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# The Record

July 2021  
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The English Reformed Church  
Begijnhof 48, 1012 WV Amsterdam  
[www.erc.amsterdam](http://www.erc.amsterdam)

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*Painting frontpage: Het Begijnhof met de Engelse kerk (1754)  
Jan ten Compe (1713-1761)*

# Minister's Letter

Dear Friends,

What a difficult task - to write a farewell letter for The Record after 7 very happy years as your minister! What on earth can I say? Well, I've decided to make a short list of special memories that will go with me and stay with me. Of course, there are so many memories that I know I will savour in the years ahead, but here are just a few that particularly stand out:

- Worship on special 'high and holy days' - in particular Easter Sunday, with a packed church, wonderful, rousing singing from congregation and choir and us all joining in the 'Hallelujah Chorus'; and Christmas Eve, with a beautifully decorated church and, again, the place filled beyond capacity and those wonderful carols rising to the rafters. And, of course, the Nativity services, with virtuoso performances from our children. What a way to celebrate the great moments of our faith!
- The Sunday before Christmas in 2019 when we decorated The Spui with knitted angels and we carol-sang and gave away angels to passers-by. I loved the bewildered expressions on people's faces as they tried to figure out what on earth was going on!
- Coffee time after the Sunday service - always such a buzz and always newcomers and visitors to meet and chat with. A Sunday never went by without me meeting someone from somewhere round the globe either visiting or moving to Amsterdam - such a mixture of diverse and fascinating people.
- Small groups, Bible Studies, the Book Group, the 20s-30s, various explorations of the faith and other discussion gatherings which have proliferated in recent years, where we have shared and discussed and sometimes argued about what we believe and what this strange faith that we have signed up to is all about. It's been so enriching.

These are just a few snap-shots, but they indicate something of the life and vitality of the church that I have been so blessed to pastor these past years. So, my thanks to you all - and Sally adds hers for all the ways you have made this time so special for her. The ERC will always have a very special place in our hearts and, you never know, you might just find a couple of familiar faces in the pews one Sunday morning... make sure we have a chat afterwards over coffee!

May God richly bless you in the future,

*Lance*

# Consistory Report

In April Pastor Lance informed the congregation about his retirement as of Augustus 2021. We knew this would happen eventually, but when it happens, it takes you by surprise. Pastor Lance and Sally decided it was time to enjoy retirement, although it was a difficult decision with a church still closed because of Covid-19.

## Membership issues

Ingrid Zimmermann announced that she would step down as serving elder as of 1 May 2021. She will continue to support the church and congregation and, for the coming period, she will continue with her elder group. Sascha Sizoo has taken over Ingrid's role regarding the Mulanje Mission Hospital projects, and Ingrid will support her. Pastor Lance thanked



Ingrid for all her work for the Congregation, as a serving elder and otherwise.

*Picture by Jens Sorensen, Ingrid at the welcome desk*

## Church Community

Consistory studied the route map set out for re-opening society in the coming months should the number of covid infections and hospitalisations continue to decline.

This would mean that we can open the church as of June 20, giving members of the congregation the chance to participate in a live service with Pastor Lance before his departure. We can certainly have 30 people in church and hopefully even more by that time. The ground rules (hand hygiene, 1,5 meter distance and wearing a face mask while moving around) will still be in place.

The work group was convened and put in place the necessary arrangements regarding a booking system.

Concerts with an audience (with restricted numbers) will be possible in phase 3 of the plan (beginning of July).

## New Concert Organiser

As of June, Pietro Paganini will be the new concert organiser. Consistory followed the advice of a small group who interviewed

him. Pietro is a professional musician (organ and harpsichord) as well as a financial consultant who used to have his own ensemble.

Pietro will take over from Kenneth Ewen who stepped down last year. Consistory thanks Kenneth and Richard Zook for handling the emails and bookings in the interim period, and wishes Pietro success in his new position.

### **Congregational Meeting held on May 16**

The accounts of 2020 were audited and approved by the audit committee (Eduard, Olivia and Andreas). They were presented in the congregational meeting on May 16 via Zoom. An official Annual General Meeting will be held as soon as the Church of Scotland gives us the go-ahead.

### **International Presbytery meeting**

Andreas and Pastor Lance reported back from the International Presbytery meeting, during which Pastor Lance was succeeded as Moderator by Rev Alistair Bennett from Bermuda.

The report of the Finance Committee showed that the IP dues have been reduced to 50%. A first draft of the Presbytery Mission plan for 2022 and following years was discussed. The present Presbytery Plan (outlining the number of contract ministers the IP can have in line with the guidelines of the Church of Scotland) has been cisted. Whenever there is a vacancy, the considerations will be ad hoc. Fewer ministers means that the presbytery will go from mission-mode into maintenance mode.

Elisabeth reported back from the Youth Presbytery which she attended.

The next IP will be hosted by Bochum, most probably on line.

### **Vacancy Period**

Pastor Lance will lead us in worship for the last time on July 4. The rest of the month he will take his holiday. Rev John Bell (*pictured*) will be with us in July and August.



The vacancy period starts in August with John Bell acting as the first locum. The International Presbytery asked Rev Eric Foggitt, a former member of our congregation and the new minister of St. Andrew's Church in Brussels, to become the interim moderator as of August 2021. The interim moderator is responsible for the procedures regarding the vacancy and pulpit supply and also chairs the consistory meetings.

## Other relevant topics

As agreed, Stadsherstel has taken over the lease of the church hall temporarily (until October, unless the ERC reclaims it before that date). This means that as of March 22nd, the ERC does not pay the rent.

Our property convener Jaap Maas will start planning for church maintenance work to be carried out in 2022.

If you would like to participate in a Consistory meeting or bring forward a topic, please let me know. You can send an email to scriba@erc.amsterdam

*Heleen Koning*

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## Finance Report

Income January-April 2021, amounts in €

	<u>2021</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021 vs 2020</u>	<u>%</u>
Donations	32.028,70	25.192,29	6.836,41	27%
Collections	0,00	9.400,77	-9.400,77	-100%
Church hire	5.515,20	6.567,60	-1.052,40	-16%
Concerts	0,00	1.760,00	-1.760,00	-100%
Weddings	0,00	-550,00	550,00	-100%
Church shop	0,00	0,00	0,00	0%
Flowers	0,00	50,00	-50,00	-100%
	<u>37.543,90</u>	<u>42.420,66</u>	<u>-4.876,76</u>	<u>-11%</u>

The pandemic is not yet over but there is optimism that as the vaccination program intensifies and cases fall steadily, we will soon get back to some normality. It has been a long time since we came together at church to sing our hearts out in joint worship. I very much look forward to that and hope you do too.

The impact of the pandemic on our finances continues as you can see. So far, there are no incomes from concerts and weddings and the church shop as the church doors are still closed. Of course we also missed the big Easter collections when our church is normally full.

Total income has fallen by 4.877 (11%) compared to April 2020.

However, donations are at an increased level of 27 % compared to April last year.

Total expenditure is 4.004 (6%) lower compared to April last year. We have a deficit of 21.430, similar to April last year. I expect the deficit to decrease in coming months as we will not be paying rent for the church hall during the period that maintenance work is carried out there.

We have received total donations of € 12.273 so far for the Mulanje Mission Hospital. This is excluding donations for the concerts as the concerts just started.

As always, I would like to thank you all for your continued support in sustaining our church.

Donations can be made to:

**English Reformed Church**

**ABN AMRO Bank. IBAN: NL44 ABNA 0547 6235 50**

*Charles Vanderpuye, treasurer*



## **Bidding farewell to Lance and Sally Stone**

On July 4th, a limited number of people was able to attend the Service in church, and afterwards say goodbye to pastor Lance and Sally. With songs, talks, poems and a potluck lunch.

*Photographs by Henk Woudenbrg*

## For Lance and Sally, with huge thanks *some reflections ... June 2021*

Old enough now to know  
there's no such thing as parting...  
Friends and family who have passed  
through death

are suddenly with us,  
at unexpected corners,  
maybe at mealtimes.  
And returning repeatedly, we hear:  
"Let no one be a stranger".  
You picked up your guitar and sang —  
Bob Dylan's song, poignant and powerful,  
for the children, for us all,  
and the answers filled the wind:  
Credo quia incertum est or, impossibile.

Because we know,  
like Thomas, not needing  
to feel the wounded flesh.  
Every Sunday, every day  
we learned a little more, grew stronger.  
Through winter's sleet and hail and  
howling wind  
trapped and confined.  
Then covid diminishing and spring returning,  
finally free to feel the outside air,  
resurrections along the dark canals.  
So, filled with resurrections,  
and very courageous  
umbrellaed by your blessing  
we go forth in peace  
our hearts burning within us — yes,  
knowing enough,  
singing about power transmuted into love

*Wendie Shaffer, Amsterdam*

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## A new ERC website

Fresh. Beautiful. Engaging. Clean.

These are just a few of many compliments we have received about our new digital home, <https://erc.amsterdam>. For that, we, the ERC Media Team, would like to say thank you!

After several years of anticipation and planning, we had to accelerate the move to a new website at the end of 2020. Our old website (<https://ercadam.nl>) was no longer responsive and

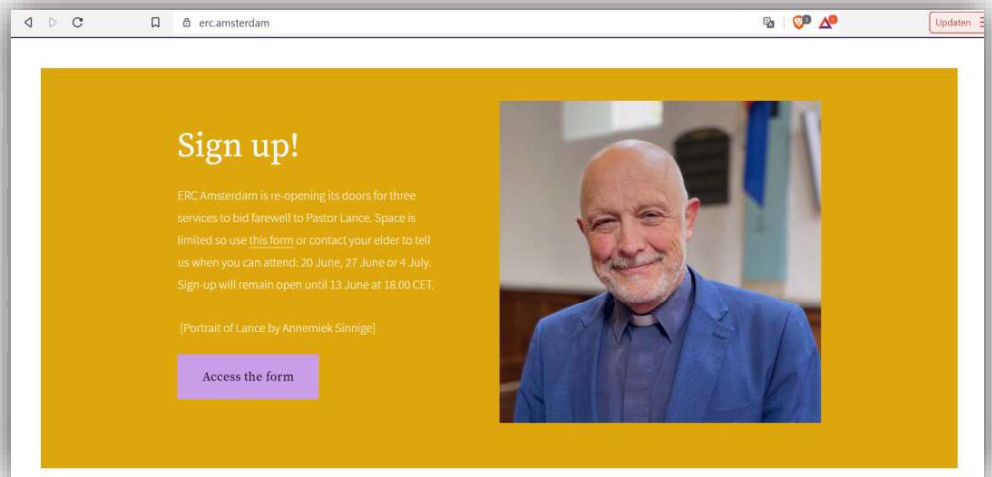


became far too difficult to maintain.

With the COVID-19 pandemic forcing us to hold all of our activities online, the website became crucial to ensuring that ERC Amsterdam could serve as many members and visitors as possible.

We had our doubts about choosing the new [erc.amsterdam](https://erc.amsterdam) name because <https://ercadam.nl> had a very high exposure on various search engines. We are now happy to report that the new website has an extra edge in its online presence, making sure our church is more relevant online, both for our members and also potential future visitors.

Not stopping at refreshing our website, we also changed the digital administration of our



church in January 2021. ERC Amsterdam is now part of Google Workspace ecosystem, making communication and collaboration easier and more professional than ever before. All church officers are assigned unique email addresses ending with @erc.amsterdam. These addresses are completely integrated with the church's new cloud storage and collaboration tools. It is absolutely essential that we spend time getting to know these tools and that we discontinue any use of the @ercadam.nl addresses as soon as possible.

Please help us with this transition and say something if you receive any digital communication that is not from the new @erc.amsterdam email address. Because sometimes we forget and old habits die hard! As more signs show that we may get back to physical Sunday services soon, we would love to get more volunteers to help us manage our website and social media presence.

If you have the talent or a calling to help us on the Media Team, do not hesitate to contact us via email: [webmaster@erc.amsterdam](mailto:webmaster@erc.amsterdam)

*Your Media Team (Ferry Haris, Jessica Bell and Laura Elliot)*

# Update from Mulanje Mission Hospital

As elsewhere in the world, the COVID-19 pandemic has hit Malawi hard. Although in March the second wave seemed to have subsided in Mulanje, prices of medical supplies had gone up drastically. The hospital is grateful for the support it gets from sponsors like the English Reformed Church, to make it possible to continue providing healthcare to the many people that rely on its services. The hospital has a good reputation far beyond its catchment area, meaning that patients often travel for days to reach Mulanje, including patients from Mozambique. However, it is sometimes hard to imagine that the secondary effects of COVID-19 in Malawi are quite different from what we read in our newspapers in the West. Food insecurity, an increase in child marriages, teenage pregnancies, and a reduction in health seeking behaviour are some of the very worrying secondary effects of COVID-19. Through the Sustainable Livelihood program, the hospital tries to help farmers tackle the food insecurity and with radio programs, people are encouraged to keep coming to the hospital for their check-ups or when ill. Read more about this in the hospital's newsletter ([www.mmh.mw](http://www.mmh.mw))



The management team of Mulanje Mission Hospital was happy to inform us that the refurbishment of the Children's ward has been completed, with the help of the funds the English Reformed Church collected last year. All efforts are now focussed on preparing for the upgrade of the Children's Intensive Care Unit. One of

the ways the ERC is trying to assist is by organising four online Prom Concerts. The concerts have been an enormous success (worldwide) and are still available on the website ([www.erc.amsterdam/the-summer-proms](http://www.erc.amsterdam/the-summer-proms)) for you to watch and listen to. Viewers are encouraged to donate in aid of the new Intensive Care Unit at the Mulanje Mission Hospital. Please watch the concerts if you have not already done so, and you will enjoy the brilliant performances of musicians including Giles Francis on the violin and of course Richard Zook on the church organ.

*Bram Sizoo*

E-mail from Mulanje:

This afternoon in the theatre,  
we listened to the concert at 1  
pm while performing a cesarian  
section.

The anesthetist and nurses  
really appreciated this  
initiative.

Thank you very much for all  
the effort

*Arie Glas, MMH*



# Christian Education

Not so much has been happening due to Covid restrictions, though the Bible Study on Zoom every alternate Wednesday continues to attract a good number of participants.

Recently we have been working through the Letter to the Colossians.

Rev John Bell, who will be with us for July and August, has offered to continue Bible Studies during these months and then we will have to take stock for the autumn.

Keep your eye on the website for further information! The Book Group is planning one more meeting before Lance leaves.

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## Church life

**20s&30s group:** contact Elisabeth Ijmer, updates on Facebook. The group has arranged a short evening act of worship, **Compline**, on Thursday and Sunday evenings at 21:00 via Zoom.

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

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

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## Join our team!

On the night of September 11-12, a team from ERC will be walking 40 km - through the night - to raise funds for refugees worldwide. Yes, it's a lot of

kilometres but we can do it and what's more, it will be fun. We'd love more people to join the team so if you enjoy a challenge and a sense of achievement please get in touch with Gillian Walker or Thijs Glasz, [gillian.walker@erc.amsterdam](mailto:gillian.walker@erc.amsterdam) or [thijs.glasz@erc.amsterdam](mailto:thijs.glasz@erc.amsterdam)

**NACHT VAN DE  
VLUCHTELING**



**11/12  
SEPT  
2021**

# Re-opening of the church

The ERC is re-opening its doors for live services.

Space is limited, and seats will be allocated. Sign up in the week before with the form on the ERC website.

55 people will be allowed in the church.

There will be *no* coffee after the services.

The recording of the services continues, though without texts, you can use the order of service. The service will be online around midday.

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All four concerts are now available online. Enjoy the music and donate generously.

Access via church website [www.erc.amsterdam](http://www.erc.amsterdam)

Thank you , musicians !!

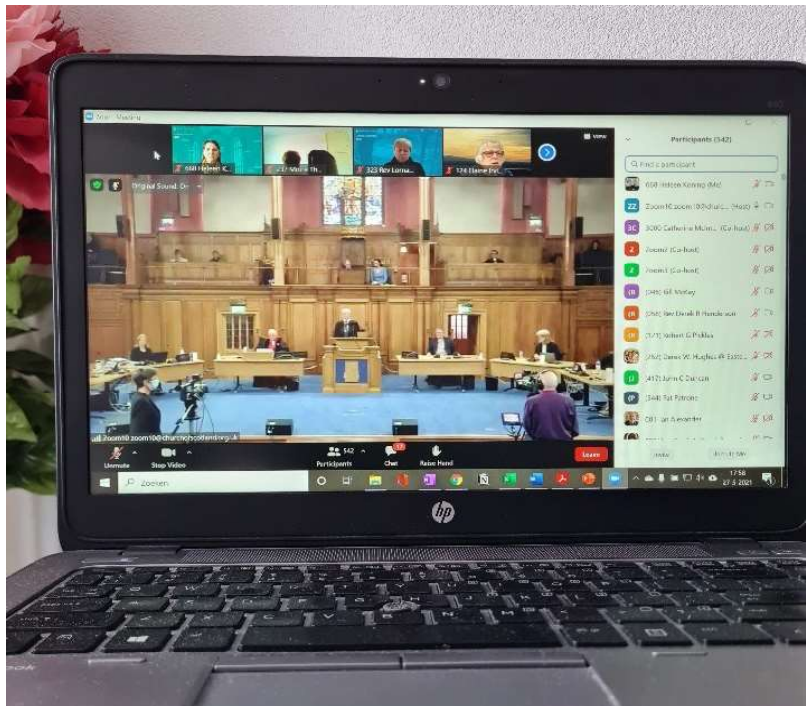
# General Assembly

From Saturday the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May to Thursday the 27<sup>th</sup> of May, Pastor Lance and I served as commissioners to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Together with 8 other ministers and elders, we represented the Presbytery of International Charges, as the presbytery we are part of is officially called.

The 671 commissioners as well as about 100 delegates from other churches and corresponding members met for the annual meeting, not in the Assembly Hall in Edinburgh as would normally be the case, but via Zoom.

The Church of Scotland's governing system is presbyterian, which means that no one person or group within the Church has more influence or say than any other. The Church does not have one person who acts as the head of faith as that role belongs to the Lord God. The Church is organised via courts: at local level the kirk session (or Consistory presided over by a minister), at district level the presbytery (consisting of all ministers in the presbytery and an equal number of elders - there are 41 presbyteries), and at the highest level the General Assembly (with commissioners from all presbyteries; the number of ministers and number of elders is equal). The General Assembly has the authority to make laws (acts and regulations) which determine how the church operates.

Each year the Church chooses a moderator who then presides over the General Assembly. This year, for the second time in history, an elder was installed as Moderator of the General Assembly, Lord Wallace of Tankerness QC. The Queen, following up on the promise to “maintain and preserve the Protestant Religion and Presbyterian Church Government”, sends a High Commissioner to the General Assembly who attends but has no right to take part. This year Prince William served as High Commissioner.



The majority of the Church of Scotland congregations are in Scotland which means that a great number of issues discussed in the General Assembly pertain only to the congregations in Scotland. One of the biggest issues at this General Assembly also affects our Presbytery: the need for restructuring due to a declining number of church members and ministers (35% of the ministers will reach retirement age in the next five years). It was decided that the Church of Scotland would have no more than 600 charges, plus 60 vacancies by 2025. This also affects the congregations in our Presbytery. Although we are funded in other ways than the Scottish charges, we all draw on the ministers trained within the Church of Scotland. All Presbyteries have to draft a new Presbytery plan in which they lay out their plans for the coming years, including a reduction of ministers. Churches with a vacancy after the first of June may not call a new minister before the new Presbytery Plan is approved by the Faith Nurture Forum. The way this will affect our vacancy procedure needs to be discussed within our Presbytery.

Because of the Zoom format and so many people in the meeting, there was no opportunity to have a lot of interaction with fellow commissioners which was a pity (though I did see some familiar faces and names of Student Associate ministers and an elder who are now ministers in Scotland!)

But, in spite of the long hours in front of a computer screen, it was a good experience. Not only because as a commissioner I really felt part of the process (everything was well organised including the voting), but also being able to see the Church of Scotland (which sometimes feels like an “institution” from a distance) at work and being able to listen to really inspiring contributions and speeches.

If you are interested to find out more, you can find all reports, speeches, and picture galleries on the website of the Church of Scotland.



<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about-us/general-assembly/general-assembly-2021>

*Heleen Koning*

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English Reformed  
Church Amsterdam

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