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The English Reformed Church
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www.ercadam.nl

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Minister's Letter

Dear Friends,

It is very strange, looking back just 3 months to what I wrote in my last minister's letter for The Record and to see not a single mention of Corona or Covid-19 or lockdown - it's a flashback to normality, to different times! And, of course, in that edition of The Record there were references to various forthcoming events on the horizon that were being publicised.

Well, as the great Scottish poet, Robert Burns, put it: "The best laid schemes o' mice an' men / Gang aft a-gley" (the best laid plans of mice and men often go awry). So, normally in this edition of The Record we would be looking forward to Summer arrangements and beyond but, sadly, there can be little of that for it is very difficult to see what will happen over the next few months. As I write, the government is beginning to ease some restrictions and two small groups are meeting to consider how we might ease back to gathering together for church - but the immediate future is uncertain.

In one of his songs, John Lennon has a line which goes, 'Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans'. Lennon expresses how much we live in the future, how much life is lived looking forward to events that punctuate and give shape to each year - and suddenly we cannot do that. So, for example, at this time of year I am usually looking forward to my Summer holiday, to travelling, to meeting up with family and friends, and yet as I write I have no idea if we will get away from Amsterdam or not. We just don't know.

There is much that we have learnt from this lockdown caused by this pandemic: not least, we have been learning to appreciate things that we take for granted, things that we often overlook - attending church, worshipping together, seeing one another in the flesh, going to a café or restaurant. Another lesson that I am trying to learn is what it means to live in the present, to take each day at a time, without knowing what lies ahead and without being able to make plans. It's a matter of trying to making each day count, to take each day as a gift, to find some joy in it, often in trying circumstances.

I wish you all a good Summer, however it takes shape. I hope that when I next write a letter for The Record we might be in a position to be making plans, to be anticipating forthcoming events. Who knows? But meanwhile I ask God's blessing upon you and upon each day, as it comes.

All best wishes,

Lance

Consistory Report

On March 2, Consistory met at Heleen's home for the annual social gathering. Little did we know that less than two weeks after that, our whole church life would be completely different. In the past months we have had to cancel services, concerts and other gatherings in church and the Manse, and we have added some new ways of being a congregation and worshipping with, for example, Compline services, our pastor's weekly newsletter, the online services.

Consistory has met informally a couple of times in the last few months and we held a formal meeting in May, all digitally.

Membership issues

Cor Stijger, non-serving elder of our church, passed away on March 2 at the age of 94. You can read more about Cor on page 7.

Susan Davies, who became a member in December, moved back to the United States earlier than anticipated due to the Covid-19 situation.

After we had to close the church due to the Corona rules, we decided to keep contact with the congregation through the pastoral regions. A letter from pastor Lance is distributed via the elders each week. If you have not been receiving any notices from one of the elders but you would like to, please contact Heleen Koning (scriba@ercadam.nl).

Annual General Meeting

The annual general meeting scheduled for April 17 had to be cancelled. The 2019 Report will be made available to the congregation via email.

Lay Assistant position stopped

For quite a number of years the ERC received a grant from the Salvesen Trust of the Church of Scotland. We used this grant for assistant ministers, youth workers and, more recently, to employ Veronica Garcia Robles as lay assistant. The funding from the Salvesen Trust ended at the beginning of 2020 and unfortunately we had to conclude that we could not continue the employment. Veronica did a wonderful job for Sunday School, Junior Church and the 20-30's group, as well as co-ordinating the Taizé services. We thank Veronica for all her work, both visible and behind the scenes.

Preparing for the "New Normal"

The ERC is of course complying with the rules set by the Dutch government and follows the guidelines of the RIVM (the governmental body responsible for public health). We closed the

church on March 14. Before our May meeting we learned that as of June 1, we may open up the church for groups of up to 30 people, and as of July 1, for a maximum of 100 people.

Consistory decided that we will prepare towards the July 1 date. Two groups have been formed. One group led by Pastor Lance will look into ways of resuming weekly services and consider how to deal with the maximum capacity given the one-and-a-half meter rule (which will be probably mean less than 100). This group will also look into new ways of worship and fellowship since we do not know how long the “new normal” will last. Another group, led by Heleen, will sort out the practical issues regarding accessing the building, cleaning, catering etc.

It was also decided that the Church Hall will remain closed until July 1 (depending on the situation and the rules of the government on that date).

Mulanje Mission Hospital

Although the fundraising concert for Mulanje was cancelled, the congregation had the opportunity to meet with medical director Arie Glas. Arie preached on May 10 and two days later, he gave a presentation via Zoom to people from our congregation as well as from Stockbridge Church in Edinburgh. He gave us not only an insight into the present situation regarding Covid-19, but also a general outline of the country, the health situation and the Mulanje Mission Hospital which does so much more than just providing health care.

Other news

In the second weekend of March, the International Presbytery held its meeting in Gibraltar. Pastor Lance took over the role of Moderator from Rev Irene Bom.

The next meeting of Consistory will take place on June 8, via Zoom. If you would like to participate, please let me know via scriba@ercadam.nl

Heleen Koning

Zoom ? You will read about Zoom several times in this Record.

Up until April 2020, not many people used this application, but since the Covid-19 outbreak, it has become a new part of our daily schedules and our communication.



Zoom is a service allowing groups of people to communicate via a video and sound connection. You can use a PC, tablet or smartphone. From 2-100 participants. Up to 40 minutes free of charge, you don't need an account.

Used for chatting, meetings, interviews, teaching etc.

The ERC choir

For quite a few weeks now, choir rehearsals have been cancelled.

So what to do now on a Tuesday evening? A few weeks ago we decided to meet up with the choir through Zoom. On my computer, that looks like this:



No, we didn't try to sing together, but just had a moment to see each other's faces and connect and see how everyone is doing. It became clear that we all miss our weekly rehearsals quite a bit and it's saddening to think that it will likely be a while before we can join in singing together again.

Of course our choir director Richard has found other ways to use his (many) talents, as he edits the videos for our weekly online services - something we're very grateful for!

Elizabeth Ijmker

Views of our pre-recorded Service of Worship

Since Coronavirus stopped us meeting in church after our service on March 15, we've made a pre-recorded Service of Worship available every Sunday on our website (www.ercadam.nl) and on social media platforms (*Facebook, Twitter, YouTube*).

Although the online service will never be as good as the real thing, it's been an acceptable substitute and we've received lots of positive feedback from all around the world. On average, there are more than a 100 views when the service is made available on Sunday morning at 10:30. This number increases to around 250 on average during the week. Considering that most views have more than one person watching, the figure is very satisfying and makes the effort to produce the videos worthwhile.

We hope our regular service in church will return at the beginning of September, but until that happens we're committed to producing the pre-recorded Service of Worship and we sincerely hope you'll keep tuning in.

Jens Sorensen

In Memoriam Cor Stijger

On 23 August 2019 the following message appeared in the church email inbox:

A 93-year-old man in a wheelchair would love to visit the church on the 1st of September. This man used to visit your church frequently but after his wife passed away and after moving to Hilversum, no visit was possible for him. Consider it as a last wish [...]

In response to my query as to whether we might learn his name - perhaps we'd have people who knew him - the reply was: Cor Stijger.

Of course we knew Cor! He and his wife Els joined our church as members in December 1977. In 1990 Cor was ordained as deacon. He stepped down in 1995 because he had reached the age of 70 (the maximum age rule for Consistory was abolished only five years ago). He was succeeded by his wife Els in 1995, who had to retire from Consistory in 2000 for the same reason. After Cor and Els moved away from Amsterdam it was difficult for them to get to church. The contact was maintained via regular visits from our ministers, members of Consistory and the visitation committee.

Els passed away in 2013. In the absence of a minister (John Cowie had just left for Scotland), the funeral service was led by George Meerveld and a number of elders in line with Cor's explicit wishes.

Cor spent his last years in a residence for the elderly in Baarn where he was well cared for by the staff and other caregivers. Els and Cor had no children. It was one of the caregivers who organised the trip to our church which took place on 1 September 2019. It was a great re-union; Cor enjoyed the service very much and seeing and talking to all the familiar faces even more so.

On March 2, Cor passed away peacefully at the age of 94. The funeral, led by pastor Lance, was held in Baarn in the presence of staff of the home, his caregivers and people of the English Reformed Church.

"So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's" (Romans 14:8)



Cor Stijger in the ERC, September 2019

Heleen Koning

Concerts in the church

All concerts have been cancelled since 13 March.

Now all concerts are being cancelled for June, July, August and September.

At the moment, there are a few scheduled for the autumn and winter. Because of the issue of social distancing, concerts may have to be postponed until this crisis is over.

Please consult our website or the church newsletter for future, up-to-date information:

<http://www.ercadam.nl/activities/concerts/upcoming-concerts>

Reminiscence:

a December concert by the Plantagekoor and Vocaal Ensemble Amadeus



Greetings to all our ERC friends! I miss seeing your smiling faces-- and I even miss making coffee and tea for you during the service! But I am enjoying watching the services online with my family, and am grateful to Lance, Richard, and many others who make that possible! Until we meet again in the not-too-distant future, I hope you are all doing well and staying well!

Greetings from Susan Polstra

Finance Report

Income January - April 2020, Amounts in €

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020 vs 2019</u>
Donations	25.192,29	16.831,41	8.360,88
Collections	9.400,77	17.644,55	-8.243,78
Church hire	6.567,60	6.517,60	50,00
Concerts	1.760,00	4.282,00	-2.522,00
Weddings	-550,00	875,00	-1.425,00
Church shop	0,00	0,00	0,00
Flowers	50,00	66,27	-16,27
	42.420,66	46.216,83	-3.796,17

Well, you may not have been expecting to get another finance report from me since the plan was originally that I would hand over the office of treasurer to Charles Vanderpuyte at our AGM in April.

For obvious reasons our AGM was cancelled and due to the restrictions, it has taken Charles and me some more time to work on the transfer details. Our aim is now that Charles will be fully in charge by the end of June. Consequently, you will have to put up with this Finance Report still coming from me.

So far, our income has been impacted only slightly by the discontinuation of our Sunday services in our church building which has also meant no Sunday offering anymore. I want to thank all of you who have increased their giving by bank transfer into our bank account. Perhaps this is an opportunity for others to think about this too.

In addition, I want to draw your attention to the possibility of donating via our webpage using the “donation-button”. I’m sure you can spare another few minutes after you have enjoyed our recorded weekly service each Sunday just to press this button and donate via PayPal.

These are strange times, and we need to be aware that our financial obligations are the same as always. I want to encourage you, even though being the English Reformed Church in Amsterdam is very different for the time being, to continue to be generous in supporting our - no better - GOD’s work.

Despite all the uncertainties I pray that each of us experience God’s compassion and love in the midst of our difficulties, uncertainties and confusions and that this transforms into trust, hope, and joy in HIS glory.

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

Meet the Glas family

Arie and Lisanne Glas both trained as tropical doctors in the Netherlands. They left for Mulanje in January 2017 with their daughters, Salomé and Eva.

After a handover period, Arie took over as Medical Director from Ruth Shakespeare.



Arie grew up in Zululand, South Africa where his father worked as a doctor and his mother taught the six children at home.

Lisanne grew up in the Netherlands and sailed on one of the Mercy Ships (providing medical care) as a teenager. After that she knew she wanted to train as a doctor and work in Africa.

Both Arie and Lisanne come from a Christian background, and their faith plays a big role in their decision to give their time and talents to the patients of MMH.

In 2019, their third daughter, Mischa, was born on the mission. Six weeks later she fell ill and was

admitted to the University Hospital in Blantyre. After developing serious complications, it was decided to bring her to the Netherlands for further treatment.

While the family was here, the Covid-19 outbreak prevented them from returning to Malawi. At first this was quite difficult, but they have temporarily settled now and have almost daily contacts with the hospital. Arie is doing a lot of management tasks from their temporary home, and spends time raising funds for the hospital.

As soon as air travel recommences, they will travel back to MMH.

Salomé (now aged 5) goes to an English school in a nearby village and receives homeschooling from Lisanne – she will soon be finishing ‘groep 2’!

Eva (now 3 years old) will soon be starting ‘groep 1’ homeschool.

The Glas family has no strict plans but previously thought to commit to at least five years at MMH. That is still their intention.

‘Yendani bwino Mulungu’, may God go with you. Sascha Sizoo-Adema

Service of worship during lockdown

In the last edition of *The Record* we were looking forward to the Easter season and I was writing about the planned music for all those marvellous services. Well, *that* didn't happen.

But we at the ERC are nothing if not flexible! We provided a service of worship for all of those special days in Holy Week, and we continue to offer a service every Sunday, with a link available on our website. It is definitely a group effort and, after a very steep learning curve and some tense moments in the beginning, we have now settled into what we feel is a very successful and workable process.

Lance provides me with the order of service early in the week and I begin immediately gathering together the required hymns and possible music.

On Thursday, Lance and the other (speaking) participants meet in the church where Thorsten stands behind the video camera to record those separate sections. He then sends those recordings to me and I assemble them all together in the proper order, along with hymns, music, and, occasionally, elements like prayers or readings which someone has recorded from their own home. I add an opening and closing sequence, which includes who is participating in the day's service, identifies the church, the date, etc., and basically invites anyone watching into the church to join together in worship. (This is the perfect time for you to invite your friends from around the world!)

When I'm finished with the full service, I send the appropriate information to Jens, who sees to the linking of it to the church website.

We are quite pleased, and I hope you all are, too, that we provide a *full* service of worship, including not only the sermon, but also collective readings and responses, music, and hymns to which everyone can sing along. Not all churches manage this! Forgive us for indulging in a bit of pride.

You can listen and watch this service any time after it is first put up on the site - you can go back to Palm Sunday again if you like! And with a video service, you can, of course, join in as much or as little as you like. If you really just want to hear Lance's message but aren't interested in singing the hymns, skip them. If you don't have time for the sermon but want a brief devotional moment at any time during the week with just the scripture reading and prayers, fast-forward to what you need. If you're in the mood for some inspirational music but have had enough of words for the week, after all those business zoom meetings, go for the music! And if you want to have a full, Sunday morning service, it's all there for you. We hope in this way that we are meeting your needs and in a way that still fits into your much-altered life right now.

Oh, and yes, that is *you* singing those hymns. I have recordings of the services since 2015 and I dig into my archive to find not only the hymns but also our choir and other music. Who knew I'd ever need those recordings?

The choir is so anxious to come together and sing again, but we have to be patient. The day will come. In the meantime, the sky is SO blue these days!

Keep singing!

Richard

Midweek Fellowship

Since the lockdown we have increased our Bible Studies from every alternate Wednesday to every Wednesday, having graduated from Skype to Zoom. And our numbers have increased as we have been joined by people as far away as London and Norway.

We have been studying the Book of Acts, looking at those early days of the church as the new Christian community came to birth, learning what it meant to be the 'new Israel', growing out of the ancient people of God. For now there seems to be the impetus for a weekly session so we will continue, at least until we stop for the Summer break. Do join us - details on the website.

Online services: from behind the camera

Thursday afternoon I am driving into Amsterdam and have my first extraordinary experience - no problem finding a parking space.

Walking to the Begijnhof, the Spui is calm but not empty. A few individuals are sitting in the sun enjoying the quietness, but each week there are more people and more shops are opening again.

Entering the Begijnhof, which is closed for visitors, I greet a few of the inhabitants, who are sitting outside, reading a book, having a cup of tea, and enjoying the sun.

Then it is becoming cold because I entered our church. It is a special experience, outside wonderful sun and warmth and now being in the empty church, even so flooded with sunlight but still low in temperature.

It is a special experience being in our church, knowing that for more the 400 years worshipping God has been ongoing and even under these extraordinary circumstances, we all are connected as the English-speaking congregation in Amsterdam.

But enough of deep thoughts – it is time to prepare for the recording as Pastor Lance and one or two others for the scripture readings and prayers will be arriving soon.

I have developed a certain routine: uncovering the piano, adjusting the lights, closing the curtains in the choir area, preparing the camera, and making some coffee and tea - remember it is cold inside. But these are all the small details, and I am already looking forward to the great experience from behind the camcorder: Pastor Lance and the others celebrating a service almost in the same way and with the same spirit as each Sunday despite only having me and my camcorder



as audience.

Of course there are differences; we record individual parts of the service at a time - the welcome, the prayers, the scripture reading, the children's talk and not to forget the sermon. And sometimes we have to stop and repeat parts because something went wrong, but we get better every time. It is important for us that this is not only a recording, but that we are worshipping God while we are recording which means that we join in the prayers and proclamations.

After "the takes" are finished, all is uploaded into the cloud the same evening. But wait. Something is still missing – the hymns and the music and putting all this together ...

Luckily and thankfully Richard picks it up from the cloud and then his work starts. Every week I am impressed and astonished at how Richard, with his creativity and sense for details, produces such a wonderful service, which we all are enjoying together.

Once the final "product" is ready, Richard loads it onto YouTube, and thanks to Jens, our webmaster, the link is magically available on our webpage and other media for you to "click".

A final word: having seen bits and pieces "live" on Thursdays, it is a special experience for me each Sunday to worship God and to know that we continue to gather - even though virtually - in our wonderful church in the Begijnhof. Although the "church" is momentarily closed, God's "CHURCH" continues to be open - always.

Thorsten König, your "trying-to-be" cameraman

International Presbytery

The International Presbytery, which comprises representatives from all the international Churches of Scotland (12 in all), including of course the English Reformed Church, met in Gibraltar in March, just in time before the Corona lockdown (though unfortunately the representative from Rome was sent home as Italy was deemed then to be high risk). Presbytery meets twice per year, in March and September, and one regular item of business at the March meeting is the induction of a new Moderator.



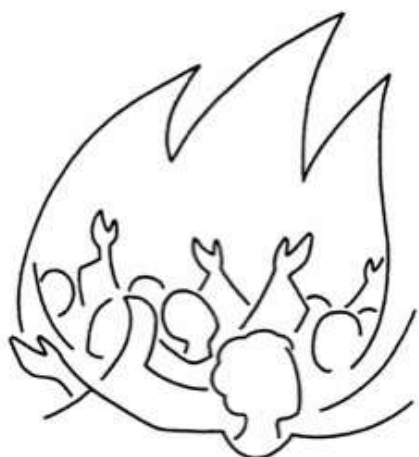
Well, look whose turn it was this time! The picture shows Rev Irene Bom from the Scots Kirk in Rotterdam, the previous Moderator, installing me as the new one.

So what does the Moderator do? Well, not all that much! S/he chairs meetings of the Presbytery on the two occasions that it convenes in the year and conducts

worship at these gatherings. S/he also attends the Presbytery Business Committee of the Presbytery which normally meets monthly (by Skype) and which processes the affairs of the Presbytery between their bi-annual meetings. S/he also presides at the induction of any new ministers that are called to churches in the Presbytery - and I had the privilege in April of presiding at the induction of the new minister of St Andrew's, Malta, Rev Betsi Thane, by Skype. Most unusual, but it worked well.

Sadly, the next Presbytery meeting due to meet in September in Budapest has been cancelled due to the virus. We will meet in some capacity for business but will not be travelling to Budapest (a shame: it's one of my favourite European cities). And then in no time it will be someone else's turn to be inducted.

Lance



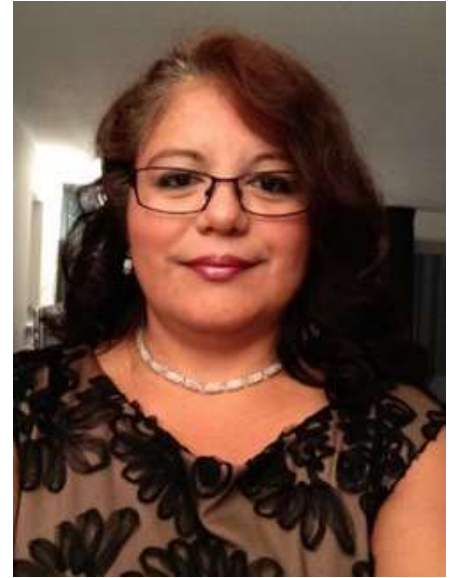
Sunday 31 May 2020

Pentecost

A conversation with Veronica

In October 2015, Veronica Garcia Robles started working for the ERC as Lay Assistant, a new position in our church at the time, made possible by a grant from the Salvesen Trust of the Church of Scotland.

“I had been a Sunday school teacher for a while when Christa (Oudshoorn-Hobo) asked me to co-chair as coordinator of the Sunday School. A while later, Christa then moved away and I took over. When the position of Lay Assistant, focused on youth, became available, I decided to apply.”



Veronica used not only her degree in English but also her Master of Divinity degree in her work. Her own Sunday School memories also proved to be a good starting point in continuing to lead the Sunday School in a positive direction. “As a child, I used to do the activities in children’s worksheets that covered the bible scripture for the day. I loved colouring in the bible-story pictures in them and they helped me in understanding themes in Bible stories.” As a teacher, Veronica started creating these kinds of worksheets depicting the bible stories for her own classes. Then, in her capacity as Lay Assistant, she started producing them on a weekly basis as part of the Sunday School curriculum. “My aim in doing that was that children at a young age would learn (and remember), just like me, different characters in the Bible and stories from these worksheets. The worksheets were meant to literally give the kids a way to picture the bible story in their heads and hopefully help them remember the stories and figures in the bible to help them lay a foundation for their spiritual life. The older Sunday School children especially are so smart and we have had wonderful conversations about bible passages. They are curious and ask a lot of questions”. And, when she didn’t know the answer to a question, she never shied away from saying, “I do not know” and “what do you think”? She likes to challenge their minds so that they think about the bible scriptures, hopefully learn more about them, but ultimately so that they will remember the stories as they grow. “I also worked on various activities for them, such as helping with Messy Church, Easter Egg Hunts, the Nativity Play and the Annual Potluck Christmas Party, among other things.”

Junior Church (JC) already has some very experienced teachers. “I was not as hands-on with JC as I was with Sunday School. I took care of the rota for the teachers and provided materials. But part of the job was also to engage junior church teens in other activities. In the past we had some successful movie and pizza gatherings, Glow in the Dark Mini Golf, as well as outings to the Bible Museum and a Martin Luther King, Jr/ Gandhi/Mandela Exhibition at the Nieuwe Kerk. In addition, we did a couple of Serve the City events. I remember during a very cold winter, the Junior Church collecting lots of new socks and underwear for the homeless.”

Over the years, the numbers of children in Sunday School have changed. “Some families with children moved away while some Sunday School children moved up to Junior Church. The number of Sunday School children at present is relatively low. We have more in the age bracket for Junior Church now”. Over the years, Veronica noted that it became more difficult to organise events for JC because nowadays teens have very full schedules and it is hard to get enough of them together at the same time.

For the 20’s to 30’s group, Veronica tried to bring some continuity of community. “Of course the group already existed when I started as lay assistant. Activities were planned, mostly at people’s homes back then. But they also had a lot of changes, as many people in the group had moved away. Creating a sense of community and fellowship was very important, so I started the monthly lunch after the service. There would be no special topics; just a time to enjoy lunch together and get to know each other better and build friendships. Aside from this, I helped organize many food and movie nights and Pastor Lance also led podcast bible studies at the Manse. The group is very active and many within the group come up with activities to do with one another as well.”

Though working with the youth was a focal point for Veronica as Lay Assistant, she also helped with the mid-week services. “Though we used to do the Bread Services, not long after Pastor Lance arrived, he introduced the Taizé services as an alternative. As the format was somewhat new to me, Pastor Lance lent me his materials so that I could familiarize myself with the songs and the order of service and I later took over leading them. We did the songs a cappella which gives it an intimate feeling. At a certain point, our neighbours from the Catholic chapel joined in. Whether we are 5 people or 20 people gathered together, the service always creates a good feeling of community. I also remember a couple of Healing services I helped Pastor Lance with, which were more focused around prayer.”

In the first years of her employment, Veronica also took part in the Social and Outreach Committee and the Publicity Committee, as editor of The Record.

In the past years the contribution of the Salvesen Trust was reduced and Veronica’s contract was adjusted accordingly. The Trust decided around the turn of the year to discontinue the grant for the ERC completely, unfortunately resulting in the end of Veronica’s employment. “I just kind of see where the Spirit takes me and roll with it. You never know what lies ahead. With my daughter going to secondary school after the summer I would like to take on another professional challenge. I have my degrees and a variety of experiences”.

“I would like to thank the congregation for allowing me to do this work. Everyone was so loving and kind. And a huge thank you to all the children of Sunday School!”

We say farewell to Veronica in the position of Lay Assistant, luckily the children of Sunday School and the congregation will keep on seeing Veronica as she is member of our congregation. “This church is my home”. Thank you, Veronica, on behalf of the congregation, for all your contributions to the growth of our community. When we can meet again, we will salute you with a proper thank you.

Heleen Koning

COVID-19 in Malawi

Dear all at ERC,

An update from us, the current Dutch doctors at Mulanje Mission Hospital. You can read a bit more about ourselves on page 10 but here I would like to tell you a bit more about COVID-19 in Malawi.

Of course, like everywhere in the world, there is a lot of attention for the virus in Mulanje, and the hospital has been prepared for what may be coming.

There has not been the flood of very sick patients with symptoms of COVID-19 that some feared, two months ago. By now, 19 May, 70 confirmed cases are reported in the country and 3 people died of COVID-19. Low figures? Yes, but keep in mind that very little tests are done, just over 1800 thus far.

If we consider who falls ill with COVID - those are mostly the elderly and people who are already sick. Unfortunately, those groups don't tend to live very long in Malawi, and in addition, we have a very young population with an average age of only 18 years! Perhaps this will protect Malawi's population against this particular disease to some degree, and it would be a much welcome blessing.

The economic effects of the crisis are, until now, more painful. Borders with all neighbours have closed and transport is more expensive. The price of maize and other food has risen, as has the cost of drugs and medical supplies. Just like here, all drugs come from Asia and need to be transported by sea.

The Malawian government had ordered a lock-down for the entire country on the 18th of April, but civil society has obtained a court injunction on the grounds that it is not appropriate to force people out of their livelihoods without providing adequate food and cash. Since then, there



are restrictions to gatherings like church services, but not a complete lock-down, luckily, since this would have done immense harm to the interests of the poorest.

At Mulanje Mission, we have focused our efforts on maintaining normal, essential healthcare as much as possible. Of course there are restrictions - one visitor per patient, only one entry point to the hospital where everyone is screened - but this should not stand in the way of other care.

We are constantly reminded that, while this pandemic may be a unique experience to us in Western countries, many Malawians have become used to seeing preventable, infectious diseases like

like these cause many more deaths, every year, then COVID-19 has done so far. We should not allow progress in reducing those to be undone! That requires extra resources in this difficult time.

It is important that the communities understand what COVID-19 is and how its' spread can be prevented, so we have invested in training sessions with village leaders. Most training activities that are not essential were postponed, to reduce spread of the virus.

We have bought a large shipment of drugs just before borders closed and are now producing our own facemasks and gowns. Staff have had extra training in how to use PPE, and to give them the confidence they need. There is some provision for very sick patients - extra oxygen, a tent to screen and treat COVID suspects and we invested in infection prevention materials for the crowded Prison in Mulanje.

It has been great to see the response from you all at the ERC, and from other friends and partners from around the world.

Arie Glas, Medical Director MMH

Amsterdam City Rights:

Undocumented help undocumented!

It seems highly likely that as of June 1st face masks will become mandatory on public transport. The debate is ongoing as to the usefulness of face masks, but it seems that they do reduce the chance of spreading the Corona Virus.

A team from Amsterdam City Rights group will make two masks each for all undocumented refugees under the banner: "Together we stay healthy". These new masks were designed by Ilmira (see photo), and the design has been approved by the GGD. The masks can easily be washed and reused.

Amsterdam City Rights are very active on Facebook so it is easy to follow their news and find out how you can provide support.

Ingrid



Photo by Annette Kouwenhoven

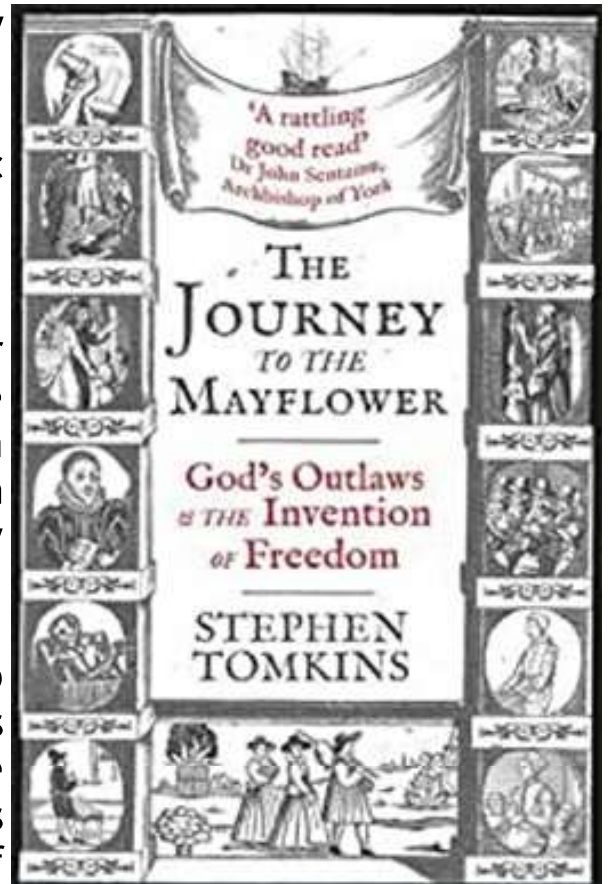
The Journey to the Mayflower

God's Outlaws and the Invention of Freedom

One of the best laid plans that has gone awry with the Covid pandemic is the event scheduled for the end of May, when historian Stephen Tomkins was to come to Amsterdam to launch his book and give a public lecture on the events leading up to the sailing of the Mayflower in 1620.

As we do not know if and when this event will now take place, I thought I would give a brief review of the book, should any of you be looking for reading material in the lockdown period.

Tomkins begins his story in 16th century Tudor England, when Mary Tudor, 'Bloody Mary', was on the throne, seeking to restore the Roman Catholic faith that pertained prior to her father, Henry VIII's break with Rome in 1533. Mary's fearful rule of persecution and burning of Protestants ended with her death and replacement by the Protestant Elizabeth I, under whom there emerged various factions with varying degrees of support, antipathy and resistance to the 'Elizabethan settlement' - Mary's advocacy of the Church of England and its relationship to her and to the State. From this emerged those exiles who moved to the Netherlands in search of religious freedom and to escape the danger of dissent at home. Eventually, of course, that led to the sailing of pilgrims to the New World - and the voyage of the Mayflower.



It is a gripping story told with scholarly expertise. What I had not appreciated was the degree of division and in-fighting between the various groups who came to Amsterdam. The problem with breaking with the stability and weight of the established Church of England was that there easily followed a splintering of those who were looking for a purer, more Biblical faith as they found it impossible to accommodate each other's differences. Sadly, that has all too often been the story of the Protestant faith.

I am left, too, with the same uncertainty I had before as to how well disposed the exiles who found their way to Amsterdam would have been

to our church - given their convictions and the fact that they themselves were so diverse and fragmented. The English Reformed Church features in the book, and also its first minister, John Paget. He was clearly a formidable figure, and one who would have had little time for many of the pilgrims who ended up on the Mayflower - and nor they for him.

I commend this book for anyone with a taste for history, an interest in the events surrounding the founding of our church and in the sailing of the Mayflower.

Lance



Services of worship from other communities in the Church of Scotland

are accessible online: see

<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/worship/services-online>

An article from the MMH Quarterly Newsletter: **Beekeeping provides income to small farmers**

Bee farming (apiculture) is one of the neglected forms of farming in Malawi. The Sustainable Livelihoods Project at MMH introduced farmers in its catchment area to this farming. Farmers are happy because it is yielding results with farmers in the trade now earning up to 2,600.00 Kwacha for a kilo of honey.

The initiative by Mulanje Mission Hospital already includes over 200 farmers from Traditional Authorities Chikumbu, Mabuka and Nkanda. The project is only two years old and is banking on quick returns with farmers who have 10 hives earning up to Kw 780,000.00 annually. “We realized that most farmers lack knowledge about the economic and agricultural importance of Apiculture. Although many players in the agricultural sector are supporting agri-business initiatives, most of that has caused the venture to be shunned by many rural farmers” said John Mpatama, chair of Mlatho Hills Conservation Committee.

The sparse attention accorded to this promising sector prompted MMH’s Sustainable Livelihoods Project to enlighten farmers about this less labour-intensive venture that guarantees relatively large returns.

“Beekeeping, unlike other agricultural ventures requires less attention and space. You just hang the hives at an appropriate point and wait to harvest the honey after four months. Bees do not need medication, feeds etc.” added Mpatama.

Mulanje Mission Hospital, having realized the challenges to successful commercial beekeeping, like poor standard beehives among other things, set out to eliminate them with the main focus on access to modern bee hives and other accessories.

The projects campaign is rooting for quality honey production. The honey market is filled with a lot of fake honey which is affecting the growth of the sector. When MMH ventured into the industry, we realized that it was hard for one to get pure honey with some unscrupulous traders going to the extent of cheating clients with molasses. Quality honey being a key point in the project’s work has driven MMH to partner with the farmers and provide accessories for harvesting honey. MMH offers ready markets to its farmers at an average of Kw 2,600.00 per kilo. Currently, MMH is sourcing funds for the purchase of machinery for processing of honey and honey products (Wax) into polish, candles and many more products. This work has recently been supported by Blacksburg Presbyterian Church (Virginia), Fane Valley, the Good Little Company and Stichting Steun Malawi.

Hastings E. Chitengu



Photographs by Arie Glas



ZoomIn / KnitIn

Four weeks ago we started ZoomIn KnitIn. At the usual time on Monday (2 - 4 pm) when we would normally be knitting at home, we chat online.

The reality is that we do most of our knitting during the rest of the week— it's pretty difficult to chat on Zoom and knit at the same time.

Not at all like sitting together, chatting and knitting in the church. Just seeing each other and catching up on what everyone is doing is wonderful and keeps us knitting on through the week.

We've even had new people joining in! So, if you'd like to knit at home and /or chat on Zoom, please, let us know.

We have around 50 angels up to now, not bad going considering we only started after Easter! Thanks to everyone involved.

Gillian

Picture: the 2019 yarnbomb on the Spui. By Jens Sorensen.



Church life during lockdown

20s&30s group: contact Elizabeth Ijmker, updates on Facebook. The group has arranged a short evening act of worship (known as Compline) on Thursday and Sunday evenings at 21:00 via Zoom.

Bible Study: Wednesday 19:30. Weekly via Zoom. Contact Lance Stone.

Coffee Morning: suspended till further notice.

Women's Fellowship: suspended.

KnitIn: Monday 14:00-16:00 via Zoom. Contact Gillian Walker.

Men's group: upcoming activity, Pétanque at Museumplein postponed until 25 June at 19:00.

Psalm reciting: Tuesday 08:45. Weekly via Zoom.

Cooking at the Kloof: volunteer work suspended, financial support continues. Contact Sally Stone.

STOP PRESS! On 18 May it was decided to:

- wait until September to reopen the church for Sunday services, with limited attendance each week;
- continue until then, to pre-record and post services each week on our website;
- begin to host some small gatherings in the church in June (e.g. coffee morning);
- arrange for some larger gatherings in July for worship (not Sunday mornings) and requiring reservation of seats;

All the above will be done in accordance with rules laid down by the government (concerning social distancing, disinfecting, cleaning etc) and in consultation with our neighbours in the Begijnhof. More details will follow.

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Deadline for the next edition of the Record is 23 August 2020

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