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The Record

December 2019

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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 thought that I might take this opportunity to say a few words about some developments taking place within the walls of our church, involving the inside of the building. Elsewhere in this edition our Treasurer, Thorsten Koening, writes of the 'cube tower' facility that will feature in the church, allowing visitors and worshippers on a Sunday to donate with cards rather than with cash. It is very common now to find such a feature in a public building, especially a historic church or cathedral, and with such a traffic of tourists passing through our church it is only right that we should keep up with this sort of development.

The 'cube tower' - which sounds rather more intrusive than it will actually be! - was never intended, however, to stand alone. The idea has always been that it should accompany a simple display that draws attention to the fact that we are a lively and vibrant church. Many of our visitors don't just want to contribute to a very beautiful and historic building, important though that is, but also to a living community that is caught up in God's mission not only to Amsterdam, but that has an international focus as well. With this in mind, one of our members, Jessica Bell, has worked hard to produce a simple tryptic: three panels that profile our history, our present life as a church, and also our commitment to Mulanje Mission Hospital, Malawi that our church has supported for many years. We have not yet decided exactly how this tryptic will feature in the church and how it will be placed, but great care will be taken to ensure that this does not intrude upon the very special ambience of our building.

This brings me to one other new feature. For some weeks now we have been holding a short act of worship on Tuesday mornings (8.45 a.m.). In this service we recite psalms, pray for the city and the wider world and for our own church community, remembering people in special need. As well as providing an opportunity to pray for our church family it seems right that a historic church like ours, set in the centre of Amsterdam, should be a place of prayer for the city and the wider world. It lasts for about half an hour, but people are very welcome to just pop in for a few minutes for some prayer and some silence - possibly before work. This enhances the priestly task of our church: to be a place where the world is brought before God in worship and intercession.

We are blessed with a historic building, a precious resource. We pray that in these different ways we will be faithful stewards of what has been entrusted to us, to the glory of God.

As I write the season of Advent is almost upon us. May I take this opportunity of wishing you a blessed Advent and a very joyful Christmas.

With all good wishes,

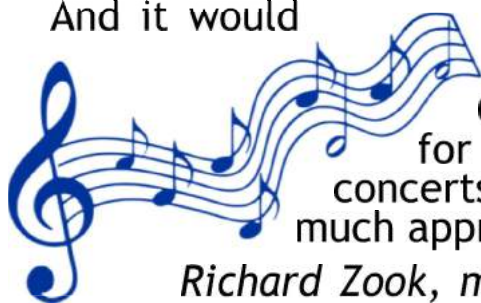
Lance

Consistory Report

After the summer holiday, Consistory convened in September, setting out to find new elders. In our September and November meeting we also welcome members of the church's staff in the meeting.

Kenneth Ewen, concert organiser, gave a brief update on the concerts. For 2019 there are 57 confirmed concerts, a bit less than before, but stable. We lost some groups to the other venues, but new ones came, like the Rietveld ensemble as well as a baroque orchestra.

The majority of the concerts are during the day. Kenneth is faced with problems from tourists in the Begijnhof after refusing people access to the church because of concerts. The hassle caused by tourists is also a topic in our meetings with the Stichting Begijnhof and the Roman Catholic church. The importance of keeping a log of incidents was stressed. We need to find a comprehensive approach with all parties. And it would be good if we find people who can help Kenneth during the concert.



Consistory expressed a big thank you to Kenneth for all his works. The extra donations in the free concerts towards Mulanje Mission Hospital were also very much appreciated.

Richard Zook, music director and choir leader started by saying Pastor Lance and he work very well together. Pastor Lance is always open for suggestions. And Richard does his best to make new ideas work. The Choir is little smaller than last year. Richard is stretching the singers so that they learn new things. The choir was looking forward to the upcoming concert with the Purcell Orchestra on November 17. The proceeds will go towards new choir robes, Instrument fund.

Consistory gave their thanks for Richard's work, not only as a music director and choir leader, but also his hands on work in the church, e.g. some insulation work up in the organ loft and putting felt covers on the chairs, with great effect.

Susan Polstra, church officer, is one of the faces of the church, not only because of her work on Sundays, but also during the week as she is volunteering as one of the guides. She emphasises the importance of keeping the church open, these days only on Monday, Thursday and Friday. It would be most welcome if more people could be available to keep the church open. The volunteers are called "guides", but in essence they are hosts. The information is given via leaflets and the tryptich.

Susan is also confronted with the effects of mass tourism in the square. We still have to see whether the decision of the City of Amsterdam to limit the size of the group will have a positive effect.

Another topic is sustainability. Susan is looking for real paper cups to be used for coffee after the service. Pastor Lance brings up the idea of bring your own cup. That would be good to try.

A big thank you to Susan, not only for all her work as church officer and

guide, but also for the welcome she gives to lots of visitors from all over the world.

Veronica Garcia is the fourth member of staff. We hope to welcome her in the beginning of next year.

New Elders

After Nick and Sarah leaving the Netherlands, Pamela stepping down as serving elder and Thorsten preparing for a move to Glasgow, we started the search for four new elders. In October the congregation had the opportunity to nominate candidates for eldership. 24 Ballots were filled out by 13 members of the congregation. 13 different people were nominated.

Consistory considered all nominations in light of the general requirements and diversity in terms of being a reflection of the congregation. This resulted in the decision that Charles Vanderpuye, Elisabeth IJmker, Andreas Decker and Sies Plokker would be asked by pastor Lance to be candidate for eldership. You can read more about the new elders on page 10-11.

Some decisions regarding elders and consistory meetings were made:

It was re-affirmed that the treasurer should be an elder, although that is not a requirement in the Acts of the Church of Scotland. Consistory also decided that the minister and scribe will speak with an elder whose 6 year term comes to an end to establish wishes, ideas etc (and elder can serve 4 terms of 6 years). Every second Consistory meeting would be a discussion meeting. Topics could include the development of eldership, role of elders, pastoral care etc.

Outreach

On March 20, 2020 the charity concert for Mulanje Mission will be held, but before that we will have a Pub Quiz to raise funds, on November 23 in our church.

More than 600 angels were knitted so far for the Yarn Bomb initiative. A wooden Christmas tree was made to show the angels. Logo and small banners for the angels are in the making. The angels will be given out during Carol singing on the Spui on December 22.

Scriptorium Collective

Dr. Stefan Royé, member of the congregation, was invited to the September meeting. Stefan leads the Scriptorium collective at the Free University. In the Scriptorium the worlds of Abstract thinking and craftsmen are brought together round religious texts. Stefan proposed to have the motto of our church chiselled in stone. The Scriptorium Collective could also do calligraphy and book binding. Consistory thanked Stefan for his presentation and would explore possibilities, e.g. commemorating a special date.

Consistory meetings are usually held on the first Monday of the month. For more information, please contact Heleen Koning (scriba@ercadam.nl) of Pastor Lance (minister@ercadam.nl).

Heleen Koning

Messy Church

is church, but different. A family time for having fun, being creative, exploring faith and enjoying lunch together, Sunday November 3 the first Messy Church, organised by ERC, took place in the hall of the Lutheran church. The theme was “Climate Change”: what could we - as children from God - do? Around 25 children and adults and anything in between enjoyed a great lunch and time of fellowship and worship. Some beautiful artwork was produced. One painting was given out as prize at the PubQuiz' raffle. Proceeds go towards planting indigenous broad leaved trees in Mulanje.

Photos by Ingrid Sørensen



Welcoming!

Hello ERC members and friends! As we near the Christmas season, one of the busiest times of the year for everyone, the welcomers at our church are extra busy... and could use some help. We call ourselves the church ‘guides’, but what we really do is welcome people to our church during the week, when there is no service taking place.

We welcome more than 200,000 visitors, tourists, Amsterdammers, travelers and wanderers per year, and we would like to keep the church open more often than is now the case.

If you find yourself with an hour or two free every week or every so often, please let Els Nooij, or Pastor Lance, know. Els is the volunteer who organizes all the rest of the volunteers. We are a small group, but would like to increase in size! You can also help once to see what you think of it – who knows, you may find it a great experience!

Susan Polstra

The endless possibilities of cashless donations

When was the last time you paid with real cash? I mean, do you even remember those colourful bits of paper with numbers like 5, 10 or even 50 printed on it? Or what about the little metal discs they called coins?

Perhaps you've been travelling abroad, picking up a different kind of currency, called 'dollar', 'pound', 'cedi' or 'rupia'?

More and more people carry little or no cash nowadays, let alone in the local currency when visiting abroad. Here in the Netherlands you can pay almost everywhere with 'plastic', be it your pin-pass, credit or debit card. You can even pay with your smartphone.

As you may know, our beautiful church is open to visitors several days a week, in large part due to the commitment and time that our guides invest in providing a warm welcome to our guests. With more than 100,000 visitors annually, (yes that's a hundred thousand) you can imagine what would happen if only 10% of them would give a euro each. You can do the maths!

At the moment they can donate to the church by putting money into the wonderful ancient cashbox in the vestibule, but this requires those funny pieces of paper or coins, preferably with 'euro' printed on them.

Donation research shows that people donated less over the past years because they simply do not carry cash anymore nor do they have the small amount of change which they would consider appropriate. Therefore, some organisations have started to explore the possibility of enabling easy and safe donating through credit or debit cards, even for smaller amounts. It has been shown that this significantly increases the total revenue from donations.

To leverage this new opportunity, we are now working with LibertyPay (for the electronic banking) and Angal (the UK's most traditional donation box maker). As a result, we will introduce the "cube tower" equipped with a device for simple, easy and safe donating by using cards. And indeed, you can still drop paper money and coins into it.

Thorsten and the cube tower, pictured by Jens Wejsmark Sørensen



Donations can be made using Visa, Master, AMEX (with a chip) or even Apple pay. There will be three pre-set amounts (in first instance EUR 3, 5, or 10) which can simply be chosen using the one-and-only button on the device. Once the amount has been chosen, all that is required is to tap the card in front of the device and you're done.

So, keep a look out for the “cube tower” in our vestibule, with our own ERC logo and branding and hold your cards ready!

Thorsten König, treasurer

PS: A BIG thanks to Laura, Jens and Jessica for the support on the “cube tower” and especially Susan and all the guides for keeping the church open and welcoming the visitors!

Pubquiz

Ingredients: ca 60 people grouped in teams, Thijs, Gillian and Lance as hosts, drinks, snacks and 8 rounds of 10 questions (including ERC questions), a raffle with as prize a painting made by Isobel. Of course one team won the first prize, but the big winner was Mulanje Mission Hospital. The income of the evening was for the hospital. We raised a total amount of 700€.

A big thank you to all who made this evening possible! Not only Sally, Gillian, Lance and Thijs but also all who contributed with questions!



Finance Report: challenges

Income January - October 2019, Amounts in €

-	<u>2019</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019 vs 2018</u>
Donations	52.529,51	58.428,73	- 5.899,22
Collections	45.290,54	42.930,72	2.359,82
Church hire	16.194,00	15.844,00	350,00
Concerts	10.397,00	12.612,00	- 2.215,00
Weddings	2.295,00	3.025,00	- 730,00
Church shop	440,00	460,00	- 20,00
Flowers	102,54	130,85	- 28,31
	127.248,59	133.431,30	- 6.182,71

Dear Friends, from a financial point of view there are two months to go until the end of the year. Of course, we all start to think about Sinterklaas, Christmas decoration, and all the activities of the time of advent when are preparing for the celebration of God coming into this world in Jesus.

For me as your treasurer this is also the time to consider if we will meet the budget for this year, will there be a deficit at the end of the year? I am starting to prepare the budget for next year, what can/must we afford. In this context my projection of our income and expenditure until the end of the year results in a deficit of about EUR 13.000.

I know that all of you contemplate how you can support our church in the ways which are possible for you. As you can read in this issue, pages 7-8 we are exploring additional opportunities of income e.g. making donations by credit cards - especially but not exclusively for the visitors of our church during the week. I am wondering if you could consider an additional “year-end-donation” to worship God by giving as we are grateful and celebrating that God has given us the greatest gift: His son Jesus. 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 just a bit more. Any questions or comments? Please contact me at treasurer@ercadam.nl or (0294) 77 29 34. *Thorsten König*

Four new members of consistory

My wife Olivia and I have been attending services at the ERC since Summer 2007 after we relocated from Paris. The first service we attended at the English Reformed Church was led by Reverend John Bell. Our son Christopher, born in 2011, was baptized by Reverend John Cowie. I am grateful to have been nominated and will do my best to meet the expectations of the congregation should I become an elder. I became a Christian when I was 16 years old. A friend from school invited me to the "Weigle Haus" - an independent entity of the Rhineland Protestant Church situated in Essen/ Germany - where I "let Jesus into my heart" as it was called at that time. I work for a global corporate travel management company, which is owned by a Dutch shareholder. In my current role I am responsible for the internal audit function of the company. Olivia, Christopher and I have relatives in the US, Kenya and Germany.



Andreas Decker

When Heleen asked me to introduce myself, I thought it best to give you a short CV first and then tell you how and why I became and still am a member of the ERC. I was born in Voorburg/ The Hague in 1944, grew up in a "Nederlands Hervormde" family, studied at the local Gymnasium, at the TU Delft and finally Law in Rotterdam Erasmus University. During my professional life I was a corporate lawyer and was during some years expatriated to Saudi Arabia, Singapore and New York. When we, my Korean wife and I moved to Amsterdam in 2009 we were looking for an English speaking church. One Sunday we saw the sign of the ERC on the Spui and went for a tryout. We immediately fell in love with the church and its minister. My wife later found a Korean church in Amstelveen, which she joined, while I stayed with the ERC where I always find spiritual peace.



I am very honored and thankful to have been asked by the Consistory to become an elder and hope to give a meaningful contribution to the ERC.

Sies Plokker



I was born and raised in Amstelveen. After spending several years abroad for study purposes, I came back to Amsterdam and I am grateful to have found the international community at ERC. I quickly joined the choir and have been coming regularly to the church now for almost five years. In my daily life I work for the city of Amsterdam, where I focus on connecting research and policy in the city. Besides singing, I enjoy reading, going to the cinema and taking walks along the Amstel or somewhere in the Dutch countryside. One of my favourite pastimes is listening to a

podcast while working on a crochet or embroidery project. At church I always try to keep an eye out for potential new visitors who would like to join the choir or the 20s30s group. I am excited to join consistory and am looking forward to meeting more of you!

Elisabeth Ijmker

My name is Charles Vanderpuye, a Ghanaian by birth, now a Dutch citizen. I was raised in Ghana in a religious family and attended a religious school. I am Business Economist by profession and work as a financial controller in Haarlem.

I have been worshipping at the English Reform Church for over 25 years. I have served in the past in the audit committee of the church and it will be my pleasure to be able to serve as an elder of this church which has become the house of God to me and my family.



I do find time to do some volunteer work for the Ghanaian community in Amsterdam and in the Netherlands at large. I trust God willing I will also be able to find time and the needed effort to be able to contribute to the work in the church.

I will undoubtedly be glad to meet and talk to all in our church who wishes to do so.

Thanks.

Charles Vanderpuye

Midweek Fellowship

In recent months in our fortnightly Bible Studies (1st and 3rd Wednesdays) we have been looking at the subjects of food in the Bible, sin, and currently we are engaged in a short series called 'Sabbath as resistance': considering the ways in which we as Christians are called to counter the often frenetic and stressful way that modern life is lived, often at the expense of our humanity.

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** (pictured below) and (less often) the **Men's Group** meet.



City of Amsterdam:

Improving Spui and Koningsplein

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

Creche for babys and toddlers

Children of all ages have an important place in our church.

Did you know the church does not only have Sunday School or Junior Church, but also a creche for children under four years old? Each Sunday, also during holidays, a team co-ordinated by Nancy Sekyere makes sure the young ones have their own, fun place. The creche was initiated decades ago by an number of parents who in turns took care of the children during the church service.

The creche serves several purposes: it gives parents the opportunity to follow the service without distraction, but it also helps children to prepare for Sunday School when they are four years old. And is it not more fun to play with other children, then to sit still in church?

The creche is attached to the church (at the Gedempte Begijnsteeg side) and equipped with all necessary facilities and lots of toys and books. There are always two creche leaders present.

Some of the volunteers have done this work already for years, but we are always looking for new people to help out. If you are interested because you have a child you would like to bring to the creche, or you can volunteer as creche leader, please speak to Nancy Sekyere or to the minister to get more information.

The ERC follows the safeguarding guidelines of the Church of Scotland.



Goodbye Ans

At the end of September, during the Harvest Thanksgiving potluck lunch, the ERC family said farewell to Mrs Ans van Saagsvelt. Ans has been a very active member of our church for more than sixty years. She and her late husband Charles (who was an elder) volunteered in front of and behind the scenes in various capacities. Together they prepared communion for 40 years.

After Charles passed away two years ago, Ans decided it was time to leave Hoofddorp and relocate to Vlissingen, to be nearer to relatives.

Ans, thank you so much for all you did in al these years and blessings for this new chapter. We will miss you.

Property update

Over the past two years we thoroughly addressed building and maintenance needs. The consistory and the deaconry were repainted and repairs were conducted where necessary. This means that from 2020 we will be able to stick to maintenance plan as well as finance it.

In 2020 we also aim to reduce our spending on electricity and heating through the now completed insulation of the heating elements (hidden behind the wooden panels) and the installation of a smart meter in 2018. Once we have analysed the data from the smart meter we will decide whether the wooden church roof will need insulating as well.

Much time and energy was invested in safety measures, and we worked in co-operation with both the Begijnhof Stichting (foundation) and the Begijnhofkapel (the chapel). Working together in this way has been very effective, building as it does on our faith and our love for the unique history of this beautiful space in Amsterdam.

In the meantime, more than 10 consistory members have now passed their exams for a course on in-house emergency services training, including Pastor Lance. This spring, joint additional training will be offered with Stichting and chapel.

Finally, as far as the issues of mass tourism and large groups are concerned, we are still exploring suitable solutions together with the municipality of Amsterdam.

Jaap Maas, property convener



**Saturday December 14th,
15.00 hrs
Sunday School
Christmas Party &
Christingle**

Advent and Christmas

Sunday 1 December
10:30 hrs

Purcell Chamber Orchestra and
choir for first Sunday of Advent



Friday 13 December
20:00 hrs

Carols by Candlelight
Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols

Sunday 15 December
10:30 hrs

Nativity Play in Sunday Service,
and choir

Sundag 15 December
16:00 hrs

Joint Carol Service
in the Singel Kerk, our choir singing

Sunday 22 December
11:45 hrs

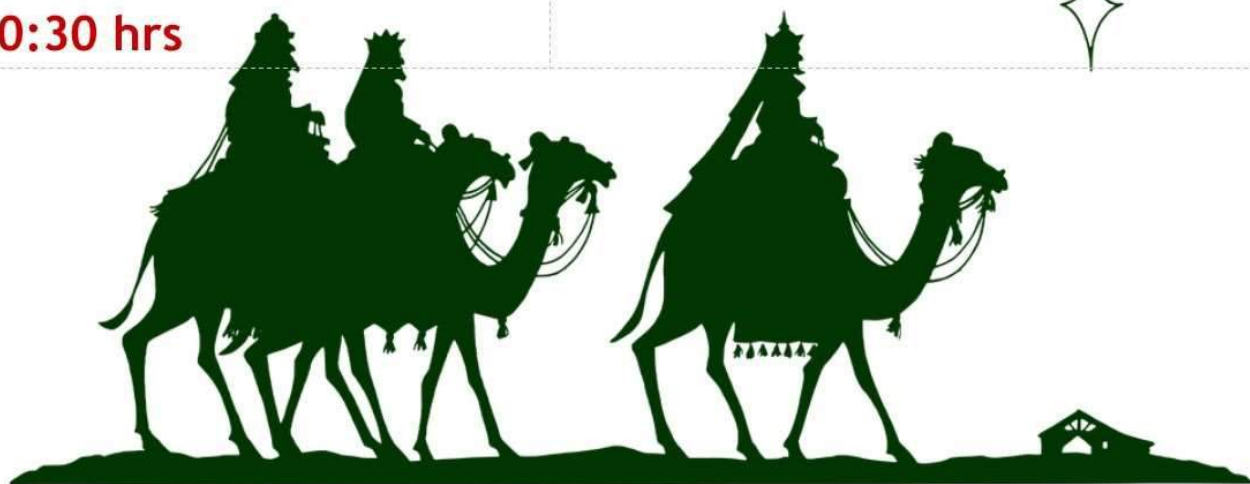
Carol singing on the Spui,
yarnbomb, handing out angels

Tuesday 24 December
17:30 hrs
22:30 hrs

Early Christmas Eve family service
Christmas Eve service with choir

Wednesday 25 December
10:30 hrs

Christmas Day Family Service



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

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/

May we draw your attention to the concert on Sunday 15 December at 14.00 hrs: **The Musicians Without Borders Benefit**

From 2 pm to 5 pm at least six world music choirs and ensembles will in turn perform songs from all corners of the world. The proceeds from this musical afternoon will go to the very special organisation *Musicians without Borders*, which through the power of music aims to unify people divided and affected by conflict.

And on Friday 20 December at 20.15 hrs: **the Grand Stand Classickoor**, conducted by Adriaen van der Veen, and Ensemble Conservatorium Amsterdam (*all pictured below*)

A varied Christmas concert with works by Johann Sebastian Bach and Antonio Vivaldi.

As well as the traditional well-loved and less well-known Christmas songs from all corners of the globe, this year a





Music Notes

The choir has just finished a very busy autumn, culminating in a splendid concert together with the Purcell Chamber Orchestra in November. With that event we raised the fantastic amount of €1.430,00 towards new choir robes. Thank you for your support!

Advent/Christmas season is now upon us. Some of the members of the Purcell Orchestra will join the choir in the morning service to kick off the festive season on the first Sunday of Advent, December 1st.

This year's **Carols By Candlelight**, our annual service of *Nine Lessons and Carols*, will be on Friday, 13 December at 20.00 hrs. 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, after singing in our morning service on December 15th, 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, at 16:00 hrs in the Singel Kerk. Please join us!

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

'Tis the season - Fa-la-la-la-la!

Richard Zook

Further in the Faith

This group is finishing its study of a book called the Powers That Be by Walter Wink, which looks at the subject of evil in the New Testament. Following on from this we are going to spend a session looking at the death of Christ and how the Cross spelled defeat of evil sin and death. Come and join us at 9, Jan Willem Brouwersstraat on the last Tuesday evening of the month.

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.

In the coming months:

December 4th at Pat Rood in Sassenheim

January 7th at Sies Plokker

February 4th at the home of Janet Donszelmann, hosted by Pastor Lance

March 3rd at Joke de Bruin

April 7th at Elly Kalf



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

In summer 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. We have decided to continue with it - early in the morning, before tourists flock to the Begijnhof.

On **Tuesday mornings** at **8.45 hrs** there will be short (30 mins max) service of psalms and prayers in the church

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

New members

Elisabeth IJmker

Andreas Decker

In memoriam

Mrs. Sheena van Teeseling

16 September 2019

Mr. Alan Massie Scott

20 September 2019





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NEWSLETTER



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Deadline for the next edition of the Record is
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