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# The Record

December 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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# Minister's Letter

Greetings!

It's been a privilege over the past few months for me to lead you in worship a couple of times here at ERC and to chair the Consistory as they discuss matters relating to the church in these difficult Covid-19 days. We all face the daily worries of the pandemic in different ways, but I hope that the church, your faith and God himself have been a support for you. Coming together in worship, even under the current restrictions, is a wonderful blessing and one which we should value greatly, so I'm very grateful to those who make this possible: the people who open the church and welcome us and also the media team who film and broadcast the proceedings to others at home.

I suggested in our service on Christ the King Sunday that monarchs come with different levels of authority: in Europe we no longer have the absolute monarchies of medieval times, thankfully. Some are merely figureheads - they have power in name only. We have little contact with most of them. More often than not we hear about their personal foibles and failings - rather than their authority.

And Christ the King has authority to the extent that we allow him to: for many, he's a distant and unknown figure who might as well not exist, for all the attention they pay to him. For others, he's a figurehead who has theoretical power, but who doesn't really hold much sway over their lives.

For a very, very few Jesus is an absolute monarch: in Nicky Gumbel's book outlining the famous Alpha course, we hear about a woman who wouldn't get out of bed until she had prayed over each item of clothing, down to asking the Lord which sock she should have on her left foot, and which on her right!

In between these extremes of figurehead and despot, Jesus seeks to be our King. He invites us to welcome his authority into our hearts: over the way we live, over our relationships, in our workplaces and homes... And the Advent message is that he is a King who has come down to us in disguise, as it were (like the time in 1986 that the future King Willem-Alexander took part in the Elfstedentocht, as "W.A. van Buren".) God's "disguise" was a baby in a Bethlehem manger.

So the challenge is this: how much authority will you really allow Jesus the King to have in your life?

Things are moving slowly forward with regards to the Presbytery Plan, on which depends the timescale for seeking a permanent Minister for ERC. But I repeat: vacancies, and the locums whom we welcome among us, are an opportunity to experience different kinds of ministry and to reflect on the question: "What kind of church are we?" and "What kind of Minister do we need?" So we are blessed to have Dr Russell Barr with us until the end of January - do take time to appreciate the messages and skills which he brings.

This Advent and Christmas, I offer you my blessings, along with the prayer that you would know love, joy and peace as you welcome the Prince of Peace into our midst.

*Eric*

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

# Consistory Report

*Since the last issue of the Record, Consistory has met three times. We had a regular meeting in October, another meeting to prepare the upcoming Local Congregational Review, and we dedicated a Saturday morning to a discussion about our church and ministry as a first step towards a parish profile.*

## Membership issues

Ms Hanny van Kerkhof, Ms Erna de Jong and Mr Bruno Zijp passed away in October and Mrs Janny Leeuwenstein-van der Spiegel in August. All four were long time members of our congregation.

Jaap Maas stepped down as a serving elder. He will continue his work as property convener. Laura Elliott has decided to step down from Consistory as of the first of January and focus on her work for the newly formed Web Team. This team took over from Jessica Bell and will maintain and develop our website further.

We thank Jaap and Laura for all their work in Consistory. We are very grateful that they continue to volunteer their time and talents for the benefit of the congregation.

## Vacancy Period

Andreas Decker and Rev Eric Foggitt reported back from the Presbytery meeting in October. As was reported in the last issue of the Record, Presbytery is in the middle of drafting the Presbytery Mission Plan, which will lay out how the number of five full-time equivalent ministers could best be allocated amongst the congregations of the Presbytery (this number has been allocated to us by the Church of Scotland due to the declining number of Church of Scotland ministers). There are different ways of organising this. In these plans Presbytery also needs to take in account the various local situations.

The first step would be a Local Congregational Review (LCR): a small team of the Presbytery will visit the congregation and assess all aspects of church life and organisation, to see where we are as a congregation, how we would like to develop, and in which ways Presbytery can support us.

Rev Laurence Twaddle and Rev Gillean MacLean from the International Presbytery's Superintendence Committee came to meet with Consistory on November 10 in preparation of the LCR. They added context to the LCR—the position that the Church of Scotland and the International Presbytery are in. It is a time of reflection but also a time of new initiatives and motivating people in the congregation to explore their talents.

The Local Congregational Review will be carried out in the first quarter of 2022.

On November 20 Consistory dedicated a Saturday morning to a discussion on the purposes of church in general and the ERC in particular, as well as the question of how well-equipped we are as a



congregation in the areas of worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry and mission. No definite answer yet, but food for thought and a follow-up discussion at the beginning of next year.

### **Church Community**

Although it is difficult to organise activities and meet people, we continue to look at what is possible.

In that light Gillian started preparing for a “Yarn Bomb” event. On Sunday 19 December, we will be outdoors on the Spui, singing carols and handing out knitted angels to spread the spirit of Christmas and the love of Christ to the people on the square. Each Monday afternoon, knitters and people who want to help in other ways gather in the church in preparation.

### **Covid measures**

The impact of the Covid-19 measures are closely monitored by Consistory. We follow the guidelines of the government and the advice of the PKN. We decided as of November to stop the registration for services, but have had to re-introduce wearing masks in church. We also stipulated the importance of ventilation, which in our building can only be reached by leaving doors and windows open.

### **Other relevant topics**

The church building underwent maintenance work in October and November.

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

On the other Thursday evenings, Consistory has a short informal (digital) gathering.

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](mailto:scriba@erc.amsterdam)

*Heleen Koning*

## Call for volunteers for Communion Preparation



For the past 7-8 years, Margaret Ann Richards, together with Judi Haynes-Smart, was responsible for all preparations involved in Communion services as well as caring for the silverware and table linen.

Now that Margaret has returned home to Trinidad, we need volunteers to become part of a dedicated Communion Preparation team. The various tasks include preparing the bread and wine, setting out the elements on Communion Sunday morning and taking care of the silverware and linen.

Preparations on Communion Sundays require a minimum of 2 people and of course we also need backup teams. It's really important to have a group of people who know exactly what needs to be done and how to perform these very rewarding tasks. Training will of course be provided. If you would like to get involved, please get in touch with Judi ([judi.haynes-smart@erc.amsterdam](mailto:judi.haynes-smart@erc.amsterdam)) to find out more.

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## Multi-faith service and climate march

Many of us are concerned about climate change. We also often feel overwhelmed by the enormity of it and consequently somewhat helpless. We can all do something, small or large.



On Saturday, 6 November a group from our church attended a multi-faith service at the Westerkerk to support those involved in the COP 26 conference. The service was uplifting - it was lovely to feel connected to those of other beliefs and faiths (Hindu, Buddhist, Catholic, Humanist, Islam) and to know that we all wanted the same thing - to protect this beautiful world and to help it flourish.

We then joined the protest march through Amsterdam, which even made headlines beyond the Dutch borders. We did seem to find ourselves next to the anarchists quite often on the way, but hey, it's being there that counts. It

was fun!

Thank you to all who came along on Saturday; your voice and presence count.

*Gillian*



# Finance Report

Income	January - October 2021, Amounts in €		
	2021	2020	2021 vs 2020
Donations	84.883,35	68.595,95	16.287,40
Collections	0,00	12.260,47	-12.260,47
Church hire	14.114,20	14.889,20	-775,00
Concerts	2.304,00	1.758,00	546,00
Weddings	0,00	-300,00	300,00
Church shop	0,00	0,00	0,00
Flowers	-45,00	-16,00	-29,00
	<u>101.256,55</u>	<u>97.187,62</u>	<u>4.068,93</u>

You will have noticed the scaffolding around the church building the last few months. Yes, it was once again time for the major maintenance and painting work, both in and outside the building. It is our obligation to ensure the building is in good condition for us and for the future. Of course, that comes with a cost which is around € 101.200,- this time around.

As you can see, this amount wipes out our total income to date this year, which means we have to dig deep into our church's reserves to fund this important maintenance work.

However, it is very important for the church to maintain a good buffer, so I will urge us all as a congregation to commit some money to our church.

Even though our total income so far this year is better than 2020, I believe we can do even better in our giving.

A lot of us have been following the services online since Covid-19 struck. Most of them will give an offering when they come to church. Unfortunately, we are missing the offering which online followers would normally give when at church.

I will therefore like to motivate everyone to continue supporting our church by giving through our bank account. You can find the account number here or on our website:

**English Refomed Church, NL44 ABNA 0547 6235 50**

You can also press the Tikkie or PayPal links on the website each Sunday after watching the service. Let us all, with large or small donations, do our part for our church.

*Charles Vanderpuye, treasurer*

# In memoriam Hannie van Kerkhof

Hannie van Kerkhof was a member of our church for many years, and she became very much attached to it. In the past she spent lots of time in the building because she was the church archivist when she was a member of Consistory. Her interest was history. I remember the series of nice stories she wrote for the Record.

During the last years we have seen her very regularly at our coffee mornings. She liked to meet with people from church. Some of them she had known for a long time. She was also interested in the outings we organised. Hannie went with us on outings to Noordwijk, Groningen, Keukenhof etc.

Hannie lived in Naarden in a nice flat. She made beautiful quilts which are with the family now. If someone is interested...contact me.

She was very sad when she needed more care and had to move to a nursing home in Bussum.

On October 12, when I took her to the coffee morning, she enjoyed it very much. But it was her last visit to church for, on our way back in the wheelchair to my car, she suddenly could not stand up and step in the car. The ambulance came and had to take her to hospital.

It appeared she had had a brain haemorrhage. A week later, on October 20, she passed away. But she had enjoyed the day so much so I was glad that I had been able to get her to church that Tuesday.

*Joke de Bruin*



*In the nineties, we used to have a chapter in The Record called 'From the Archives'. This is where we were able to read about things Hannie had discovered during her digging in the archives of the Church. I will try to retrieve some pieces and publish them in the 2022 Record.*

*Sascha, editor The Record*

*Begijnhof Amsterdam (1925)  
By Meijer Bleekrode*



# Welcome, Russell and Margaret Barr

Dear friends

I first heard of the English Reformed Church when one of the ministers in my home town of Kilmarnock, the Reverend Colin Bell, became the minister at the ERC in 1972. As you can imagine, Colin's move from Kilmarnock, then an industrial town on the west coast of Scotland, to Amsterdam, one of the great European cities, created quite a stir as it seemed such an exciting thing to do.

Little could I ever have imagined that almost 50 years later, I would be invited to serve as locum and preach from the same pulpit where Colin once preached.

Although we will only be here for three months, Margaret and I are delighted to join you and we are more than grateful for the lovely welcome we have received.



As locum my responsibilities include leading Sunday worship and already I am enjoying working with Richard to plan the themes of the services and choose appropriate hymns and music.

Having met with some of the Sunday school leaders, Children's church will be re-introduced to the Sunday service, and I hope we will be able to encourage families back into the worshipping life of the congregation.

Leading the fortnightly Bible study and discussion group will also be one of my duties, something I will enjoy very much, because despite having spent a lifetime studying and reading the Bible, such is the richness of the Biblical text, there is always more to be learned and new insights to be gleaned.

And as Covid restrictions allow, there will be a full programme of Christmas services, including an ecumenical carol service with our Lutheran, Mennonite and Roman Catholic friends and neighbours.

Having founded and led a charity in Edinburgh helping people who were homeless make a home, I will be interested to learn about what happens in Amsterdam to support people who become homeless.

For several years I was part of a Scottish Government working group which introduced the Housing First model into Scotland, a model which has brought together national government, local authorities, and third

sector charities into a coordinated and strategic approach.

As well as sharing in the life of the congregation and meeting as many people as possible, we have bought our museum cards and have started to explore something of this wonderful city, its galleries, museums, concert hall, canals, parks, cafés and restaurants.

And not having been able to see them face to face for the last two years, Margaret and I are looking forward to visiting our daughter, Lindsey, and her family in Brussels, especially at the beginning of December when Lindsey celebrates her 40<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Someone asked what we will miss about Scotland - our son Robert and his family, our garden, a game of golf - but in truth the opportunity to live and work in Amsterdam for a short time, especially over Christmas, is far greater than anything we will miss at home.

With every good wish to you and yours for a peaceful Christmas and a much healthier and happier 2022.

*Russell Barr*

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## Update from Mulanje Mission Hospital

Dear friends, I am glad to report that work on the new children's intensive care unit at Mulanje Mission Hospital is well under way, thanks to your support.

Arie Glas, the Medical Director, mentioned that they have a volunteer architect for a year, which helps improve oversight and quality of the work.

The hospital management is currently making further plans for improving health care delivery in the catchment area. There will be a need for a specialized eye clinic, but in the meantime, the urgency of meeting the daily costs of running the hospital cannot be neglected. Roughly 20 years ago the hospital bed sponsoring scheme was set up to raise funds for general purposes. This scheme is still very successful. You can find out more on the website of the hospital (<http://www.mmh.mw/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/mulanje-bed-sponsorship-leaflet.pdf>) .

Elsewhere in this Record you can read about the scheduled concert in February that is being organized. We are very grateful that the proceeds are designated for a new project at Mulanje Mission Hospital.

*Bram Sizoo, Mulanje Mission Hospital liaison*

# Music Notes

As you read this we are well and truly into the Advent/Christmas season, a time the choir certainly looks forward to, and we hope you do as well! Unfortunately, as you all know, we are also now in a difficult covid period. The choir had been busily preparing for weeks for the festive services but the highlight of the season, our Carols by Candlelight service, will not be possible this year. This is a great disappointment to us but we'll just have to save our program for next year!

There will still be plenty of music to enjoy in our Sunday morning services, which I hope you'll attend. The choir sang in the service on the first Sunday of Advent and we'll be back again on the fourth Sunday, December 19. But first we will be able to enjoy the lovely singing of Judi Haynes-Smart in the service on December 12.

Sunday, 19 December *could* still be a festival of music. After the choir sings in the morning we will all go out onto the Spui to sing Christmas carols for - and hopefully with - the passers-by and people of the market. This is also the time when the knitted Christmas angels will be given away to people on the Spui. Come and sing!

Then at 16:00 that afternoon we will all go over to the Singelkerk to join our friends of the H4H group: Lutheran Church on the Spui, Singelkerk (Mennonite) and the Krijtberg (RC). This is a lovely joint carol service in which the pastors of all four churches participate, and our church choir always contributes to the music as well. Members of all four congregations attend - a great way to meet and celebrate with our neighbors!

Christmas Eve will also have the choir leading the music as we crown the year with a very festive service! As I say, we've been preparing for months. I hope you now come to join us!

At the time of this newsletter going to press, these are the plans. As we all will have certainly learned in the past twenty months, anything can change!

Ding dong merrily on high!

*Richard Zook*







## Junior Church

Just to say that there has been some talk already of reconvening the Junior Church, after not being able to meet up for so long...

In the time that's elapsed, several teenagers have 'come of age', and moved on: It would be great to know of any kids aged 12 upwards in the ERC who are interested in meeting up together & doing something fun as soon as the regulations allow.

Like the rest of the congregation, we need to know who's who, & get to know each other again!

Do get in touch if you are interested. Meanwhile, watch this space for more news!

*Giles Francis*

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## Church life

**20s&30s group:** contact Elisabeth 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. Fortnightly via Zoom. Led by Russell Barr.

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**Advent & Christmas services**

December 19<sup>th</sup> at 16.00 hrs  
at Singel Kerk

Joint Carol Service

December 25<sup>th</sup> at 10.30 hrs  
Christmas Day Service

*The Carols by Candlelight service and  
Christmas Eve service have been cancelled  
due to Covid restrictions*



# Yarnbomb

In December 2019 we yarnbombed the Spui square with angels during the carol singing. In 2020 we sent origami angels (DIY!) with our Christmas cards. This year the knitted angels and the carol-singing are (hopefully) back!

At the end of the summer we started knitting on our regular spot of Monday afternoons in the church. It's now December and we have around 300 angels! No, not all knitted during those few months, we had a supply stored from 2020.

The wooden tree is now standing at the front of the church to display some of the angels, it does add some cheer.

To bump up the numbers, we held an Angel Marathon after the service on Sunday, 21 November and now have a good supply of both knitted and origami angels. Now all we need is fine, dry weather on Sunday, 19 December when we will be singing carols out on the square and passing on a bit of God's love - through the angels - to passers-by.

We do hope you can join us to either sing or hand out angels.

*Gillian*

Gillian Walker [gillian.walker.ams@icloud.com](mailto:gillian.walker.ams@icloud.com) 06 4058 6654



# MMH Benefit Concert - February 2022

## Connaught Brass

*A “thrilling young ensemble at the start of what is sure to be a major international career” (Great Birmingham Brass Fest), Connaught Brass are quickly making a name for themselves as a fresh talent in the chamber music world. Already set to perform at London’s Wigmore Hall and in the Lucerne Festival Debut Series, the ensemble’s ability to manipulate and unify sound earned them First Prize in the Inaugural Philip Jones International Brass Ensemble Competition 2019. Vibrant, spirited and bold...*

Plans are now well under way for the next Mulanje Mission Hospital Benefit Concert which will be live in the church on **Friday, February 11, 2022, at 20:00**. Our church has been supporting this hospital in Malawi for years. We provide on-going aid on a regular monthly basis, but we also sponsor one large fund-raiser in the form of an annual concert. These are always splendid programs performed by first-class musicians. This year we will be featuring a brass quintet, the **Connaught Brass**. This promises to be a very exciting concert!



- \* Tillett Trust Debut Artist for the 2020/2021 season
- \* Winner 'SPECIAL AWARD' for Chamber Music, 5th Manhattan International Music Competition
- \* Debut performance at the Lucerne Festival, September 2021
- \* Invited to play at a special concert in Wigmore Hall, March 2022

## \* City Music Foundations Artists for 2021

You can read more about Connaught Brass and hear recordings at:  
[www.connaughtbrass.com](http://www.connaughtbrass.com)

The quintet is generously offering this concert to us without taking a fee. This concert is also being co-sponsored by Ferrandou Musique [www.ferrandou.org](http://www.ferrandou.org) who are paying travel expenses and lodging. We are most grateful! This means ALL proceeds from ticket sales go entirely to MMH.

Over the years we have funded many capital improvement projects at the hospital, including a new digital X-ray machine, solar power, renovation of various wards, etc. This year's project has not yet been designated but we will be giving further information on that in the coming weeks. Later in December there will also be information on the church website [www.erc.amsterdam](http://www.erc.amsterdam) on how you can reserve and purchase tickets in advance. In the meantime, mark the date on your calendar! You won't want to miss this splendid concert!

We hope you enjoyed the series of four on-line benefit concerts for Mulanje Mission Hospital which we presented earlier this year. Those concerts are still available via the church website. Please listen if you missed any of them!

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## In memoriam Erna de Jong

It is quite special to still be in touch with a teacher from secondary school, many years later. Miss Erna was that teacher. My school-friend Pat Rood and I also saw her in this church, on the Begijnhof. Erna was a member for about 45 years.

The historical church building was a place for her to come and worship, enjoy the music during the Service, and guide visitors. Together with her colleague, Erna welcomed visitors to the church and explained what interesting things could be seen, and what church life was about.

She showed thousands of visitors around, and spoke Russian or Hebrew when necessary.

At times I was allowed to be her assistant, and we agreed that I would speak the widely spoken languages and she would cover the more exotic ones.

Erna loved English literature, and enriched me with many texts which she thought would be helpful to me.

These texts would also show something about Erna herself.

From her house in Buitenveldert she sent me this one, she knew it by heart:

Alfred Lord Tennyson— from “Ulysses”

*Come my friends*

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*'Tis not too late to seek a newer world...  
Though much is taken, much abides;  
... that which we are, we are  
-- One equal temper of heroic hearts,  
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will  
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield  
Brave Erna, I got the message!*

This summer, I read a poem for Erna, sitting together in her apartment in *Huis aan de Gracht*. "By heart?" she asked...It is a poem written for a newborn child, by the Irish poet, Daniel Kelleher.

*Without aid of the eyes  
The gifts that life holds for the wise.  
When the storms break for you,  
May the trees shake for you their blossoms down.  
In the night that you are troubled  
May a friend wake for you  
So that your time be doubled  
And at the end of all loving and love  
May the Man Above Give you His crown.*



I wish that that had been written for me, said Erna. Well in a way it was, because she always kept children in her heart.

With gratitude we remember all the years we knew this special woman, our Miss Erna. And now these three remain: Word, Music, and Fellowship. But the greatest is our fellowship.

These words were spoken in Dutch at Erna's funeral by *Marieke Verhaert*

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Christmas Service (1867)

by Thomas Lochlan Smith  
(1835-1884)

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# Message from Trinidad

Pictured : Margaret singing with the choir on her last Sunday in church

*By S. Sizoo-Adema*

Margaret has arrived safely in Trinidad and was welcomed by her family members.

She is awaiting the shipment of personal belongings from Amsterdam. She continues to teach young talented singers.



Winter in Holland – Skating Scene (1645) by Aert van der Neer (1603-1677)



# Membership

In memoriam

Mrs Janny Leeuwenstein-van der Spiegel

3 February 1926 - 8 August 2021

Ms Hannie van Kerkhof

27 April 1925 - 20 October 2021

Ms Erna de Jong

2 July 1936 – 20 October 2021

Mr Bruno Zijp

24 December 1930 - 31 October 2021



# Members of Consistory

Andreas Decker	06 83172702
Laura Elliot	06 26423799
Mattia Falcone	06 27853671
Giles Francis	06 21401420
Judi Haynes-Smart	06 10242250
Elisabeth IJmker	06 25362826
Heleen Koning, <i>scriba</i>	06 13097756
Peggy Krol	020 6767804
Sies Plokker	06 30365295
Baafi Sekyere	020 6933521
Charles Vanderpuye, <i>treasurer</i>	06 28066821
Gillian Walker	06 40586654



English Reformed  
Church Amsterdam

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