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The Record

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The English Reformed Church
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www.ercadam.nl

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Minister's Letter

Dear Friends,

I am writing this letter in an important week in the life of the Church, but one which can all too easily go unnoticed: The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This week is an opportunity every year for churches throughout the world to remember that despite all our differences - and indeed our conflicts and hostilities - we are all part of the one world-wide Body of Christ, and furthermore that one heartfelt desire of Jesus is that his people should be one. Perhaps the clearest expression of this comes in a highly-charged prayer found in John's Gospel that Jesus prayed as events were closing in on him and he realised the inevitability of his arrest and execution. In such extreme and desperate circumstances, it is crucial to note what was on his mind and what were his deepest concerns. And his first priority was that the people who he was leaving behind should be one. His prayer then for his disciples and those who believed as a result of their testimony was 'that they may all be one. As you, father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.' (John 17:20) Clearly, as far as Jesus was concerned, the world could not be expected to believe in him if his people were not united.

Unity, of course, does not mean uniformity. There is bound to be variety and diversity in the life of the Church because God is far too big and mysterious to be grasped by any one tradition and expression. But in all our God-given differences there has to be some clear evidence of unity and solidarity between the people of God.

In this coming year, this is especially important. 2017 marks the 500th anniversary of one of the great schisms in the Christian church in what we call the Reformation, which resulted in the break-up of the medieval church and the emergence of the Protestant transition, of which we are a part. Tragically, it also led to years of hatred and warfare between the different factions that emerged and from which we continue to bear the scars.

In this sad situation, I would draw your attention to a couple of things that I find encouraging. The first is increasing contact and co-operation between the four denominations represented in the churches on the Spui - ourselves (the Reformed), the Lutherans, the Roman Catholics and the Mennonites. Plans are in place for one event in this significant year that will bring us all together to commemorate this anniversary - of which more in due course. The other encouragement is the monthly *Taizé* service with the Begijnhofkapel, the Roman Catholic chapel yards away from us in the Begijnhof. The last such service a few days ago was especially beautiful with quite wonderful singing and a marvellous sense of unity and fellowship. It would be good to see more of our congregation support this service, offering a visible expression of our unity in Christ.

Christian unity is not just a side-show. It was Jesus' heartfelt prayer for his people in his poignant prayer to his Father as he faced arrest and execution. In this year of all years let us consider how we might be the answer to his prayer.

Best wishes to you all,
Lance

Report from Consistory

Consistory met in December on the 12th officially, and in January in a social setting to start off the new year.

We looked back at a wonderful Christmas service in which music played a big part. The Nativity Play was an original by playwright Nick Thomas, very well-written and entertaining, and greatly appreciated for the interaction between children, choir and musical director. The Carols by Candlelight service was busier than ever, with wonderful music by choir, soloist and musicians, and so were the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services. A big thanks to all who took part. And a special thank you to those who decorated the church so beautifully.

Library: Consistory considered various options for keeping the library. One is to use the upstairs vestry. Access may be an issue, however. Another option is the deaconry at the back of the church. The problem here is space, since it is used during concerts. Other ideas involved having a cupboard on top of the hymnbook cupboard or somewhere in that corner - we would have to seek expert advice for these options. Pastor Lance proposed first selecting the books worth keeping & then reviewing the situation.

On membership matters we received the sad news of the passing of first Dick van Spijk on December 27th and then John Patz on January 13th. Our thoughts and prayers are with those close to them.

Safeguarding Panel: the two candidates joining Peggy Krol on the panel are Veronica Garcia Robles and Sally Stone. Pastor Lance will check dates with Julie Gardner from the church in Brussels for a safeguarding training, which will be organized for all working with children and youth in the church.

The Mulanje Fundraising evening on the 8th of December turned out to be an excellent evening and a triumph for the organisers and everyone involved, particularly Sally, Annie and Pamela. It did however require a huge effort and it might prove difficult to pull off something similar this year.

Seppo Stout has had his last Consistory meeting. Consistory thanks him for all the work he did for the church, first as deacon and later as Property Convener. Seppo was ordained a deacon in 1999. After a pause of a couple of years he resumed his service on Consistory in 2008. Seppo continues to give time to the church as member of the Property Committee and of course in our choir. Consistory is presently considering nominations for eldership. We expect to be able to present a candidate to the congregation by the end of February.

Next meetings of Consistory will be held on February 6th and March 6th.

Heleen Koning
scriba@ercadam.nl

A Victorian Night for MMH

How to organize a successful fundraising event?

There are only a few things that are needed: Commitment, Continuity and Charity, mixed with a large portion of Entertainment and Involvement.

The December 8th Mulanje Mission Hospital Fundraiser demonstrated all of these in abundance. Not only did we have a fantastic star (Ashley Ramsden performing his Charles Dickens One Man Show) but we had a full house (another vital ingredient).

The best news is that we have achieved our target for new equipment for the hospital's laboratory and medical director Ruth Shakespeare is already setting up the project with *Wilde Ganzen*.

A huge big Thank You goes to all of you who ensured an absolutely fabulous, unforgettable evening, especially Pamela Woolley, Annie Francis and Sally Stone.

Here are a few photos which hopefully give you an idea of how wonderful it was.
(Photos: Ingrid & Jens Sørensen)



Mulanje Mission

Our support matters

Over the years, the English Reformed Church, with additional contributions from *Wilde Ganzen* and International Rotary Club Amsterdam, has sponsored a number of projects for the Mulanje Mission Hospital in Malawi. Our latest fundraising event, a Victorian Christmas Evening in December, was a great success and the € 25.000 target to improve the hospitals laboratory services has been reached.

“At the moment we have one big room in which we try to do biochemistry, hematology, microbiology with very little differentiation of equipment. So the funding will first of all help us develop a dedicated microbiology lab, which is so important to the diagnosis of tropical diseases and then to develop our hematology and biochemistry departments,” says Dr. Ruth Shakespeare.

Ruth has been Medical Director at the Mulanje Mission Hospital for six years and although the overall healthcare situation in Malawi is deteriorating, it has constantly improved at the Mulanje Mission Hospital.

“You have been supporting us magnificently over the years and thanks to your fundraising in 2015 we’ve just opened a new 20-bedded antenatal ward for our maternity department. Before this the women coming to give birth had to lie on mats on the floor in our waiting area,” she says.



Photo: Ruth Shakespeare

Entrance to the new antenatal ward.



Photo: Ruth Shakespeare

The hospital was founded by Scottish missionaries in the 19th century and retains its links with the Church of Scotland. Today the mission has a 204-bed hospital, two schools, a nursing college and a small factory as well as a very big public and primary healthcare programme looking after about 85,000 people in 72 villages. The challenges are huge in a country estimated to be the third poorest in the world and where three out of four people live on less than one dollar a day.

“Climate change and floods ruins almost 90 percent of the harvest. So a normal production of say 50 bags of sweet potatoes are down to only five bags. Obviously there’s nothing to sell and already by September the stock runs out,” explains Ruth Shakespeare. Then there’s the impact of HIV/Aids, which is enormous in the whole of Malawi, with 10.6 percent of the adult population living with HIV.

“In the Mulanje district it’s even higher and the impact on our health services is huge. Two out of three admissions to our hospital are HIV-related and as part of our palliative care programme we have 8,000 patients in treatment.” The good news is that over the last decade, impressive efforts to reduce the HIV epidemic have been made at both national and local levels and new infections have dramatically declined.

Dr. Ruth Shakespeare and her staff are doing a tremendous job under very difficult circumstances and although she stresses that their finances work in God’s economy and that all they can do is their best, the hospital greatly appreciates the continuing support from the English Reformed Church in helping to achieve the things they set out to do.

Jens Anders Wejsmark Sørensen

Outreach to refugees - after the Knit-In

The successful Knit-In in the ERC in July last year had a follow-up for Gillian Walker, organiser. “We sewed together six blankets of knitted squares, the work of about 60 people, which will find their way to a refugee centre in Riekerhaven, Amsterdam”. The enthusiasm and energy made Gillian decide to focus on outreach to refugees. “There was so much good will. The Knit-In, the actual doing something, touched people’s hearts”. She decided to hand over the co-ordination of the *Kloof* cooking to Tom Flanagan and start this new project.

How do you go about such a project? “The first idea was that it should not be about having long meetings, but just doing things. And finding out what refugees really need”.

The ERC was not the only church interested in outreach to refugees, Gillian discovered in November at a interdenominational meeting of churches who form a network, organised by Rogier Schravendeel. “That meeting was very enlightening”, Gillian explained. “Contrary to what we might think, the influx of refugees has seriously decreased and the need for food, health care, shelter and other necessities - for most refugees - is covered. There are two main groups needing help: those about to round off their applications for refugee status, and those who have completed this process and been turned down. The people who are at the brink of finally getting their papers and a home, ready to start building a new life in our society, see the support system gradually disappear. That is when they need friends who are not part of their traumatized past, but who are a link to their new environment. It is about building memories together”. The group whose application has been turned down need shelter, medical care and of course, also friends.

The idea was born to organise activities *with* refugees, rather than *for* them. “It is not only fun, but it also helps bridging language barriers. You do not need only words to have contact.” Another thing that Gillian learned is the importance of continuity. “When you organise an activity, it needs to take place at regular intervals : same place, same time, building up some routine, so that everyone knows what to count on. It is about commitment for the long term”.



Gillian met with Vladan Potic from our congregation, who does volunteer work in the Wereldhuis, an organisation that supports “undocumented” refugees. Also, Jo Matthews and Ingrid Sørensen decided to offer their talents and time. They are now in a phase of brainstorming and gathering ideas from the congregation and beyond.

Michael Blazey came up with the idea of football. The plan is to organise football matches on a regular basis which include teams that are mixed with church members and refugees. A first match is planned on 24/25 March. At the moment, anyone from this church or other churches that would like to join as a player or a ref are welcome. The ERC is part of a network of about 50 churches in Amsterdam that do outreach programmes, and those 50 churches are also being notified about this football idea. It will be a nice way to bond with refugees and other church members, and it helps your fitness levels too!



Information about activities will be given via the notice board in our church, the newsletter, the *Record* and in the announcements of the liturgy sheet. Anyone who is interested or would like to bring in an idea or volunteer, please contact Gillian at gillian.walker.ams@icloud.com

Heleen Koning

New chairs for the ERC

Our church has 3 main seating sections: 2 are pews, and 1 is chairs. The chairs are in the newest part of the church, the 17th-century addition. The present chairs have been there - according to some of our older members - since before WWII, and they have more than outlasted their life span. Many of them have already been taken out because they were no longer safe.

Quite some time ago the ERC received a considerable donation to be applied to replacing the church's chairs. For a while not much happened because, among other things, the church was soon dealing with a minister leaving and a new minister arriving. Some years passed.

Those years behind us, a number of Dutch church chair makers were approached. We also got in touch with our sister Church of Scotland congregation in Geneva, which had gone through a 'changing of the chairs' just a year or so earlier. Peter Tulloch, who was instrumental in choosing Geneva's new chairs, wrote us a very informative discourse about how they had surveyed all the possibilities in both Switzerland and abroad. They even had a sample chair sent down that had been especially made for the Church of Scotland's main church, St Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh. Geneva, however, decided against that one - too heavy-looking for the Geneva situation - and eventually zeroed in on a chair from North Yorkshire, UK.

As it happened, most of those at the ERC involved in selecting a new chair took a liking to the one chosen by Geneva. A sample chair that was shipped to Amsterdam met with general approval, being well designed and good for back and bottom. Various stains (varnishes) were discussed - do we want the stain to be the same as the previous chairs, or should it be the same as the oak pews? Someone pointed out that the pew stain is the product of seasoning by generations of churchgoers and their wet raincoats, a process that cannot really be copied onto the new chairs.

Also, a chair is not a pew, and has its own particular characteristic. After much deliberation, a stain darker than Geneva's, somewhat in the direction of the current chairs, was agreed upon. We have ordered 110 chairs; the donation covered the costs.



The new ERC chairs as seen in the Auditoire de Calvin, Geneva

We hope to have the new chairs in place before this year's Easter service. Please let us know if you have a good idea for where the old chairs - the ones that are still in good shape - can go. Perhaps for a community centre in your area, or - for old time's sake - 1 or 2 for your home?

*Thijs Polstra,
Member of the Property Committee*

H4H

Four churches in a "holy" rectangle, that is what H4H stands for. The pastors of the Krijtberg, the Doopsgezinde Kerk (de Singelkerk), the Old Lutheran Church started in 2000 ecumenical initiatives and later the English Reformed Church joined. From triangle to rectangle. Some of these initiatives have been organised for years, like the multilingual carol services around Christmas.

In the week of Prayer for Christian Unity the four churches came together in the Lutheran church for vespers.

Later this year the churches will come together to mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. You can read more about this in the next edition of the *Record*.



Ds Henk Leegte of the Doopsgezinde Kerk, Rev Lance Stone and Heleen Koning of the ERC, Father Gregory of the Krijtberg and Ds. Andreas Wöhle of the Old Lutheran Church.

Study, Services, Fellowship

Coffee Mornings



The coffee mornings take place on the first Tuesday of each month. A wonderful opportunity for fellowship with members of our congregation who carry the history of our church. Please join if you are interested, you are most welcome to come. You can contact Sies Plokker of Ellie Kalf for more information. The next months' coffee mornings will be hosted by:
February: Pat Rood-van Beem
March: Joke de Bruin

Midweek Fellowship

In our fortnightly Bible Studies we have begun our studies in Matthew's Gospel, the Gospel followed in our worship and by churches all over the world in 2017. First and third Wednesdays of the month at 9-11 Jan Willem Brouwersstraat, 1071LH Amsterdam, starting at 20:00 hrs.

Coffee after the service

Meet your fellow members of the congregation over a cup of coffee after the service each week. And if you enjoy these gatherings, please consider volunteering once in a while or regularly. We always need help in this vital ministry. Please contact Anniek van Engelenburg or Sally Stone.

Ladies Fellowship

For those who have not yet been able to attend, we start out by having dinner together followed by a time of fellowship. We are now looking each month at a chapter from the book, *Experiencing God's Peace* by Elizabeth George from the Series 'A Woman After God's Own Heart'. If you would like to join us but are not on the invitation list, please contact Peggy Krol and you will be added to the list. All ladies are most welcome.

Men's Fellowship

The Men's fellowship group continues to meet in the last week of the month. For more information regarding meeting dates and times, please contact Jaap Maas at jj.maas@upcmail.nl. All men are welcome.

Taizé Service

Second Wednesday is our joint *Taizé* service with the Roman Catholic Begijnhof Chapel, a wonderful opportunity to share in ecumenical worship with our near neighbours. If you haven't given this a try, come along. Services start at 19:30 hrs.



De Kloof

Tom Flanagan is always looking for people to help out on the second Monday of the month. A group of four will prepare a meal for the visitors of the homeless shelter *De Kloof*. If you are interested, please contact Tom at dekloof@ercadam.nl.

Concerts in the ERC



Sunday 12 February 3:15pm:

Nico Sevenhuysen: baritone
Ruud van Odenhoven: piano

Programme: Franz Schubert Die Winterreise
D.911 opus 89

Thursday 16 February 8.15 pm

Johannette Zomer soprano and het
Tulipa Consort
Lidewij van der Voort, Marc Cooper:
violin
Yoshiko Morita & Anna Smith: viola
Susanne Braumann: viola da gamba &
lirone
Fred Jacobs: theorbo
Emma Huijsser: harp & recorder
Bart Naessens: harpsichord

Programme: Soprano Johannette Zomer and
her Tulipa Consort are treating music lovers to
a series of baroque concerts in the English
Reformed Church.

On this evening famous lamenting ladies make
their appearance: Dido, Olympia, Ariadne,
Venus and Armide. Sometimes sad, but also
furious. Always overwhelming.
With works of Bertali, d'India, Lully, Muffar,
Marini, Monteverdi and Purcell.

Saturday 18 March 3:15 pm

Vocaal Ensemble Multiple Voice
Conductor: Paul de Kok

Programme: Der Dichter spricht- German
Romantic Music

From amongst others the popular 19th century
collection of poems Des Knaben Wunderhorn.
With works by Rheinberger, Wolff, Schumann,
Mendelssohn, Brahms, Reger and Berg

Saturday 18 March 8:15 pm

Vrouwenkoor Nordlys
Conductor: Ulrikke Reed Findenegg
Soloist: Daniëlle Kreeft:oboe

Programme: Vinteräng - Winter meadows
The choir will perform Snowforms by the
Canadian composer and writer R. Murray
Schafer.

Vinteräng by the Swedish composer Lars Erik
Larsson, Lauuluja Merelta -Songs of the sea- by
the Finnish composer Aulis Sallinen and the
world-famous piece Eatnemen Vuelie by the
Norwegian composer Frode Fjellheim.



Sunday 19 March 3:15 pm

Merel Naomi: harpist and
Tenar van Kooten Niekerk: soprano

Programme: Jewels for voice and harp
with numerous pearls from the world of opera
and lieder. Including masterpieces by Mozart
and Gounod's Faust.

Saturday 25 March 8.15 pm

Vocaal Ensemble Tien
Conductor:Christiaan Winter

Programme: Passio - A programme based on
texts which refer to the days round Easter.
Johann Christoph Demantius: De Johannes
passion
Motets by Antonio Lotti, Heinrich Schütz, Elena
Kats-Chernin and Morten Lauridsen,
Psalms by Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck and
Rosephanye Powell.

Sunday 26 March 3:15 pm

Purcell Kamerorkest

Conductor: Mimi Mitchell

Soloist: Saskia van Boven:oboe d'amore

Programme:

Johann Sebastian Bach: Concerto for oboe d'amore, BWV 1055

Georg Friedrich Handel: Concerto Grosso opus 6 No. 7

Georg Philipp Telemann: Chaconne -Suite in f minor

Johann David Heinichen: Orchestral Suite in G major. - Seibel 205

Johann Christian Schieferdecker: Chaconne



Looking back at Christmas

In early December the ERC children, in conjunction with the ERC choir and our Choir Director Richard Zook, successfully performed a lovely Nativity Play written and directed by consistory member Nick Thomas. All were invited to enjoy the annual Potluck Christmas Party & Christingle the day before, to celebrate Christmas and all the hard work they put in to prepare for the performance.



Short News and Activities

Youth Programmes available during Sunday Services

Crèche: open for 0-3 year olds
Sunday School: open for 4-11 year olds
Junior Church: open for 12+ year olds

For more information, please speak to
Veronica Garcia-Robles, Lay Assistant, in
church or send her an email:

layassistant@ercadam.nl

20s-30s Luncheon

The 20s and 30s group continues to gather for their monthly luncheons after church. This month, the group enjoyed catching up with one another after the holidays and did a little brainstorming on future possible fellowship activities for the group. All 20s & 30s are welcome to join us for these luncheons held after the service on the first Sunday of each month. Information about group activities is listed on our Facebook page, otherwise please contact our lay assistant for more information.



Choir

The choir will sing in the services of:

19 February

19 March

You might also want to mark these choir dates:

9 April Palm Sunday

14 April Good Friday

16 April Easter: choir and brass

Membership notices

Deceased

Dick van Spijk (27 December 2016)

John Patz (13 January 2017)



Did you know that the English Reformed Church sends out a weekly newsletter? Receive news about services, activities and events and a PDF-version of the Record automatically. You can subscribe via the website: www.ercadam.nl

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