, Joke and Sies for organising this trip! -----

Marja Anderton

Upcoming dates for the coffee mornings:

October 3

November 7

December 5



The Food Run

As I have been requested to write about the Food Run, I take it as an opportunity to canvas The Netherlands against other European countries, and back to our groceries shopping habits.

The Food Run has a prequel in the Bread Run which I set up in 2000, with the immediate aid of Thys Polstra and Gilles Van Den Berge, on a 7 days per week basis, picking up bread at LaPlace in Kalverstraat and distributing to Mother Theresa's Sisters of Charity. After that initial year and a half, I was grateful Gilles and Magdala Van Den Berge took over the coordinating of the picking up schedule of the car owners within the church, as well as the coordinating the backup schedule should a car owner be held up. Halfway through the stretch, until the closing down of V&D, I was able to get the pre Voedselbank, the original founder of it, Regina McKnack, as well as De Kloof involved, on the condition each do the picking up themselves on designated days .

Fast Forward to 2015, I set up the Food Run, working closely with Ekoplaza as an organic grocer and with [BuurtBuik – Voedsel Verbindt](#) , providing the surplus food for their 3 times a week (car owners one Sunday for 90 min. a month right after church are particularly welcome) open days for soup, made by a chef from the provided vegetables and for the food packages, for people who missed out on the official Voedselbank strict regulations. Having started out with a single Ekoplaza branch, now the picking up schedule comprises 9 volunteers/ car owners and 8 Ekoplaza's on a 7days a week basis.

From a helicopter view, France has installed laws on the supermarket chains like those we all once visited, with 70+ cash registers, Casino, Carrefour, etc, they themselves reach out to charities for the destination of their surplus food on a daily basis. Until then in The Netherlands as well as in the UK the statistics ruefully apply that 40+% is surplus,

thrown away, more often than not into locked containers. A BBC series visited and awarded British households the worth in money, as to what families would buy and throw away their groceries, even before BestBefore date, being 40%. The amount in cash was an incentive for the families to look closer into their family groceries shopping habits.

The App: #2good2go showed an immediate response from grocers and restaurants and by us consumers alike. Daily, grocers and restaurants offer food packages worth EUR 9 for EUR 3, and dishes of EUR 21 for EUR 7 respectively, at a discount of 66%. By far a WinWin. The incentive shows that the bigger issue is not how the past BestBeforeDate food gets to the consumer, but rather how the consumer is more aware that the BestBeforeDate system is a mere agreement made by the supermarket conglomerate to be able to logistically move food off the shelves. The food itself is still good quite some time longer, eg. old cheese.

I mention our habits, as in behaviours bordering dependency, have underlying bigger themes. Quite some items on grocery lists are fairly to extremely recently developed. Eg. our desire to return home with a holiday or beach tan only just started in the mid 20's when one young Coco Chanel was the first to return from the Deauville beach straight into the Paris salons sunburnt. The rest is history, economy, dermatology.

Pre-Elizabethan England was the last age to have had honey, in moderation while costly, on their diet. Skull studies show that in the Americas, the gentry, followed by the upper class, proceeded to decaying teeth by sugar made cheap and accessible to ordinary people. Grains, full of complex sugars which our body breaks down in highly nutritional parts, were replaced by the potato, technically a vegetable, also from the Americas. Corn flakes, technically popped corn with sugar and milk added, is any dentist and nutritionist's bad dream on the effects on the long run to our teeth, and the poor nutritional value to the body.

Zooming out, we are, and yours truly included, the well-targeted group of advertising of the food industry to get our sugar rush, available in almost everything we like, also and especially in salty foods, when walking the aisles of the supermarket.

=Joe Alibasah =



Music Notes

The new season is here and that means lots of lots of beautiful music in our church services! The choir is busy at work after a well-deserved summer break. We'll be singing twice in September, including the 24th, when we'll celebrate the Harvest. Grand singing and a delicious meal afterward - what could be better? We'll sing twice in October and then in November for Remembrance Sunday.

And believe it or not, that brings us to Advent on the first Sunday of December! I know it feels very early to be talking about Christmas plans, but by the time the next *Record* comes out your December calendar may be pretty full, so here are some dates you might want to book right away. The choir will sing the first and third Sundays of Advent in the morning service, but that's not all! This year's *Carols By Candlelight* will be on Friday evening, Dec. 15th at 20:00. You won't want to miss this annual service of Nine Lessons and Carols, with lots of splendid music by the choir, the beautiful readings of the Christmas Story, and plenty of favorite carols for you to sing, too! All of this is in our splendidly decorated church – Christmas tree, candles – and delicious coffee and Christmas cookies afterward! This is a perfect opportunity for you to invite your friends to join us in this pre-Christmas musical celebration.



But there's more! The afternoon of Sunday Dec. 17th will be our annual joint Carol Service with the other three congregations around the Spui making up our H4H club – the Lutheran Church, the Krijtberg (RC) and the Singelkerk (Mennonite). That service will be in the Singelkerk at 16:00. on the 17th. And then, of course, there is our lovely Christmas Eve service on the 24th, with choir, lots of carol singing, and the grandest night of the Church year.

So even though it's still September, turn the page to December and be sure to mark down these lovely occasions!

Oh, and by the way, the concert season is up and in full swing. As many of you know, we have a full and varied program of performances in our church, presented by people outside the ERC who rent our beautiful facility to present marvelous concerts. Do check out the Concert page on the church website to find a complete listing.

Make a joyful noise!
Richard

Membership notices

Baptised

Chloe Wanjiku Murage Parker,

Daughter of Reuben Murage and Jill Parker

Admitted to Membership

Wendie Schaffer

Guy Parfitt



The December edition of The Record will be put together by Margaret Davis.

Please send your contribution before November 5th to: margaret.davis@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)