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# The Record

## September 2020

Vol. 2020/3



The English Reformed Church  
Begijnhof 48, 1012 WV Amsterdam  
[www.ercadam.nl](http://www.ercadam.nl)

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# Minister's Letter

Dear Friends,

In my last letter for The Record, written in June, I mentioned how the Covid pandemic has made us grateful for things we often take for granted and now miss: attending church, worshipping together, seeing one another in the flesh, going to a café or restaurant. This month I want to focus on something else that we might take for granted but which Covid has made me deeply grateful for - and that is technology. I frequently find myself thinking of how we would have managed this pandemic in former times when technology was less advanced - especially the invention of the household computer. We have been so reliant upon it: for the beautifully constructed and edited pre-recorded services that people could follow online (see below); for numerous meetings on Zoom, including Bible Study which now has a far greater gathering than it did before; for the recent live-streamed services which have enabled people to participate in 'live' worship from the safety of their homes; and for numerous other ways, e.g. email, by which we have been able to keep in touch and sustain some measure of community. Without the computer it doesn't bear thinking of what this pandemic would have been like - for the church and the world - and we view this as a blessing from God.

Of course, information technology is a two-edged sword. There is such a danger of us becoming addicted to our screens to the detriment of other activities; the internet gives us access to material that is not good for us; and social media have their very dark and sinister side. I feel for parents bringing up children in the age of mobile phones and social media: pressures on children and young people are bad enough without the perils these bring. We come up against the ambiguity that runs through all of life: our capacity for good and evil, for blessing and for curse, and the calling of Christians to promote whatever is true, honourable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable (Philippians 4:8) - all that enhances life and community and wellbeing.

So I am thankful for the blessings of technology. And evidently, from what we hear, during the pandemic online church services have attracted some increased interest from non-church attenders: let's hope and pray that what we've discovered and learned from technology during lockdown can be used creatively and imaginatively in the service of the Kingdom!

All good wishes to you - keep safe and well,

*Lance*

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# Consistory Report

Since April, Consistory met via Zoom in June and twice in July. Although we started using the church again, it was only with small groups. After our meeting in September we resumed services in church (with all the necessary precautions and a limited number of people present) as of 13 September.

**Membership issues:** We received news that Keith MacFarlane, Gillian Walker's husband, passed away on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July. The funeral service took place on the 23<sup>rd</sup> in our church.

During the past month Consistory tried to keep in touch with the breadth of the congregation via emails and telephone calls in the pastoral regions.

**Church Community:** A number of gatherings continued online: Bible study attracted a good number of participants including some from abroad. The 20-30's group have been meeting online, but they also had the first semi-official gathering with 12 people participating - a good outcome. It was decided to meet up for a picnic outside. A small group was also participating on a regular basis in the Compline services on Thursday and Sunday evenings via Zoom.

In June and July the Coffee mornings took place in church, with 12-15 people attending.

The committee for co-ordinating Sunday School was formed: Danielle Vroom, Ivan Digber, Jessica Lamming and Sally Stone are part of this group. They had a meeting in July to get things ready for the possibility of holding Sunday School starting in September.

**Preparing for re-opening:** Pastor Lance convened a committee to explore all the necessary preparations for resuming live services: a reservation system (we can seat a limited number of people in the church under the 1.5m distance rule), a live stream of the services, and proposal re community singing etc. We worked towards holding a first service after the lockdown on 13 September. Before that date, the registration system had to be in place: everyone would have to register via a website or via phone. A team prepared for setting up a live stream of the services which is a different technique than pre-recording. Our services had been pre-recorded during the week, edited very professionally by Richard Zook, and then uploaded by Jens Sorensen on the website. In September, there would be a live stream of the service which could also be accessed later via the website. In addition to Jens, Jessica Bell, Sally Stone, Thijs Polstra and Olivia Decker are also part of the "live stream" group.

Another committee dealt with the practical issues: walking routes, hand sanitizing, masks, cleaning etc. Most important remain the general guidelines (wash your hands regularly, sneeze in elbow, keep your distance and in case of complaints, stay home).



In the September meeting, Consistory decided to resume services on the designated date of 13 September following a protocol based on the governmental guidelines, with extra measures in relation to the specific layout of the building (wearing facemasks while entering and leaving the building). Reaching the decision was not easy, given the different perspectives and the available information from official and unofficial channels. Consistory will evaluate on a weekly basis, taking into consideration the measures from the national and municipal government, the figures regarding the spread of the virus and the extent to which the congregation adheres to the practical rules for the Sunday service.

**Handing over treasurership from Thorsten to Charles:** The audit of the 2019 accounts was executed on 25 June (Victoria Lavelle, Eduard van Starrenburg and Andreas Decker). The Audit Committee approved the accounts. This completed Thorsten König's work as treasurer for the English Reformed Church. Thorsten was treasurer for 7 years and a member of Consistory for almost 16 years. He leaves the church financially healthy, with regular income lower because of the Corona situation, but with good reserves due to two recent bequests we were recently blessed with.

Pastor Lance expressed the gratitude of consistory and the congregation for all the work Thorsten did, not only for the ERC in Amsterdam but also in our relation with the Presbytery (figuring out a good system for the M&R contributions) and for Mulanje Mission Hospital, which Thorsten and Astrid also visited.

Thorsten officially handed over the treasurership to Charles Vanderpuye on 1 July 2020. Charles thanked his predecessor for all preparations and time dedicated to make it a swift transition. Charles is hoping to find new ways of increasing the regular income of our church. He looks forward to working with all involved in the financial side of the church.

**Mulanje Mission Hospital:** Although the Mulanje benefit concert could not take place this year, Arie Glas (medical director of the Mulanje Mission Hospital), his network and the ERC raised € 17,000 (to be doubled by Wilde Ganzen) for a Corona Fund. The funds will be used for building a tent for triage and stockpile on the necessary personal protection equipment.

Bram Sizoo joined the first July meeting. Bram took over the role of liaison between the ERC and MMH. Bram became member of the ERC in the mid-eighties, got married to Sascha (who is editor of the Record) in the church in 1995, became an elder in 1998 and moved to Malawi in 1999 where they stayed for 4 years. Bram, Arie Glas, Thorsten and Lance had a meeting on 30 June to discuss a number of issues before Thorsten's move to Scotland. Bram is looking forward to meeting not only with the people in the ERC who are/were involved (Ingrid, Giles) but also the staff in Mulanje Mission Hospital. Bram will set up meetings in the near future. He sees many opportunities and hopes to involve people in our congregation and in MMH.



**Changes:** Kenneth Ewen informed Consistory and the ERC staff that he will end his work as concert organiser. Given the circumstances this is very understandable, but the ERC and all the musicians and choirs will miss Kenneth's dedication and hard work.

We discussed the steps we need to take for the future as well as how to organise a proper farewell for Kenneth. This will be followed up in October.

Giles Francis has decided to step down as serving elder as of August. "I do think it is time for me to step down, and let someone else provide new energy and perspective. I intend to participate as fully as ever in the aspect of our church that matters most to me- namely worship. I will pray for Consistory and its direction and wish everyone well."

We thank Giles for all his work and time he put into Consistory and into the mission of the church. It was decided to discuss the procedure for finding a new elder in November/December.

**Other competent business:** The world-wide protests against racism following the death of George Floyd were brought forward. How could we express ourselves as a church? What is our calling in this situation? Pastor Lance put forward the role of the church which included confessing the sins of the world. Having a conversation about this topic was not made easy in our current condition of lockdown, but it was suggested that members of the congregation might like to contribute a prayer, thought or poem to our Ercadam Facebook site. Pastor Lance addressed the issue in his weekly letter and in the sermon of the June 14 service.

**Pulpit Supply:** Rev. John Bell led the online worship during Pastor Lance's holiday.

Next Consistory meeting : October 5th, via Zoom. If you would like to participate, let me know: [scriba@ercadam.nl](mailto:scriba@ercadam.nl) *Heleen Koning*

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## Invitation from Task Force Refugees

*Quote: 'Amsterdam is good, people mind their own business.' But sometimes newcomers to Amsterdam face challenges 'I was with friends in the metro and this woman looked very angry at me and walked away. Why? Maybe because I look different? Crazy, all people are the same family in the end. We are all children of God. In my country we believe in God.'*

Are you interested in finding out more about how Christian organisations have been involved with asylum seekers, refugees, undocumented refugees and migrant workers?

With Gianni da Costa of the Diaconal Platform Amsterdam Oost, the Task Force Refugees invites you to get acquainted with each other and with refugees in the neighbourhood.

Date : Thursday 15 October 2020

Time : 19:30 to 22:00.

Location : Muiderkerk, Linnaeusstraat 37, 1093 EG Amsterdam

It is essential that you reserve a place at the meeting (*you can only come if you have registered*). Please send an email to Ingrid Sorensen [mail@in-grids.net](mailto:mail@in-grids.net) for more information or to register.



# Finance Report

## Income January - July 2020, Amounts in €

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020 vs 2019</u>
Donations	47,889.11	32,518.81	15,370.30
Collections	11,254.61	30,614.37	-19,359.76
Church hire	10,428.40	11,355.80	-927.40
Concerts	1,358.00	8,388.00	-7,030.00
Weddings	-300.00	1,575.00	-1,875.00
Church shop	0.00	250.00	-250.00
Flowers	16.50	92.77	-76.27
	<b>70,646.62</b>	<b>84,794.75</b>	<b>-14,148.13</b>

As this is my first finance report as the new treasurer of the congregation I would like to take this opportunity to thank Thorsten Koenig for his support of the transition during the months of the lockdown.

Our income up to the month of July dropped by 17% compared to last year. All sources of income with exception of donations have dropped considerably. This is of course due to the impact of the Corona crisis. Collection and Concerts are about € 19,000 and € 7,000 less respectively as compared to 2019.

Donations however has increased by more than € 15,000. This reflects a positive response from the congregation to the call for donation through the online services.

Total expenditure also fell by 16% compared to the same period last year resulting in a minor surplus for the church in July.

The fall in expenditure is mainly due to less maintenance work carried out this year, less wages & salaries and less representation costs.

We also received a total donation of € 33,238.00 from the congregation and third party donors for the Mulanje Mission Hospital and the Mulanje Covid-19 appeal. This amount has been transferred to the hospital through the Wilde Ganzen project.

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity to thank all who continue to donate to the church during the period that the church doors are closed. I encourage those who are yet to make a contribution to kindly reflect on doing their part.

Donations can be made to:  
English Reformed Church

ABN AMRO Bank. IBAN: NL44 ABNA 0547 6235 50

*Charles Vanderpuye, Treasurer*

## Online Services

On Sunday September 13<sup>th</sup> we returned to 'live' church, with a live-streamed service from the Begijnhof, but with limited numbers, no coffee or fellowship afterwards, and a ban on socialising and singing (though 8 members of the choir sang from the front). We had about 55 people in church the first week, well within our limit of 65 so there was no need to turn anyone away. As I write, numbers for this second Sunday back in church, September 20<sup>th</sup>, are slightly down; evidently many people prefer to watch from the safety of home.

We will continue with live-streamed services with a limit of 65 until and unless circumstances change.

A few comments about online services from March to September: Firstly, a huge thank you to those who made the pre-recorded online services possible: especially Richard Zook for the wonderful assembling of the parts of the service - a massive task; Sally Stone and Olivia Decker for their filming of the services; and Jens Wejsmark Sorensen for all his work on the website. Over the months 'hits' on the website for each Sunday service ranged from about 150 to over 300 and I know of people far and wide who logged onto them.

Again, as in my letter on p. 3: thank God for the blessings of technology, and what we were able to do in a very challenging time! *Lance*

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## Thorsten and Astrid's final farewell from Amsterdam

After 16 years being part of our congregation and 7 years as treasurer, Thorsten König left Amsterdam this month to follow not only his wife Astrid to the Glasgow area, where she has been working as an Ear Nose and Throat consultant for a while, but also his calling to become a minister. Due to the Covid-19 situation we were not able to organise a regular farewell. In Thorsten's last meeting of Consistory in June he officially handed over to Charles Vanderpuye, the new treasurer of the English Reformed Church.

In the pre-recorded service of August 2<sup>nd</sup>, pastor Lance and I could thank Thorsten on behalf of consistory and the congregation, not only for all his good work for our church, but also in our financial relation with the Presbytery of Europe and for the hospital in Malawi. Thorsten and Astrid had a strong connection with Mulanje Mission Hospital. They did a lot of work for the hospital in the Netherlands. And they also played an important role in bridging the distance between the ERC and Mulanje, by visiting the hospital a couple of times and bringing back to our church their stories and pictures.

We thank you, Thorsten and Astrid, for your work for the congregation, in front and behind the scenes, for your hospitality, your cheerfulness, for your work for Malawi. May God bless you abundantly in your new phase in life in Scotland. *Heleen*

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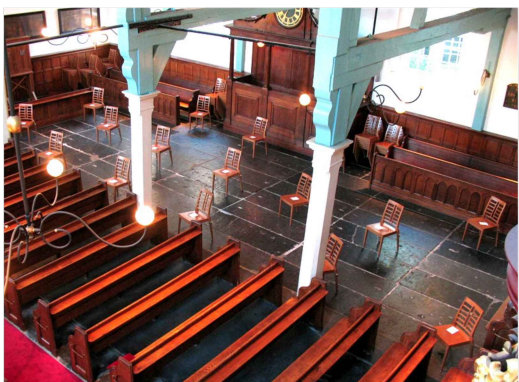


## Choir news

I hope you have been enjoying hearing the choir on most Sunday video services over the past months, albeit via old recordings. But now, after the sudden halt to last season (the first service cancelled in March had been one the choir was going to sing) followed by the usual summer break, the choir is finally back to rehearsing and participating in live services! Some members have been caught out of the country by travel restrictions and are only now managing to get back, but most of us are here and very happy to be singing together again.

For those of you who have been reading the news over the past months and are concerned, I can assure you that I have been in contact with my colleagues in the professional singing world and the decision to rehearse together in the church again has not been made without careful consideration. Those famous stories of choirs that came out back in April were the source of much confusion and hasty conclusions. Singing, studies

have shown, is in fact *not* a "super conductor" of the virus. Nevertheless care must still be taken and observing proper distancing is essential. The entire choir meets in the church for rehearsals but that is only possible because we can spread out and use the entire space of the church, as you can see in the photo. All seating is set out with *more than* 1.5m between each singer. We have *no* coffee break, no use of the kitchen, no crowded gathering in the vestibule. This is working out fine and we are all very happy to be singing together again!



Sunday morning services present a larger challenge. After very careful measuring, it is clear that only a fraction of the choir can fit into the front of the church maintaining distance. I have decided to use only eight singers at a time. In order for everyone to have a chance to sing, almost every Sunday will be a "choir Sunday." Please do not be confused or disheartened by the fact that the church has decided not to allow *congregational* singing just yet. There are always valid arguments on both sides. The PKN has officially approved singing in services, but we are not alone in taking a relatively cautious and conservative approach. One step at a time! We're only just beginning. Until we do all raise our voices together in song again, I hope you'll enjoy hearing the choir sing the hymns as well as their own anthems. It's a challenge for all of us!

We are always working ahead to the coming months, and therefore Christmas is already on our minds. That is a big frustration, with no possibility for the entire choir to sing together in a service. We are therefore planning to make a video recording of a full Lessons and Carols service. It's a puzzle, but we will find a way for all of the choir to sing together. So if you have grown accustomed to the video services over the past months, you can look forward to a very special Carol service this year!

Keep singing - in your heart if not in church!

Richard

## Coffee Morning

Els Nooij took these pictures at the gathering in the church on September 3rd.

While keeping a 1.5m distance, people enjoyed catching up and sharing a cup of coffee and a cake.



The next coffee morning is scheduled on Tuesday October 6th.

(under precondition of COVID-19 regulations)

Contact Joke de Bruin for more information.



## Some Pastoral News

It is with some sadness but much gratitude that I report that after 7 years serving on the Consistory, Giles Francis has decided to stand down as a serving elder. Giles, however, is not leaving our church and assures us that he will be as involved in the worship life of the church as ever - and continues to be a Junior Church leader. For now Giles will continue to keep in touch with his pastoral group.

Also, many of you will be delighted to hear that Cara Thomas, who recently returned to the UK with Nick, Zahra and Will, was baptised and confirmed in Oxford on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> September. Congratulations and every blessing to Cara and to the Thomas family!

*Lance*

## Who's who : Bram Sizoo

*In this issue, you meet Bram, a Dutch national and psychiatrist. He has been asked to succeed Thorsten in the role of liaison between the ERC and Mulanje Mission Hospital. I asked him why he had been asked, how he ended up sharing experiences in both ERC and MMH.*

Sascha Sizoo-Adema

With Thorsten moving to Glasgow, he left a vacancy and asked me to take over from him. I worked in MMH and am familiar with the ERC as well.

From 1999-2003 I was medical director of MMH and was responsible for the entire administration (including financial), on top of patient care.

When John Cowie visited us in 2000, he initiated the long-term relationship between ERC and Mulanje Mission.

I became a member of the ERC in 1985, after moving to Amsterdam from Den Helder. My parents and an uncle had been members in the past, and I was already used to worshipping in English after spending a few years in the UK. Sascha and I got married in the church in 1995. Our sons were baptised in the ERC in 1997 (Bastiaan) and 1999 (Willem and Bob). I was a member of consistory from around 1990 until we left for Mulanje in April 1999.



After returning to the Netherlands I switched from tropical medicine to psychiatry, and obtained my PhD on 'substance abuse in autism / ADHD'.

I feel privileged to be asked for the liaison task. I feel that the strong ties between ERC and MMH deserve to be nurtured in the interest of both 'sides'.

When we worked in MMH we sometimes had mixed feelings about gifts sent to the hospital. Gifts without an underlying relationship may strengthen the dependency of the receivers. Absence of a relationship and communication about donations may lead to inappropriate donations (e.g. technical equipment not of any use to MMH at the time).

I have already been in touch with Arie Glas during his time in the Netherlands. Talking to him about current issues brought back a lot of memories of our time in Mulanje.

My main concerns for the future are maintaining the strong relationship between Mulanje Mission Hospital and the English Reformed Church. We would also like to explore more/new ways of connecting MMH staff and ERC members.

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# Christian Education

As we move into Autumn there is much happening on the Christian Education front.

Mid-week Bible study continues on Zoom - back to 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays of the month - with a good crowd, including some participants from beyond the Netherlands. We are following a series on Jesus' parables.

We also have 2 Book Groups about to read and discuss:  
The Hidden Wound, by the American poet, novelist and writer Wendell Berry. Interest was so great that we had to set up an additional group!

We also have the monthly Further In The Faith group that is going to be doing some studies in the Book of Exodus.

All are welcome to join any of these gatherings!

*Lance*

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## Men's Group

Normally, at this time of the year I would be sending out the program for the next season (2020/21) in the Men's Group. Unfortunately, a lot of the activities we normally do together are no longer possible when having to respect the Covid-19 social distancing.

However, we're still thinking of ways to do something together, and therefore please keep the following dates reserved for the Men's Group:

Thursday, 26 November 2020      Sunday, 27 December 2020

Thursday, 28 January 2021      Thursday, 25 March 2021

Thursday, 27 May 2021 and      Thursday, 29 July 2021.

We usually meet at 19:30.

If you want to be added to the mailing list, please contact Jens Anders Wejsmark Sorensen by email [webmaster@ercadam.nl](mailto:webmaster@ercadam.nl)







## Church of Scotland

Services of worship from other communities in the Church of Scotland

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

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### Vakantie in eigen land: Vlissingen

Like many people who want to reduce their carbon footprint we decided to plan our 2020 summer holiday here in the Netherlands, otherwise known as: “vakantie in eigen land”. If we were serious about our environmentally friendly ambitions, then we should do a cycling holiday!

Living in the city we really wanted to see the sea and the Dutch coastline, so we decided to cycle all the way to Vlissingen via Zandvoort, Scheveningen and Hoek van Holland. This way we could kill two birds with one stone: see the coastline AND visit our dear friend Ans van Saagsvelt-Melse. We had a lovely day together enjoying lunch at the seaside and sharing news of ERC-life.

For those who know Ans they will be very pleased to hear that she is extremely happy in her lovely new home (with Lucy's knitted angel on the front door).

Her neighbours are great (they took the photo) and she has a new friend and a new church. However, as for most of us, church services are no longer live affairs and she has been following the ERC pre-recorded services online.



It is our pleasure to pass on warm greetings to you from Ans.

*Ingrid & Jens Sorensen*

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# 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 hrs via Zoom.

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

**Coffee Morning:** first Tuesday of the month at 10.30 hrs, at the church

**Women's Fellowship:** suspended.

**KnitIn:** Monday 14:00-16:00 hrs in church. Contact Gillian Walker.

**Men's group:** upcoming activities postponed

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

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



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## Up-to-date information

Did you know that the English Reformed Church sends out a weekly newsletter?

Receive news about services, activities and events and a PDF-version of the Record automatically. You can subscribe via the website: [www.ercadam.nl](http://www.ercadam.nl)



English Reformed  
Church Amsterdam

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

# NEWSLETTER



On the site you'll also find many links to other interesting websites, like MMH, Vluchtelingenwerk etc.

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# Thank you

*On July 14th 2020, Keith MacFarlane passed away at the age of 65. Keith, husband of Gillian Walker was a friend of our congregation for many years. Gillian expressed her thanks for support, attention and prayers in the following way and she would like to extend these words of thanks to the whole congregation.*

Thank you to all who the last four months have....

turned up with food, drink and company for us

sent gifts of books, candles, jewellery, photos, angels

taken Bailey out for walks

phoned the vet about travelling with Bailey

brought wine, whisky, drinks and food for Keith's funeral

stayed overnight to help care for Keith

listened to me, listened to Keith

cared for my garden, cleaned my house for me

thought of us - prayed for us

sent us cards and flowers

sent us messages every single day

sung at Keith's funeral

drove us around Scotland, turned up at our house there with food, wine, dog food, freshly baked bread and cakes - for five people for four days!

put me up and put up with me and my grief

folded the neverending washing

looked into venues for the funeral tea in Scotland

drove us to hospital appointments

did the shopping for us

took photos for us

came to witness our wedding

read poems to Keith

washed, dressed, held Keith

carried Keith

comforted me

comforted Keith

and have done many of these things unasked.

In short, to all who have helped us in whatever way you felt you could: thank you. All these acts of kindness have helped both of us along the way.

*Gillian and - on behalf of - Keith.*



## Dear friends,

I send you greetings from Scotland! We have arrived in Howwood and our house is now about 80% habitable. Well, would be nice if the kitchen were finally ready - all the fittings are still missing, and therefore most of the kitchen boxes are unpacked. It is like living as students again with 6 plates, 6 cups and 2 pots and pans. But for the rest we are settling in.



My placement at Houston & Killellan Kirk just has started. It is quite “strange” to be limited to Zoom meetings to get to know people better. Fortunately Astrid and I already attended the Sunday services last year, so we are at least a bit familiar with the congregation - but still strange times. The situation is still very unpredictable. So far we have planned to “go back to church” with a short service on Wednesdays starting September 23<sup>rd</sup>. The idea is to get some routine and practise and not raising too much expectation with the congregation. We can seat about 50 people in the church building and normally there are about 150 attending a Sunday service. I hope and pray for your plans for Sunday the 13<sup>th</sup>.

My academic studies will start the week after next. All will be online, so another “strange” experience to be limited to my own little office and not having this discussion with other students or the teachers before or after lectures around some coffee. Especially when you are such a small group like us doing Theology and Religious Studies in Glasgow. So far we are four starting our training for ministry and there may be a very few additional students.

The good news is (and again God’s mysterious preparation) that I already found a study-buddy: Hanneke Marshall, the minister in Bridge of Weir, the neighbouring village, is my so called “Presbytery representative”. Her husband Aaron (about my age) also starts his training for ministry and also in Glasgow! So we met already to get to know each other and to see how we can do our studies together. You can call it coincidence, or you can simply smile and enjoy God’s good preparation.

Astrid’s situation at work in the hospital is still “strange”, too. Because of all the precautionary measures, they operate with significant reduced capacity. Unfortunately people are still scared to come to appointments - they simply do not show up. So on the one side waiting lists are growing and growing, but it is also quite unsatisfactory for the doctors not being able to do what needs to be done. And please remember: Currently hospitals are the safest place with respect to corona.

So as you can see we are settling in and I am really looking forward to dig deeper into my training. By the way my first full service (pre-recorded....) will be on Sunday October 18<sup>th</sup> - would be nice if you pray for my preparation. All the best to you all and let us stay in touch,  
God bless,

*Thorsten*

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# Church life under lockdown

*In March of this year the Covid-virus started taking over our lives in many ways, and since then we have been looking for ways to find comfort and strength to get us through these strange and unprecedented times. How have members of our church dealt with the situation that we can no longer meet in person for the Sunday services? Did they find alternative opportunities for worship and enjoy different ways to share fellowship with each other? Three members of our church are telling their own story.*

Ingrid Sorensen and her husband Jens have been following the online services on Sunday morning since the start of lock-down. Jens is the current ERC webmaster and, even though the recording was posted to the website slightly earlier in the morning, they both looked forward to participating in the Sunday morning service at the set time of 10.30 hrs.



Ed Jackson, his wife Sarah and their son have done the same. For Ed, the Sunday service has been a defining moment in the week, as he has been mostly forced to work from home. Their 18-month old son normally

would go to the crèche in church, and now is attending the service online together with his mom and dad.

In June we started organizing the Coffee Mornings in church, benefiting from the decreasing number of Covid-infections at that time. Joke de Bruin has been attending some of the in-person Coffee Mornings in church, which was a really nice opportunity for some of our longstanding church members to see and speak with each other again. Joke also has pro-actively contacted people in church to see how they are, take them out for a walk, a coffee or a visit to the museum. Whilst in the past she would often engage with others during coffee after a Sunday service, because of the virus situation she has been more focused on one-on-one activities. Ingrid has in a similar way contacted others, enquiring how they are and spending time having lunch with others or even going to the hairdresser together. Specifically people who are alone, or otherwise in need of company miss the intimacy and the warm personal relationships in church and enjoy having contact with others outside of regular church events. Although Ingrid has a full-time job, she believes it is important to connect with others and spend time together.

Ed, who sings in the choir as a tenor, spends time with the 20s-30s

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group and also enjoys seeing some of his choir friends via Zoom at the regular Tuesday choir practice times. Although he misses the fellowship in church, he believes that the online services and meetings are a very good alternative for worship and fellowship; with a young family, he appreciated the flexibility online meetings offer. He is also a regular in the weekly Compline meetings. The attendees pray together and although not a substitute for singing in the choir, they sometimes sing together as well.

Ingrid, Ed and Joke all look forward to in-person services again in church, but at the same time are amazed by the quality and the intimacy of the online services. Before Covid they could not have imagined to worship and share fellowship together in a way that we have done in the last 6 months. Ingrid also mentioned that we now are able to reach many more people with our digital services, including longstanding members who moved away to other cities or even to another country. On average, we have around 200 views of the Sunday service every week, the majority attending the service at the usual start time of 10:30.

Thankfully, we are able to slowly move back to in-person church services in September. Although the number of people is still limited, people are craving to spend time together again, enjoying the service in the church building.

Until the church crèche is safe to open again, Ed and his family will continue to participate in the online service. Ingrid would like to attend the in-person services again, but for now has decided to continue watching from home, also providing others with an opportunity to attend the live service. Joke, who sings in the choir as an alto, is really happy to sing in church again, both on Tuesdays during the practice as well as on Sundays. She hopes that everyone will follow the given guidelines, so we can all stay safe and healthy.

*Thijs Glasz*

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## **In the footsteps of Piet Mondriaan**

The Gifted Art foundation has created [www.mondriaanroute.com](http://www.mondriaanroute.com). On this website you can find walks and cycle routes following in the footsteps of the famous Dutch artist Piet Mondriaan. As he lived in Amsterdam, there is a 8 km walk through our city. Our church is added to the walk, as Piet Mondriaan designed the panels of the pulpit <https://mondriaanroute.com/areas/amsterdam/engelse-hervormde-kerk>

The aim of the website is to provide lots of interesting knowledge, available both on your PC at home and on your smartphone while walking or cycling.

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## Yarnbomb 2020: those angels are flying!

Fortunately, knitting angels for the Yarnbomb 2020 has not been badly affected by Covid-19 restrictions. Anyone can knit at home and keeping our distance in the church on Monday afternoons is not difficult at all.

We're having as much fun as we did last year and are just keeping on knitting, not knowing if we will be able to yarnbomb the square as we did last year or not.

If not, I'm sure we'll find an alternative. Just in case we can, we've started (trying!) to teach the three dog regulars to take around the angels in a basket and offer them to passers-by during the carol singing. That way we can easily keep our distance!

Whether the angels will survive this journey is currently somewhat doubtful!

Thank you to all who come along faithfully and who haven't given up on the yarnbomb. We'll make something happen!

If you'd like to join in please feel welcome to come to the church on Mondays from 14:00-16:00 hrs or contact me on [gillian.walker.ams@icloud.com](mailto:gillian.walker.ams@icloud.com)



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English Reformed  
Church Amsterdam

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