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The Record

October 2021

Vol. 2021/3



The English Reformed Church
Begijnhof 48, 1012 WV Amsterdam
www.erc.amsterdam

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Minister's Letter

Greetings!

When Lance retired in July, I was appointed Interim Moderator and my job is to nurture you through the vacancy period towards finding a new Minister. I am responsible for many of the official functions of the Minister, such as chairing the Consistory, but as I said at a service in early September, I also see myself as an honest friend, whose job is to hold up a mirror to the church and enable you to see yourselves more clearly, so that you have a better idea of what skill-set you would be looking for in a future Minister.

As the lockdown restrictions have eased, it's become possible to do more of the normal things that churches do - like meeting together and holding services. I'm aware that some of you are anxious about going to church, and we need to be aware not only of the guidelines that the government and PKN offer us, but also of the natural anxiety that some people have of meeting, singing and talking together. So I make no apology for taking things slowly and ensuring that we maximise safety for everyone during church services. If you wish to wear a mask during the service, you're very welcome to do so and we ask you all to respect others' boundaries - not everyone is comfortable at this time with people coming close or even touching them. As we enter the Autumn period, we will keep a close eye on infection rates and on our church attendance levels to ensure that we worship God in a place of welcome and of safety.

One of my tasks as Interim Moderator has been to engage locum ministers for the next few months. I have done this not just to provide a preacher each week, but more so that you can experience a variety of styles and approaches. This will also help you to decide what kind of Minister you want - and need - in the coming years. The first of these is Very Rev Dr Russell Barr, who brings a great wealth of pastoral experience and who is a most gracious and able Minister. He will be with you from November until February.

Meantime, please pray for your church and try to answer the question: "What can I do to help?" These past 18 months or so have put great strain on a few people within the church and new hands and faces are both much needed and very welcome. If you'd like to offer your time and skills, please contact me via Heleen, the Scriba.

With every blessing to you all!

Eric

Eric Foggitt
Interim Moderator, ERC Amsterdam
Minister, St Andrew's Church, Brussels

Consistory Report

We have had five Consistory meetings since the last report. In June, Rev. Lance Stone chaired his last meeting before retirement. We thanked him for the last seven years of leadership in all aspects of church life. In July, Rev. John Bell graciously took over from Pastor Lance and in August, Rev. Eric Foggitt, interim moderator, started his work in support of our congregation.

Membership issues: In his last service on the 4th of July, Pastor Lance and the congregation welcomed members who were admitted into membership in December 2020: Robert van Dijk, Besong Etchu and Rebecca Roell. Anja Polstra was admitted by Profession of Faith during that same service.

Thijs and Virginia Glasz will temporarily move to Iceland. Thijs will step down as serving member of Consistory. In his absence, Giles Francis (non serving elder) will take Thijs' seat in Consistory.

Vacancy Period: Pastor Lance's last meeting explained the different roles in the coming vacancy period. Rev. Eric Foggitt, appointed by the Presbytery, will act as Interim Moderator. He is responsible for the nominating procedure, consistory meetings and arranging locums and pulpit supply. A locum minister leads worship, takes on pastoral care where needed, and leads Bible study and other activities in consultation with consistory. A locum minister's work-load is about two days a week. Consistory is responsible for the daily running of the church.



In the August meeting, a lot of time was dedicated to discussing the vacancy in relation to the situation of the Church of Scotland (CoS). There are a lot of very tiny communities, geographically very spread, where there are not enough funds to sustain a church. The Church of Scotland has committed itself to maintain Christian presence in all sorts of places. Being a minister in a situation where you have to serve a number of congregations, can be quite stressful. The largest group of ministers, by age, is aged between 60-70 years. The CoS faces a decline of ministers in the coming five years. The proposal adopted by the General Assembly is to reduce the number of charges, so that ministers can carry out more concentrated work. The reduction in the number of parishes means that the very small congregations will be limited. All presbyteries are allocated a number of full time equivalent ministers. The calculation made means that the International Presbytery will be reduced from 13 to 5fte CoS ministers. The presbyteries are to present a Presbytery Mission Plan to the Faith Nurture Forum of the CoS in which they describe how the presbytery will work under the new circumstances. All vacancies have been cisted until the plan is accepted by the Faith Nurture Forum. Because of our vacancy as of 1 August, the ERC is not allowed to recruit a new minister from within the Church of Scotland at present.

The Presbytery of International Charges, to which the ERC belongs, is in

the process of drafting the Presbytery Mission Plan. It will be on the agenda of the October Presbytery meeting, but might take until the end of next year before it is accepted. After the October meeting, Consistory will decide which paths need exploration.

Rev. Eric Foggitt has organised locums from November 2021 until May/June 2022. In September and October, a different minister or preacher will lead worship each Sunday.



New Concert Manager: In May we appointed a new concert manager. However, he revisited his application and decided not to take the post. We interviewed two new candidates and were very happy that we could appoint Anja Polstra as our new concert manager. We wish her every blessing in her work.

Church Community: In each Consistory meeting, we have had to make decisions regarding the consequences of the Covid-19 situation. We decided to proceed with caution, taking the guidelines offered by the government and the PKN as the maximum we could do. We updated the protocol for church and organised the duties on Sundays accordingly. A registration system was also put in place.

We very happy that Pastor Lance could have three live services in church with ca 60 members present before he left. The numbers we decided we could admit fluctuated, partly because of a sudden spike in infections in the summer. In August we could sing again. As of 1 September, we raised the number to 60-70 people in church, which is the maximum we can have in order to guarantee a 1.5 meter distance. Mid September the facemask requirement was dropped. In the October meeting we will assess the current protocol once again in respect of government rules and the advice of the PKN.

Other relevant topics: We thank everyone involved, especially Richard Zook and Giles Francis for the excellent series of Summer Proms concerts to raise funds for the Mulanje Mission Hospital.

Consistory decided to adopt the proposal from the Finance Committee, regarding the funds we were blessed with in 2019 and 2020. Consistory thanked Jolmer Gerritse for his contribution to the meeting and thanked the members of the Finance Committee for their work in this.

Anja Polstra will be substituting for Susan Polstra, during her absence.

The Bible Study in September and October will, in the absence of a locum, be led by different ministers from the Presbytery of International charges.

We will continue with the present format, including using Zoom, which gives many more people access than the live sessions do.

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

Please note that until further notice, the meetings of Consistory are held on the second Wednesday of the month.

Heleen Koning

Finance Report

Income January - August 2021, Amounts in €

	<u>2021</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021 vs</u> <u>2020</u>
Donations	69.535,38	55.790,69	13.744,69
Collections	0,00	11.579,61	-11.579,61
Church hire	10.955,40	11.730,40	-775,00
Concerts	1.190,00	1.358,00	-168,00
Weddings	0,00	-300,00	300,00
Church shop	0,00	0,00	0,00
Flowers	0,00	16,50	-16,50
	81.680,78	80.175,20	1.505,58

As you all know, we have entered into an interim period in search of a new minister after the retirement of Lance as our minister. Reverend John Bell supported us for the first 2 months and Reverend Eric Foggitt has taken over as our interim moderator during our search for a new minister. This means we will be having different preachers till we find and employ our new minister.

In my last record, I mentioned the optimism of things getting back to normal in the country and at church. Well, we may celebrate Christmas this year with a full church judging by the way things are going.

Financially, our total income till August showed a slight improvement compared to August 2020 (2% better) but more importantly, a better improvement compared to April this year (an overturn from -11% to 2%) which is encouraging.

Donations increased by 25 % compared to August last year. We have also had 4 concerts so far this year. These are quite positive.

Total expenditure fell by 2% compared to the same period last year however, resulting in a minor surplus for the church.

We have received total donations of € 24.595,- so far for the Mulanje Mission Hospital. This includes € 5.850,- for the MMH Summer Proms, just € 150,- short of the € 6.000,- target.

€ 28.794 has been transferred to the hospital up till now. € 14.294,- through the Wilde Ganzen project and € 14.500,- for hospital drugs.

Finally, I would like to thank you all for your continued support in sustaining our church. I encourage those who are yet to make a

contribution to do their part.

Donations can be made to:
English Reformed Church
ABN AMRO Bank. IBAN: NL44 ABNA 0547 6235 50

Charles Vanderpuye, Treasurer

Dogs & walks!

Here is a covid safe activity for you! We will soon be resuming dog walks. It's very simple, we just go for a walk with dogs. You don't need to bring a dog along with you, but all your dogs are welcome. It does help if you like dogs! We meet up somewhere not too far away - and walk. It might be a fairly short walk, or it could be a day out. Everyone gets to say what they would like and at some point your preference will be met (within reason!). There is no fixed day or time, we just see what suits most people. I will set up a Whatsapp group/email group.

If you'd like to join in please get in touch with me, *Rebecca Röell*, through rebeccaroell@hotmail.com or on 06 29 28 86 03.

Here is a photo from our last walk, in February 2020! That's me on the right with the Jack Russell



Knitting angels We are knitting angels again every Monday from 14-16 hrs in the church. All are welcome, even if you can't knit but just like chatting.

Gillian Walker
gillian.walker.ams@icloud.com
or 06 4058 6654

Mulanje Mission Hospital

The management of MMH was thrilled to hear that the donations from people who listened to the ERC Summer Proms that went online (still available on the ERC website!) almost reached the target of €6,000. This meant that in a joint effort with Wilde Ganzen and funds raised by the hospital, we were able to help fund the refurbishment of the dilapidated children's ICU. Work took off immediately and is progressing well.

Bram Sizoo

Music Notes

After a challenging year the choir is back in full swing and enthusiastically preparing for the upcoming season of church music. I hope you have been able to enjoy our efforts to keep our rich musical heritage alive and well throughout the pandemic, sometimes via old recordings from past services, sometimes in various smaller formations during live-streamed services. But now we will be singing again in full force during services. We started with the last Sunday of September. Your next opportunity to hear us will be October 10th, when Margaret Richards will be joining us to sing *for the last time before she departs for Trinidad*. *You won't want to miss that!*



The choir will sing again the last Sunday of October, and then for Remembrance Sunday on November 14th. Following that will be, believe it or not, the first Sunday of Advent, on November 28th. You'll want to put on your calendar our annual Joint Carol Service over at the Singel Kerk. This is a delightful service organized by our neighborhood church group H4H: ERC, Lutheran Church on the Spui, Singel Kerk (Mennonite) and the Krijtberg (Roman Catholic.) Our choir always sings, plus there are musical contributions from the other churches. Please plan to join us

Sunday, 19 December 16:00.

I hope you enjoyed the lovely *Nine Lessons and Carols service* that the choir recorded last year, which was used as our on-line Christmas Eve service. We worked very hard to produce that for the church and we were delighted to be able to achieve it during the pandemic! But this year we will be back to our tradition of holding the live "**Carols by Candlelight**" service on **Friday, 17 December, 20:00** in the church. Please mark that in red on your calendar! This is the perfect service for you to invite friends and family to attend, with our beautiful church, decorated for Christmas and warmly lit by candles, forming the backdrop for a splendid evening of traditional music and the Christmas story - and not forgetting the refreshments afterward! What better way to fill the church with our friends and celebrate the joyous season - again!

The choir will also be adding lustre to the Christmas Eve service. How fine it will be to see our church once *again full of people for this marvellous service!*

We are looking forward to this year of music in the church! We hope you are too! Make a joyful noise!

Richard Zook

Changes in the Media Team

The ERC Media team and activities have recently undergone several changes. Jessica Bell and Ferry Haris have stepped down from the team, as of the end of September. We'd like to thank them both for their valuable contributions to our Church's media activities. These have been especially important during the peak period of the Covid pandemic when we relied on digital channels to remain connected and informed as a Church community.

We would like to welcome Annemiek Sinnige as our newest member of the ERC Media team. Annemiek is familiar with our Church media activities and has, for some time already, been involved with sound and live-streaming. The current ERC Media team, therefore, includes Annemiek Sinnige, Heleen Koning, Thijs Polstra and Laura Elliott.

ERC Website: We have decided to manage the new ERC website differently going forward, with shared responsibility and management by a small group of volunteers. We welcome Anniek van Engelenburg, Helena Mitchell and Laura Elliott. We wish them well as they take on new responsibilities and learn to use the website content management system.

ERC Live-streaming: We have heard from many people about how much they have appreciated Sunday services being live-streamed during the past year, enabling them to join from near and far. We would like to thank our Sound and Live-streaming team volunteers for their ongoing support: Annemiek Sinnige, Thijs Polstra, Anja Polstra, Ahmed Hussan, Henk Esselink and Mia Lee.

We would, of course, like to continue to offer live-streaming, and to do this we need additional volunteers to join the Sound and Live-streaming team. Are you comfortable with tech? And are you able to commit to supporting the live-streaming in the Church one Sunday per month? Then please get in touch with Annemiek Sinnige, Laura Elliott or Heleen Koning. Training will be provided!

annemiek.sinnige@erc.amsterdam

laura.elliott@erc.amsterdam

heleen.koning@erc.amsterdam



Thank you.

Laura Elliott



Margaret returns to Trinidad

After spending many years abroad with studies in Canada and in Europe and finally settling here in the Netherlands for 37 years, I have decided to emigrate to Trinidad, the land of my birth, on 16th October, 2021.

This had been my desire and plan for some time now and I had hoped to do so in 2020.

However, the Covid 19 pandemic started and life became one of change, anxiety and uncertainty for everyone.

A ray of light appeared when the Dutch Airline KLM announced it's first scheduled flights to Port of Spain, Trinidad via Barbados and I decided to secure a seat on that flight.

The news was and still is for me, a MIRACLE!

The Netherlands became my home away from home but without family and close ties.

When the ERC became my place of worship within weeks of my arrival, it also became with the passing of time not only my spiritual home but also a community of fellowship, friendship, family and of belonging.

The life and work of the Church has been a source of spiritual enrichment and growth.

Thank you all for the wonderful memories; for the love, unity and fellowship which we have shared.

As I go forward into the future and new beginning, so do you as you go through the process of finding a new Pastor(Minister).

May you continue to seek God's guidance in your desire to find the right person.

It is with a touch of sadness that I say "goodbye" but you'll always remain in my thoughts and prayers.

Thanks once again for everything.

With sincere and heartfelt love and appreciation,

Margaret A Richards

Church life, christian education

20s&30s group: contact Elizabeth IJmker, 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.

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

Night of the refugee 2021

The annual sponsored walk to raise money for the support of refugees (De Nacht van de Vluchteling) got off the ground again this year, albeit in a reduced format.

In previous years our team of 15 - 20 walkers has skipped round the 10km or 20 km walk in Amsterdam. We had not yet ventured into the realm of the 40 km night walk. This year we had no option. The 10km and 20km walks weren't on offer - too many crowds for covid. Clearly there were going to be no crowds on a 40 km walk starting at midnight!

It was now or never. Six of us signed up, and after a few practice walks we were ready. There was no route in Amsterdam, which turned out well for us because one of our team, Rebecca, invited us all to a pre-hike dinner at her house in Haarlem, the starting point of the walk. This was a great start to our evening. After the usual hiccups of last minute faff - not signed up probably, toilet visit - yes, no, well yes; I can't find my phone ... oh, it's ok, found it, we set off with our hi-viz jackets, water and snacks.

The photos will tell our tale of ... well ... just walking and walking and walking. There was something very serene about walking at night - few people, no traffic, just a few night sounds from nocturnal animals. It's surprising how many people do night fishing. We (well, just two of us) thought we'd spotted an exotic illuminated night frog on the lake. It turned out to be a luminous float! As we walked we got to know each other better - who gets blisters and who doesn't, who prefers the salt snacks to the sweet - all important stuff on a night like this. And sometimes we just walked together in silence, also lovely. The walk was of course physically challenging, but even more so a test of mental endurance - keeping on going ... and going.

The idea of the night walk is to help you imagine what it might be like to be a refugee. We had nothing to run from; we had the security of knowing that the walk would end, that we could all go home to a hot shower, comfortable bed, warm food and drinks. Nevertheless, it did give you a tiny taste of how much refugees endure, that fleeing like this is really only for the young and fit. It made me think of all those unable to leave dangerous situations to look for safety.

The best part was the finish! We felt a great sense of achievement, and even more so now we know that we have raised over € 8000 to support refugees worldwide! Our church also made a very generous donation to support our team and refugees.

We would like to send a very heartfelt thank-you to all of you who showed your support in whichever way you wished - donating, sending encouraging



messages, cooking for us, picking us up and bringing us home - everything helped.

If you would still like to donate then this link is live until 31.10.2021:
<https://www.nachtvandevluchteling.nl/team/ercadam2021/doneren>



Thank you all once again

Joanna, Kathi, Peter, Rebecca, Rob, Gillian.

PS : Sign up is now open for NvdV2022:) If you'd like to join in with us (10 km/20km or 40 km) please drop me a line: gillian.walker.ams@icloud.com

Just as an encouragement, the Sunday after the walk wasn't a great day, but the days after ... we felt reborn!

Coffee Mornings restart

After a long time... it now felt safe enough to restart our monthly coffee mornings.

For as long as we have to keep distance from each other we will meet in our church.

Last June we arranged a meeting to create an opportunity to say goodbye to Lance and Sally (see pictures). And we also met in September.

The upcoming dates are (on Tuesday):

October 12

November 2

December 7

From 10.30 till about 13.00 hrs

Anyone interested is welcome!

For more information please contact Joke de Bruin or Sies Plokker



Greetings from...



Dear Friends,

Greetings to you from South London - and, I'm tempted to add, from 'broken Britain', a country hit by shortages and queues and much grumbling and dissatisfaction about the state of the nation.

Maybe leaving Amsterdam and returning home wasn't such a bright idea after all! Leaving all that aside, however, Sascha has kindly invited me to share a bit of what has been happening since we left the Netherlands in early July.

So - there was a two-week holiday in Scotland with the family which was wonderful, and since then life has been geared towards sorting our flat here in Brixton so as to transfer our worldly goods from Amsterdam. This also involved having the flat re-painted, with all the upheaval associated with that - including us moving out and casting ourselves upon the hospitality of two of our daughters. It's been very chaotic: sleeping in different beds (and sofas), night-time bus journeys clutching carrier bags and Finn's lead, and our flat piled high with boxes awaiting unpacking and the contents relocated.

Slowly but surely we are getting there... it just takes time and, happily, one feature of retirement- land is that time is plentiful!

One new venture is that I accepted an invitation to be a locum in Crown Court Church in Covent Garden in London. Like you, they are in vacancy (though considerably further on in the process), and also like you, they also have an interim moderator who oversees the vacancy, chairs elders' meetings etc. Like your locums my job is to provide pastoral care and to lead worship, for which I am allocated two days per week. I have conducted worship two Sundays now and have enjoyed it. The church is very Scottish, much less diverse (and much smaller) than the ERC, but the people are friendly and have given Sally and me a warm welcome. The congregation is fairly limited due to social distancing and they are pretty stringent about Covid protocols. Covent Garden is a beautiful part of London, with theatres and an Opera House, and it's a nice area to explore before and after the service. I anticipate doing this for a few months but hope that they might be sorted with a new minister early in 2022.

So that is the state of play for us at present. It's been a strange time and we are very much looking forward to getting the flat sorted and to beginning to feel settled. Meanwhile it is a joy to see more of the

family and to be able to do Opa and Oma duties with Raphi and Lila. Of course we miss the ERC and think of you often.

Sally joins me in sending our love and best wishes. If you're in town come and see us!

Lance

Concerts in the church

After a big pandemic-sized gap in our concert schedule, I am happy to be able to say that concerts are finally possible again at the church! I am excited to be taking on this new challenge, and will try my best to live up to the standard set by Kenneth Ewen, concert manager extraordinaire!



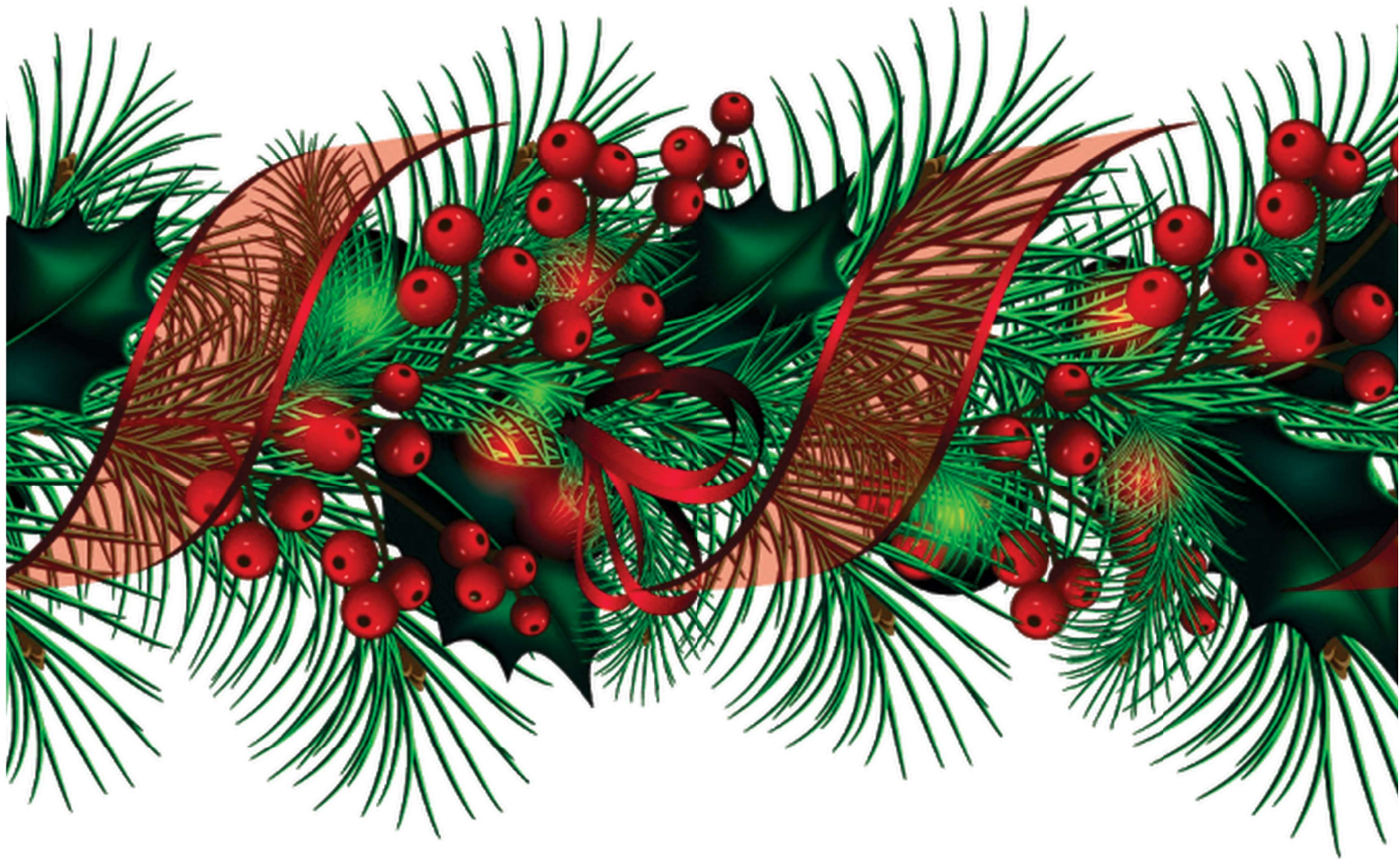
On Sunday October 10th Trio Cantabile will celebrate its tenth anniversary by presenting an ode to the French composer Charles Gounod. Just a week later, on Sunday October 17th, the church will be filled with the heavenly music of string ensemble Amici Consort, led by Bram Buitenkant. Pianist Michael Sellers will return to the ERC to give an afternoon concert on Friday November 19th.

December is choir month! Not only is our own choir working hard to prepare the Christmas repertoire for the services, but there are several vocal groups coming to give concerts. A cappella choir Slavuj, which is led by Ivo Boswijk and focuses on

music from Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the countries surrounding the Black Sea, will be with us on two dates: Saturday 11 December and Sunday 19 December. You can find more information at www.slavuj.nl. Colorful female vocal ensemble Angels, led by Tatiana Lina, will present a varied repertoire on December 12th. Grand Stand Classickoor, directed by Adriaen van der Veen, will return to our church on Saturday December 18th. On Monday December 20th the project choir HartsTocht naar het Oosten will sing polyphonic songs from Georgia and Ukraine.

Please see our website for up-to-date information about all scheduled concerts: www.erc.amsterdam/concerts

Anja Polstra



Advent and Christmas Services

December 17th at 20.00 hrs:

Carols by Candlelight

December 19th at 16.00 hrs at Singel Kerk:

Joint Carol Service

December 24th at 22.30 Hrs:

Christmas Eve Service

December 25th at 10.30 hrs:

Christmas Day Service

Members of Consistory

Andreas Decker	06 83172702
Laura Elliott	06 26423799
Mattia Falcone	06 27853671
Thijs Glasz	06 11775459
Judi Haynes-Smart	06 10242250
Elisabeth IJmker	06 28520274
Heleen Koning, <i>scriba</i>	06 13097756
Peggy Krol	020 6767804
Jaap Maas, <i>property convener</i>	020 3880996
Sies Plokker	06 30365295
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Gillian Walker	06 40586654



English Reformed
Church Amsterdam

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