



# The Record

June & July 2014

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The English Reformed Church  
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## From our Interim Moderator

Dear Folks at the ERC Amsterdam,

This newsletter was delayed for a week, as you will read elsewhere, in order to bring you news of the outcome of the overwhelming vote for Lance Stone to be your new minister, and his considered positive response. So as we head into the holiday season, many of you can look forward to a well earned break. The Consistory, the Nominating Committee and others have worked hard not only at maintaining things as they are, but in seeking the way forward when your new minister arrives. I have been grateful to the locums who have filled the pulpit and carried out some pastoral care over the last year, as they have made my task so much easier as well as enjoying their time with you. Each one wrote to me to say how much they enjoyed their time with you, and their willingness to be used in the future if needed.

Of course there is still work to be done in planning the induction date and service, and a welcome to Lance and his wife Sally. Some of that is done by the Presbytery of Europe in consultation with your Consistory. You'll hear all the news of that after the summer.

So we "Look forward in Faith" (as Hymn 237 begins), "All time is in God's hands" – leisure and work; Christian service and family; the present and the future; in the ERC Amsterdam and wherever we find ourselves. May God richly bless you in the coming months, whatever they hold for you; and as you prepare for your new minister, and he prepares to lead you forward in faith.

Sincere good wishes,

Rev Jim Cowie  
(Interim Moderator)

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## Ministers in the Coming Months

In the coming months we will be welcoming various ministers and preachers to our church to help lead the Sunday services and provide pastoral help. For the month of June we welcome the Rev. Bill Brown, who also led our services in November. In July we will have the Rev. Norman Hutchison leading our services. Rev. Hutchison is no stranger to our church, as he has preached here before. The Rev. John Bell will return to lead our services for the first three weeks in August. We are extremely grateful for all the guest ministers and preachers who have led worship in our church for nearly a year now. It has been a challenging, but most enjoyable, time!

## Finance Report

January – March 2014, Amounts in €

	<u>2014</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>Change</u>
Income			
Donations	14.367,68	18.556,15	- 4.188,47
Collections	10.044,87	11.535,52	- 1.490,65
Church hire	5.866,95	4.839,60	1.027,35
Concerts	3.050,50	2.525,80	524,70
Weddings	2.625,00	450,00	2.175,00
Church shop	55,00	200,00	- 145,00
Flowers	167,5	141,57	25,93
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	36.177,50	38.248,64	- 2.071,14

From a financial point of view the first quarter of this year showed a slight decrease in income, therefore I would like to encourage you all to reflect on your individual ability to support the congregation. The expenses were down, mainly because of the lower monthly obligation to pay salaries, as we currently do not have a minister. Hopefully when this *Record* is in your hands I can look forward to paying a monthly stipend again, because this means we will have the perspective of having a new Reverend among us!

Other good news is that we just finished the financial aspects of the *Mulanje Mission Hospital Concert* of last year. Together with significant donations from the Rotary Club and other individuals, as well as all of you who enjoyed the wonderful music, we raised €9.269,21, which will be topped up by *De Wilde Ganzen* group by approximately 55%, to a total of about €14.300 - **GREAT NEWS!**

I want to thank you all for your commitment and support of our congregation, especially during this interim time. For me it was exciting to experience so many different preachers and to see in how many different and colourful ways GOD sends His message of Love and Grace into the world.

As always, if you have any further questions please feel free to contact me anytime at [treasurer@ercadam.nl](mailto:treasurer@ercadam.nl) or (0294) 77 29 34.

*Thorsten König, Treasurer*

## Rev. Dr. Lance Stone

*After the Sunday service on 25 May, ERC members and adherents voted to call the Rev. Lance Stone to be our new minister. A few days later he accepted the call and we hope to welcome him into the family of our church in September or October. We've used some of his own words to give you a short introduction to Lance and his wife Sally:*



Brought up, trained and ordained in the Church of Scotland, Lance ministered for seven years in Aberdeen before transferring to the United Reformed Church which he has served for the past 30 years, firstly for 12 years in a very multi-racial pastorate in Hackney, East London; then teaching for 9 years at the URC training College, Westminster College, Cambridge; and latterly serving two churches in the city-centre and suburbs of Cambridge.

He is married to Sally, who works in the Learning Support Department of the 'other' university in Cambridge, Anglian Ruskin University. They have four grown-up children, Naomi, Chloe, Robyn and Euan. Naomi and her husband currently live in Argentina and the others all live in London.

Lance reads as much as he can, enjoys watching films, listens to a wide range of music (with a particular obsession with Bob Dylan), goes to the gym regularly, plays golf (badly) and loves walking (particularly up hills when he can find some).

*We look forward to welcoming you, Lance and Sally!*

## Consistory Meetings of April, May & June

The past months were quite eventful. We had the AGM at the end of March, chaired by the Very Rev. David Arnott. The meeting was well attended. The minutes of the meeting will be available before the end of June. And then of course we prepared for the May 25th service: the service led by the Rev. Dr. Lance Stone as sole nominee, proposed by the Nominating Committee. The voting by the congregation afterwards led to the call which Rev. Lance Stone accepted. Consistory is very happy that the vacancy period was relatively short. The induction service will be planned by the Presbytery of Europe as soon as we know when Rev. Stone can start in Amsterdam.

**Membership matters:** *Ineke Adolf* (widow of Simon Fraaij, elder of the ERC in the eighties) was readmitted into membership of the ERC by Resolution of Consistory.

*Iain and Celeste Majcher* and their son Andrew are leaving the Netherlands for Edinburgh. Iain has taken on a job as youth worker, before starting his Divinity studies next year.

*Fiona and Allan Poot-Campbell* will move to Glasgow at the end of the summer with their children Jamie and Leila. Fiona will start a new job there in August.

It was suggested that after the closing date for the Electoral Roll, people who are applying for membership should await the start of the new minister.

**Youth work:** Celeste Majcher gave her report as Youth Worker in the June meeting. She resumed her duties after her maternity leave. Celeste's contract will expire on June 30th. She presented Consistory with an overview of activities: the Bread Service, the Family Services, Junior Church and the 20-30's group. The proposals she gave will be discussed in the next meeting. They all have to be assessed in light of the fact that we will have a new minister soon.

During the previous meeting we discussed a few topics concerning the crèche, Sunday School and Junior Church. The ages of the different groups will be put in the liturgy sheet. It was also decided that the Consistory room can be used as a family room during the service, in order to accommodate parents with young children who are not in the crèche.

**Fabric: Church:** in July and August maintenance work will be carried out in the church. The Property Convener will liaise with staff and other churches (the *AlleDagKerk* & the *Diensten met Belangstellenden*) using our building.

**Stichting Begijnhof:** we are still waiting for a reply of the Stichting Begijnhof regarding our last proposal to reach an agreement about the opening hours of the courtyard. In the proposal the ERC is trying to maintain free access to the church so all the activities can continue without any complication, while at the same time reaching out to the residents in their quest for safety in the Begijnhof courtyard.

**Other matters:** We are looking into ways to participate in the Presbytery project for this year: assisting a corresponding church in Lebanon, which is very active in supporting refugees from Syria.

This year instead of the annual barbecue we will have a potluck lunch in church after the Family service of June 29<sup>th</sup>.

The Rev. Norman Hutchinson will be with us in July. The Rev. John Bell will lead three services in August.

It was Iain Majcher's last meeting as a member of Consistory before moving to Scotland. Consistory thanked Iain for all the work he has done during his role as Deacon, but also for the Youth Presbytery, the family services and for the church in general. We wished him and his family every blessing in this new stage of their life.

The next Consistory meeting is still to be determined, either June 30<sup>th</sup> or July 7<sup>th</sup>.

*Heleen Koning*

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## **BREAD: Mid-Week Worship Services**

### **Supper with reflection and worship**

The BREAD service is an informal meditative service led by members of the congregation using a blend of different worship styles and including a short meditation on a theme. It is held monthly at 19:30, beginning with soup and bread. The service begins at 20:00 and lasts approximately 45 minutes. We end with coffee and perhaps something sweet.

The BREAD service usually takes place on the second Thursday of each month. The next BREAD service will be held on 12 June, and after the summer break the next service is on 11 September. It would be great to see you there! Please do come and share with us.

For more information see Veronica Garcia-Robles.

*Jesus said, "I am the Bread of Life"*



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## **Bible Study**

Don't forget the weekly Bible Study at the manse, J.W. Brouwersstraat 9 in Amsterdam. Led by members of Consistory, it is open to anyone who would like to learn more about the Bible and discuss it with others. Every Wednesday evening from 7:30pm, unless otherwise announced in church.

## Full Circle

There had to be a very good reason to return to Scotland after 20 years living in the Netherlands. Allan and I had many conversations about the lure of the mountains and pure old nostalgia, but there needed to be something worthwhile to spring to. Life was so good here. Then I learned about *Sistema Scotland* and how it is changing children's lives through music, and the vague idea we had talked about suddenly found focus.

It's based on *Il Sistema*, a national programme of music education and social action in Venezuela that teaches some 400,000 children from disadvantaged backgrounds every day. The key to its success is that music becomes embedded in the children's lives, playing with others in the orchestra becomes normal and self-esteem begins to soar. Richard Holloway, the former Bishop of Edinburgh, heard about this, went out to visit the barrios in Caracas and thought this could just work in deprived parts of Scotland. It started in Stirling (40 minutes north of Glasgow) five years ago, and a second programme began last year in Glasgow. It is known as Big Noise and it involves the whole community, from babies to grannies. Before a note is even played, the team spends 18 months talking to social workers and police, teachers and people who live there, about the problems and what the programme sets out to do, so everyone knows what is going on. The orchestra is the connecting factor and because the instruction and approach is so good, the level is high. The children can really play and music becomes a vehicle for expression and communication. If a child drops out, they receive pastoral care, the family is visited and a way forward is usually found.

It isn't a Christian organisation, but it's easy to see why Richard Holloway was attracted to the *Il Sistema* mission. He is a theologian whose books I've always sought for ideas and thoughts. When I was at St. Mary's Music School in Edinburgh he was the Bishop of the cathedral connected with the school. I often snuck in to listen to Evensong and to his sermons. His message was immediate and astute and made you want to live better, so it seemed perfectly correct that he was behind *Sistema Scotland*. As soon as I heard about it I wanted to be involved, too.

And soon I will be, in August, in Glasgow, exactly 20 years after I arrived in Holland. My Dutch journey began at the Utrecht Conservatory of Music and that is when I started coming to the ERC, thanks to a nudge from a Dutch friend. I came and loved the thinking and the atmosphere, and I looked forward to the pilgrimage from Utrecht to Amsterdam every Sunday. I began freelancing as a violinist early on and ended up working for seven years with the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra. Thanks to an introduction from Gillian Cowie I got a job teaching violin at the British School. At another church coffee I ended up speaking to Mike Shaw, head of the English department at



Radio Netherlands Worldwide. During our chat I enthused to him about my recent trip to Bosnia to teach and develop an ensemble. I also revealed my broadcasting passion and he took a chance on me that shaped my next ten years: making radio programmes and interviewing people all around the world. Wherever I was, whatever I was doing, the impulse to get to church was strong, something I'd never felt before. I wanted to be part of a community that seemed so much more than an English-speaking congregation in the Netherlands. I wanted to hear sermons that made daily life more meaningful. I wanted to play in worship and feel the stark contrast with playing for an audience. I even learnt how to make shortbread for the Harvest Thanksgiving lunch.

Life in the Netherlands has been rich; it's seen me as a naïve student, a young professional, and turning from a violinist to a radio journalist and back again; it's seen me baptised and become a Deacon and Elder. It's seen me hum and haw about marriage and finally give my heart to Allan. And it's seen me become a mum as well. I've stretched out each phase as long as I can, and it seems there's a new phase to be had, somewhere else. It's time for Jamie and Leila to meet a mountain and to know my family better, and time for me to help embed Govanhill with music. Allan has no fear of change and that gives me courage, too. He plans to commute for a bit until he finds his thing in Scotland.

As Iain has mentioned elsewhere in this *Record*, the future is exciting for the ERC. Things will settle again and grow in different directions with different people. Churches need that, and our faith needs to be renewed and refreshed, too. But I will always be grateful for the little *hof* behind the little door full of people who helped me find mine.

*Fiona Poot-Campbell*

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## An Open Church

Our church remains open 4-5 days a week for visitors, thanks to the help of a group of generous volunteers who give a few hours of their time to be present in the ERC during the open church time. There are thousands of people who pass through our doors on these open days.

Helping with the guiding in the church is a lot of fun. We do it in pairs, so that the volunteers are never alone in the church.

We are always in need of new volunteers. If you have 2-3 free hours, either every week or every now and then, please consider joining our group of helpers. No experience necessary!

If you are able to help out, or just want more information, please contact [open-church@ercadam.nl](mailto:open-church@ercadam.nl) for more information, or speak to Els Nooij at church.

Come and help us keep the church open!

## Youth Day

*"The LORD is near to all them that call on him, to all that call on him in truth."  
Psalm 145:18*

On a sunny Saturday morning when many were heading off to the sea or sitting in a garden, park or cafe enjoying the sun, Celeste, Iain and Veronica headed off to Herengracht 88....no not to the famous Dutch beer cafe 'the Arendsnest', but to Vineyard Church for a youth work training.

A speaker from Northern Ireland was invited over to speak and lead the group in two sessions. The day started by watching a short movie together from [4to4window.com](http://4to4window.com). What a powerful message of how we are potentially losing a whole generation! Go to [youtube](http://youtube) and search for *4 14 Window It's Time to Wake Up*; it is worth the effort, it was a wake-up call for me. In the morning we focused on what prayer is and how and why we should teach kids the Gospel in Church. It is sometimes easy to think that especially for the younger kids/babies it is easy to think that they don't understand anything so why teach them the Gospel or pray for them; however, we were reminded that this is exactly what we need to do. 'How wonderful would it be,' the speaker said, 'as a parent to pick up your kid from Sunday School and be told by the teacher that you have been praying quietly all morning for your child'.....such a small thing, but something I at least rarely do.

Before we broke for lunch we shared in worship together, a special thing too as there we were standing next to other youth leaders from across Amsterdam and the Netherlands. It was a nice reminder that we are not alone, that we in the ERC are not alone.

After lunch we were given a number of practical tips on how to put into practice what it was that we had learnt that morning, a number of websites and books we could also try out and use. Finally we split up into small groups to discuss some case studies and hear from other youth workers how they think, what they do and what works for them. A great exchange of information and wisdom.

All in all, it was a really worthwhile day, a day of inspiration and reassurance that we are not alone and that we can teach....we just need to ask for a bit of help! Lets hope that there is another training soon so that even more of our teachers can get the chance to be inspired.

*Iain Majcher*

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## Church Library on Website

Most of us know about the church library in the church hall. Many of us have borrowed books there, or just browsed through what's on offer.

You can now look for books online, on the ERC website: [www.ercadam.nl](http://www.ercadam.nl). You can find the library at the end of the line of options on the home page, after 'news', 'our church', etc. When you click on 'library' you will first find an introduction, and then you can search for books by 'authors' or 'categories'.

## Concerts in Our Church

June 8	3:15pm	Purcell Kamerorkest: works by Purcell, Fische, Locatelli, Farina and Fasch.
June 15	3:15pm	Coro Encanto: "Cantando de Pianos"—works from southern Europe & South America incl. works by Fauré, Rossini, Montsalvatge, Vila, etc.
June 22	3:15pm	Vocal Ensemble Lassus Consort: works by Bach, Lassus, Morley, Mozart, de Sermisy, etc.
June 24	1:00pm	Methodist Ladies College Choir, Melbourne, Australia: works by Lotti, Mozart, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Chilcott, etc. <i>Free concert!</i>
June 29	3:15pm	Collegium Vocale Consonant Abcoude: works by Schubert, Mendelssohn and Brahms.
July 3	1:00pm	Augustus Woodrow-Tomizuka (guitar): "Guitar is the Star"—works by Bach, Weiss, Giuliani, Turina, Piazzolla, etc. <i>Free concert!</i>
July 6	3:15pm	The choir of Imperial College, London: works by Vivaldi, Purcell, Verdi, Britten, etc. <i>Free concert!</i>
August 17	3:15pm	Orkest Bacock Sommer: works by Bach, Abel, Eichner, Mozart & Handel.

*Tickets may be obtained at the church 30 minutes before the concert. Should you require more information, updates and changes are listed on the church's website and copies of the concert lists available in the foyer of the church.*

## The Flower List

You can help us keep fresh flowers in the church for all our services and throughout the week. If you would like to remember someone or mark a special occasion, you might consider sponsoring the flowers for one or more Sundays. We ask for a €15 donation for this.

If you are interested, you can write your name on the Flower List which hangs in the Consistory Chamber. You can give your donation to Susan Polstra or to one of the Consistory members on duty, or make your donation through the church's bank account (details on the inside cover of this *Record*), marked "Flowers".

## ***“The Times They Are a-Changin’”***

When Bob Dylan wrote these words in 1964 we were not even a twinkle in our parents' eyes. However, 50 years later these words could not be truer for the ERC or for us personally.

As we write this we have just heard that the Rev. Lance Stone will be taking up the call to be minister in the ERC. These are exciting times ahead, as we know that with him not only will he continue to look after the flock which is the ERC, but also that change will follow. A scary thought perhaps for many, but one that always

comes with new people. However, this is one change that we will not be able to share with you all. Not because we don't want to, but because we are moving on and following God's calling in our lives...we are moving to Scotland. Iain will be taking up a post as Youth Worker in Gorgie Dalry,



a parish Church not far from Haymarket station in Edinburgh. Celeste will be taking the year to enjoy being with Andrew and watching him grow up as she gets used to yet another culture....

This is all happening very quickly and we will be in Amsterdam till the end of June. Then we are off on holiday to Celeste's family in South Africa for the month of July before a quick stopover in Amsterdam to load the boxes in the van and head to the ferry to take us to Newcastle and on to Scotland. Iain starts work at the beginning of August. We have had some wonderful times in the ERC and we want to thank everybody for their love and support. We wish you every blessing wherever you end up; be it here in the ERC or further afield around the world, may God bless you, your family and your work. Finally, never forget those precious words in the Gospel of Matthew; "...do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

*Iain, Celeste & Andrew Majcher*

## Coffee Mornings

The monthly Tuesday coffee mornings are open to anyone who would like to join in some informal fellowship. The gatherings are hosted by various people at their homes, and begin at about 10:30am. If you would like more information about the coffee mornings, or if you would like to host a coffee morning at your home once in awhile, please contact either Elly Kalf (020 6479174) or Sies Plokker (020 4707944). The coffee mornings will begin after a short summer break in July and August. Here are the dates and places of the next coffee mornings:



2 September	Sies Plokker	Amsterdam
7 October	Ans & Charles van Saagsvelt	Hoofddorp
4 November	Elly Kalf	Amsterdam
2 December	Pat Rood-van Beem	Sassenheim

## The Bread Run!

Every Saturday someone from our church picks up the leftover bread products from a large bakery in the centre of the city and delivers it to a wonderful charity that provides a warm meal for homeless and needy folks.



We have been helping out with this project for many years now. Unfortunately we do not always have enough volunteers to help pick up the bread. If you have a car, or access to a car, and are able to help one Saturday each month for a pickup at either 8:00pm (off-season) or 9:00pm (high tourist season), or even every now and then,

please consider chipping in to keep the important "bread run" going!

For more information, please contact Gilles at 020-3882778 or email him at [gilles@alice.nl](mailto:gilles@alice.nl). Thank you!

## Food Bank

These are hard times for a lot of people in our city. If you would like to help out those who are going through difficulties financially, a good way is to help stock the Food Bank (*Voedselbank*) in Amsterdam. You are welcome to bring non-perishable food items and other household items such as toothpaste, soap, etc. to our church on Sundays. A box will be provided in the vestibule of the church for these items. It's a good way to help our neighbours!

## Thoughts on Reconciliation

*This article was published in a different form in the Dutch newspaper "Trouw":*

In the wake of any crisis there is a need for healing, whether that crisis be divorce, loss of a loved one, sickness, broken relationships, anger, revenge, traumas, disaster or war. Healing in such tragic situations is often a never-ending process.

In the wake of the healing of my own difficulties, I longed for reconciliation with both myself and those near to me. I longed for reconciliation with God so that I would be accepted for my humanity and my needs, despite the complexities of my past.

After years of missionary work in Africa, Albert Schweitzer, a German-French doctor and theologian, was asked what he considered the meaning of life to be. His answer was, "That all men be able to die with compassion, in their own field of endeavor." He added, "The future of mankind depends on this."

To be compassionate towards our fellow human beings is a noble goal. But how can we achieve that goal? Perhaps it can be achieved by not slavishly holding on to any idea of self. Or perhaps, on the other hand, we need to redefine what self is and begin living in that definition.

In my particular case I went in search of sincerity, righteousness and integrity. I met up with my own shortcomings and ambivalences which had been hindering me. My conscience was shaken to the core. I took a clear and hard look at the real motives behind all that had happened in my life. That was anything but easy to do or to accept.

Why had I done or said this or that? Had I unconsciously been asking for something in return or been wanting my own needs to be met? Had I always only said what others had wanted to hear, or had I spoken the truth from my heart?

Reconciliation implies sometimes letting go of something and forgiving.

Reconciliation implies no longer being afraid of ending up alone in an empty pit.

Reconciliation means attaining a oneness of worth and humility within yourself.

It is a process of discovering true freedom. Henri Nouwen, a Dutch theologian, says that only in such freedom will we ever find ourselves a home for our hearts. He adds, "We are safe in God's hands and we can point our sadness or our grief towards Him alone."

With reconciliation one experiences a wave of love gradually engulfing one's being. When a person has experienced reconciliation their encounter with humanity changes and they are able to accept criticism without bitterness. One learns not to underestimate others and to respect all sorts of sincere beliefs.

Reconciliation can be a lifelong struggle, as it whittles away at the roughness of one's heart and slowly softens the hard edges of one's personality. The world remains the same difficult place that it has always been, but reconciliation has changed the inner person. An unknown future is opening up before you and you look forward to moving on in joy.

In forgiveness and reconciliation, you can listen to your own silence because you are moving on, and later others will be able to understand your silence.

*Muriel van Gasselt-Braconnier*

## Birth

Otis William Sadler

2 April

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## Baptism

Dean Austin Lotter Homan

19 April

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## Ladies' Fellowship

Several of the women in our congregation meet about every five weeks for dinner and conversation, sharing our experiences of life and faith. We meet in each other's homes and take turns organising a theme about which to talk. We have tried to reach as many women as possible but realise that, inadvertently, we may have missed some. It is an all-age group from young to much older! If you would like to join us and are not yet on our contact list, please e-mail Peggy—[peggy.krol@planet.nl](mailto:peggy.krol@planet.nl)

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## A Paperless Record

*The Record* is also available by e-mail. If you would like to receive your copy of *The Record* by e-mail instead of through the post, please let Susan Polstra know. Her contact details are below.

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The deadline for the next *Record* is July 20th...



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