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The Record

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The English Reformed Church
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Minister's Letter

Dear Friends,

For this edition of the Record I think I need to address a subject that I hate talking about - MONEY! I've resisted doing this in the past as I think there are more pressing things for the church to focus on, but our Treasurer's report below has got me worrying rather and so here goes...

There has been a noticeable trend in our church in recent years which has become clear when we look at the Treasurer's reports. Apart from weddings and rentals etc. (which we can do little about), those reports indicate that money comes in two ways: through 'donations' and through 'offerings'. 'Donations' are regular amounts that are given by church members or by regular attenders and often these come in by direct debit or directly to the Treasurer. The 'offerings', however, are what are collected on a Sunday morning during worship. In recent years 'offerings' have kept up pretty well - if anything they have increased slightly. This reflects the fact that generally we have a good-sized congregation on a Sunday morning. Donations, however, have decreased markedly. This will be due partly to some generous members dying or moving away or ending their membership and their giving. The overall result however is a worrying decline in income.

I could preach sermons or give all kinds of exhortation to give more but I'd rather not. All I can do as your minister is to ask everybody to think seriously about their giving. People often ask me what it means to become a member of the church. What does membership entail? After all, are we not all members of Christ's church by our baptism? Well, indeed we are. But as well as being members of Christ's world-wide church we commit ourselves to a local congregation to which we offer our time and our talents... and our money. In joining the church this way we are committing to support and to enable this local church to fulfil its vocation of worship and witness and mission, and the membership promises express this.

I would encourage every member and regular attender to think very carefully and prayerfully about their giving. I would hope that every member would set up a direct debit so that they give a regular, calculated amount. The English Reformed Church has served God faithfully here in the centre of Amsterdam for centuries. Let us hope that through the generosity of its members and its congregation it will have the financial resources to continue to do so for many years to come!

With all good wishes and thanks to so many who give so much in so many ways,

Lance

Consistory Report

In this report you will find a summary of the meetings of Consistory in June and July 2019. In August Consistory does not meet. The Church Picnic marked the start of the summer season.

Changes in Consistory

At the end of June, Consistory and the congregation said farewell to *Sarah Ying Wang*. Sarah has been an elder since April 2016, and she had to relocate to Singapore for her work. Sarah put in a lot of work for the 20-30's group, and supported the prayer life in church. Sarah was a steady participant of the Women's fellowship group, opening her home more than once for this gathering.

Nick Thomas, his wife *Carishma (Cara)* and their two children *Zarah* and *William* decided to return to England. Nick served this congregation as elder since January 2015. Nick taught Sunday School, he was the writer, producer and director of a number of Nativity plays, and was proof reader of the Record. Cara was involved in the creche. Nick and Cara hosted Consistory most graciously on several occasions for away days.

In our church we have "serving" and "non-serving" elders. An elder is ordained for life. "Serving" means being part of Consistory. *Pamela Woolley* will change her status to "non-serving elder". Because of a change in work, it has been difficult for Pamela to set aside time for church activities. When the situation changes, Pamela can join Consistory again.

We thank Sarah, Nick and Pamela also on behalf of the congregation for all their work and dedication.

On page 7 you will find detailed information about the process of finding new elders.

Membership matters

Niels and Minna Benschop informed Consistory of the resignation of their membership.

Consistory looked into ways to connect with and assist people in the congregation who need help or are in poor health.

Outreach

A group of about 15 walkers participated as Team ERCadam for the third consecutive time in the Nacht van de Vluchteling /Night of the refugee. Some decided to walk 10 kilometres, others walked 20 kilometres (or a distance in between) to raise awareness for first aid to refugees and to raise funds. This year € 2.500 came in through donations of people in church, and from outside our church. A great result!

We received report from a special meeting about the organisation of De Kloof, the homeless shelter of Regenboog group. We have a long lasting relationship, in which we commit to cook once a week. In the meeting it

was decided to work with a co-ordinator every quarter. Also the logistics around meal planning and shopping were made easier.

We decided to postpone the next Charity Concert for Mulanje Mission Hospital to spring 2020. There is a possibility that we will have a smaller scale fundraiser in November. More news to follow in September.



Church of Scotland

Thorsten reported on the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (CoS) at the end of May as part of his discernment process. The CoS faces declining numbers of members, declining numbers of ministers and a decline of church life. A “Radical Action Plan” was put together to look at new ways of ministry. Also a restructuring of the governance was proposed. A board of twelve trustees will lead the operational side of the church. A proposal is to limit the number of Presbyteries in Scotland to twelve; and the cost of staff needs to be reduced with 30%. The ERC is part of the International Presbytery and will not be affected by the reduction of presbyteries. A summary of the plans can be found on the website of the CoS.

Property

Already for a while we are working closely together with our neighbours at the Begijnhof around the topic of safety. One of the decisions taken was to set up an Emergency Response Officer training (in Dutch the abbreviation BHV is used) available for Consistory members, because always two people of Consistory are on duty during any service. The training will take place in September.

Following up on the topic of a donations device: we will be comparing a few systems to facilitate cashless donations (especially for visitors during the week), one via a pilot of the CoS. We hope to have a device in place in the fall of this year.

Other competent business

In June a new short service started, held at Thursdays or Fridays at 1:15 pm, partly aimed at visitors of the church. Pastor Lance, Stefan Royé and Giles Francis are reciting psalms during this short service.

Consistory meetings are held each first Monday of the month (dates are subject to change in case of a national holiday). The meetings are open to church members. If you have a topic you would like to discuss with Consistory, please contact the minister or the Scriba.

Heleen Koning (scriba@ercadam.nl)

Summer picnic

On Sunday, July 7th, the ERC held its annual picnic on the grounds of Het Wereldhuis at the Nieuwe Herengracht. We were very lucky with beautiful weather, a clear sky and no rain. At least 80 people from the ERC attended the picnic, sharing drinks and a meal together, and enjoying each other's company. Some overseas visitors to our Sunday worship service also joined us for the picnic, which was wonderful.

Pastor Lance once again brought his meanwhile famous game of Smite along, and many joined in the fun.

With all the wonderful food and snacks which were prepared by our congregation, the annual picnic was a big success. Many thanks to Sally, Jens, Rudy, Ingrid and Thijs for setting things up and helping out.

We already look forward to our picnic next summer!

Thijs Glasz



Photo by Ingrid Sorensen

Harvest Festival Potluck Lunch



Join us for our annual Harvest Festival Potluck Lunch on Sunday 29 September. The lunch will start immediately after the service, in the church around 12 o'clock.

The tables will be heaving under delicious treats made by members of our congregation. So, please join us in Fellowship and bring along a savoury or sweet dish to share.

Can you help out with preparations? Please speak to a Consistory member.

Consistory : finding new elders

After the summer we will start the process of finding new elders in September. We will follow the procedure we used last time we looked for new elders. The procedure is as follows:

The Minister or the Scriba will inform the congregation about this vacancy during a Sunday service and will explain the process for nominating and appointing a new elder. Consistory will determine which specific requirements need to be met for the position of elder and explain these to the congregation. Apart from 'normal' skill requirements which are laid down in a profile, it may be that Consistory is looking for a male or female or a specific age bracket (to ensure the right balance in the group), or specific skills in a particular area (e.g. financial, property, other, etc).

After the official announcement of the vacancy, any registered ERC member or adherent may nominate any other registered ERC member for the position of elder. For this nomination to be considered further, the nominating member is required to give reasons why he/she is nominating the candidate. The principle applies that one cannot nominate oneself.

The nomination process will take 2 to 3 weeks. During this time, ERC members can complete the nominations by using designated forms which will be made available. All completed forms will then be reviewed by Consistory.

Selection: the review process will focus on the requirements which have been set when drawing up the profile in addition to any specific requirements which may apply. During the review process, a short list of nominees will be established from the list of all nominees.

Consistory will select the required number of candidates, and evaluate each nominee against the requirements set in the profile. For this at least 50% +1 of all consistory members need to be present and the decision needs a two-thirds majority. In the event that any of the elders or the minister have serious cause for concern regarding a nomination, this should be expressed persuasively while guarding issues of confidentiality.

After the final decision about the candidates has been made, the minister will speak with the candidates of choice to see if the candidate is willing to accept the nomination and to establish if there might be any issues. If all is well and the candidates accept, the Scriba will read the edicts in accordance with the formal Church of Scotland procedures. Any specifics about the review and candidates will not be shared outside of consistory for privacy reasons.

We hope to put the procedure to work in September so that new elders can be ordained in October.

Heleen Koning, scriba

Night of the refugee

On Saturday June 15, around 15 people of the ERC participated in a sponsored walk as part of the Nacht van de Vluchteling (Refugee Walk). This was already the third time that we joined this event, with the goal to raise money for refugees, meeting all kinds of needs from providing emergency food and shelter to support for those suffering from trauma's. Some of the ERC group joined the 10 km walk, others walked the 20 km walk, which included passing through the lovely village of Spaarnwoude. The ERC team was able to raise more than EUR 2.500, which is a great result. Thanks to all who donated to this good cause. We hope that many at the ERC will participate in next year's walk again: we even may try the 40 km then....?! *Thijs Glasz*



Further in the Faith

The 'Further in the Faith' group meets monthly to study together a book about the Christian faith. This is a very lively gathering which has been recently studying a book called *The Powers That Be* about the language of evil in the New Testament. Interested in joining us? Speak to Pastor Lance

Finance Report: challenges

Income January - June 2019, Amounts in €

	2019	2018	2019 vs 2018
Donations	24.538,19	33.905,98	- 9.367,79
Collections	25.242,19	25.535,57	- 293,38
Church hire	9.776,40	9.476,40	300,00
Concerts	8.333,00	8.875,00	- 542,00
Weddings	875,00	1.575,00	- 700,00
Church shop	150,00	240,00	- 90,00
Flowers	92,77	105,75	- 12,98
Total	69.007,55	79.713,70	- 10.706,15

I am presenting you the status of our finances for the first half of 2019 - and this is a difficult one for me as your treasurer: I have to report that currently we are facing difficult times.

As you can see from the table above, we received more than EUR 10.000 less in donation into our bank account in the first six months of this year - this is significant! In addition, we received EUR 5.000 less from the Scottish Salvesen fund, which is about half of the amount which we got last year (the Salvesen fund supports congregation of the Church of Scotland outside of Scotland).

At the same time some of our expenditures are higher than expected. Here two examples: We paid EUR 2.000 more for insurances and EUR 15.000 more for maintenance work due to several repairs and improvements, which could not wait any longer.

Even with the support of the "Friends of the English Reformed Church" we accumulated in the first six month a deficit of more than EUR 22.000, which means our reserves are melting like ice in the sunshine. It is recommended and best practise that our congregation holds reserves which enable us to pay a minimum of 6 months of our expenses - and we are now down to three (3) months, which is a quite unpleasant position. We are privileged with our great church building in such a magnificent

place in Amsterdam, we are enjoying all our congregational activities which brings us together rejoicing and worshipping God as His family. But this also means we are called to ensure that we can continue this tomorrow, the next months, and in the years to come. Therefore, I want to urge you to contemplate and to pray what is your call to support the life of the English Reformed Church in Amsterdam, with prayer, gifts, but also with financial support.

I want to remind you that donating into the Church's bank account may be tax deductible in the context of our ANBI status, which may be an incentive to give a bit more than you are used to.

As always if you have any questions or comments please feel free to contact me any time at treasurer@ercadam.nl or (0294) 77 29 34.

Thorsten König, Treasurer

Concerts in the church



Please consult our website or the church newsletter for up to date information on all scheduled concerts <http://www.ercadam.nl/activities/concerts/upcoming-concerts>

Or visit us on Facebook www.facebook.com/ERCamsterdam/

Pictured is conductor Simon Murphy

Photo by Fernando van Teijlingen

Music Notes

Just back from our summer break, the choir is already busily rehearsing for the coming season. We will be singing on the second Sunday of September as well as for our annual **Harvest** celebration on the last Sunday of the month. After that you'll hear us again on the last Sunday of October, and we will of course sing for **Remembrance** Sunday on November 10th.

The following Sunday the choir will be joining with the **Purcell Chamber Orchestra** to give an afternoon **concert!** The orchestra has long been affiliated with the ERC, making us their permanent home for an annual series of three concerts. This year our own choir will join forces with them for a splendid "Pre-Advent" program of music - not so much the angels saying, "Behold what's happening," as "Behold! Look at all the exciting things *about to happen.*" The program will include a setting of the *Magnificat*, Mary's beautiful response to Gabriel's message to her. This will give the choir a chance to stretch beyond what they can usually do during a morning service. It promises to be a concert you won't want to miss! So put this on your calendars: **Sunday, 17 November 3:15pm Concert.**



That leads us, of course, straight into the *real* season of Advent. The choir, joined by some of the members of the Purcell Orchestra (they can't all fit on a Sunday morning!) will kick off the festive season on the first Sunday of Advent. This year's **Carols By Candlelight**, our annual service of *Nine Lessons and Carols*, will be on



Friday, 13 December at 8:00pm. This is the perfect service for you to invite your friends and family to attend, with our beautiful church, decorated for Christmas and warmly lit by candles, forming the backdrop for a splendid evening of traditional music and the Christmas story - and not forgetting the refreshments afterward! What better way to fill the church with our friends and celebrate the joyous season!

And speaking of our friends, the choir will again be providing music for the annual **Joint Carol Service** with our good neighbors from around the Spui: the Lutheran, Catholic, and Mennonite communities. This is always a delightful service, this year held on Sunday afternoon, 15 December at 16:00 in the Singel Kerk.

And then there is, of course **Christmas Eve**, if you still haven't had enough of our splendid choir!

I know it may seem far too early to be thinking about Christmas, but with the next *Record* not coming out until the beginning of December, this September issue is the right time to tell you about all these events so that you can put them on you calendar in time, certainly the concert in November!

Make a joyful noise!

Richard Zook

Cooking at the Kloof

De Kloof is Amsterdam's oldest shelter for the homeless, originally founded by the Catholic society St Vincentius. It is situated in the basement of Kloveniersburgwal number 95, in the heart of the city.

De Kloof is very reminiscent of a beehive: always brimming with people from all corners of the city. Here visitors can take a shower and have a shave, exchange their clothes, get a cup of coffee and something to eat.

Above all, it's a place to find some peace and quiet which allows the visitors to arrange their affairs with the help of a social worker



The English Reformed Church is committed to providing a team of people who will cook a hot meal on the 2nd Monday of each month.

This is a very rewarding and great opportunity to help your fellow wo/man.

Please join one of the teams in 2019, we would love to hear from you!

For more information speak to Ingrid Sorensen or mail: dekloof@ercadam.nl

Kathi, Randi and Reuben: volunteers for August

City of Amsterdam: Improving Spui/Koningsplein

Starting in the summer of 2019 and continuing in 2020. extensive changes will be made to Spui , Koningsplein and Nieuwzijds voorburgwal.

Amsterdam aims to improve acces to trams, create more space for cyclists and pedestrians, and reduce the noise and vibrations caused by the trams on the current rails.

The Begijnhof will be accesible at all times, sometimes only on foot and using gangways.

More detailed information in next edition of the Record, or read more (in Dutch) on <https://www.amsterdam.nl/projecten/nieuwezijds-aanpak/singel/>

Who's who: Eric Foggitt

In June, before Eric and Tineke left for Sri Lanka. I spoke to Eric and learned about his life and work.

Born and raised in Paris for seven years, Eric is French. His mother was French and his father was British. Father and two sons moved to the UK, Derbyshire, where he spent his teenage years. The family did not educate the children in faith. Eric studied English at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland.

After that he spent time working in France, and in Greece (on the island of Corfu). It was there that Eric had a deep spiritual experience, an awareness that God was with him - which actually caught him by surprise as he was not seeking or even wanting this.



He went back to Edinburgh and studied Speech and Language Therapy and during this time sought to understand the spiritual experience he had had in Corfu, which resulted in making a commitment of faith and baptism. For two years he worked in Dumfries, then in Glasgow, but he realised that he was being called to Ministry in the Church. He was accepted by the Church of Scotland as a candidate, and started studying Theology in Glasgow, whilst working part-time as a therapist.

His first parish was in Buckie, in north-east Scotland. It's a small fishing town, known for its dolphins. From the Manse the dolphins can be seen quite frequently.

Dunbar, near Edinburgh, was Eric's next parish. With 500 new houses being built, it was a challenge for the local church to try and reach the newcomers - mostly young families from Edinburgh looking for affordable housing.

During the years in Dunbar, a link with a church in Rwanda was established. Eric travelled to Rwanda nine times, with people from Dunbar and further afield. They raised funds for installing rainwater harvesting at a school - the water is used for washing, feeding animals etc. A Church in Kibungo, east Rwanda, the "Eglise Vivante", used to meet in a hut. About two hundred people would be attending - a very cramped and unsafe situation. Dunbar Parish Church paid for a stone church was built. The pastor, Joseph Mugasa is involved in reconciliation work following the 1994 genocide. This was a defining tragedy for the Rwandans, who continue to face the consequences: a country with many widows, having to raise a family on their own and young women who fail to find a husband due to

the lack of young men.

Eric left fulltime ministry in 2009, and worked as a Speech and Language Therapist in near Edinburgh, then the Isle of Wight and Southend. At the start of this year he stopped working as a therapist and now works as a locum Minister in the International Presbytery.

When Eric and his wife Tineke moved to Amsterdam, they attended various churches in the area and a couple of years ago began attending the English Reformed Church. They very much appreciate the multinational culture and atmosphere. They became members in January this year.

In May, Eric attended the General Assembly, representing the International Presbytery. The ERC was represented by Thorsten Koenig, treasurer.

From June till end of August, Eric and Tineke will be living and working in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Eric will be preaching in the church and helping young people to improve their English. Tineke is hoping to help staff at a half-way-house which is run by the church and linked to the local psychiatric hospital. The 2019 Easter attacks on churches and hotels in Colombo, forced them to reconsider their plans...but they decided to go ahead as planned.

Eric and Tineke love cycling, they have recently just completed a 620 km trip in the Netherlands, cycling around central and eastern Netherlands. They both love reading, good TV drama and of course their seven grandchildren.

August update: Eric has been asked to preach as sole nominee for the vacant charge of St Andrew's Brussels!

Sascha Sizoo-Adema

Midweek Fellowship

In recent months in our fortnightly Bible Studies (1st and 3rd Wednesdays) we have been studying **John's Gospel**, looking especially at the seven 'signs' around which it is structured. The Bible Study stops during August but will begin again on September 4th. If you have not attended the fortnightly bible Study before, why not give it a try?

We continue to hold a service after the style of the **Taizé** community in France on the second Wednesday with our Roman Catholic neighbours in the Begijnhofkapel.

And in the last week of the month the **Women's Fellowship** and (less often) the **Men's Group** meet.

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 or Joke de Bruin for more information.

The new season started with a farewell party for Ans van Saagsvelt on the 27th of August, hosted by Janet Donszelmann.

The dates for the next coffee mornings are:

September 3rd at Heleen Koning

October 1st at Joke de Bruin

November 5th at Elly Kalf

December 3rd at Pat Rood-van Beem



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 (info@ercadam.nl) or put your name on the list on the notice board.

Morning Prayers

Recently we have experimented with a brief act of worship held in the church during the week while it has been open for tourists and visitors, and which has included recital of psalms and prayers for our city. It's been a useful trial and as a result we have decided to continue with it but at a different time - early in the morning, before tourists flock to the Begijnhof.

Commencing **September 3rd** at **8.45 am** there will be short (30 mins max) service of psalms and prayers in the church on **Tuesday mornings**.

This will not, of course, be convenient for many but some might like to join us on their way to work.

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Deadline for the next edition of the Record is November 22nd, 2019

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