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The Record

March 2022

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

Church contact information

Minister <i>minister@erc.amsterdam</i>	J.W. Brouwersstraat 9 1071 LH Amsterdam 020 6722288
Heleen Koning Scriba <i>scriba@erc.amsterdam</i>	Jan de Jongkade 56 1063 MH Amsterdam 06 13097756
Charles Vanderpuye Treasurer <i>treasury@erc.amsterdam</i>	Fioringras 32 1441 WK Purmerend 06 28066821
Jaap Maas Property Convener <i>property@erc.amsterdam</i>	Liederkerkeplantsoen 2 1066 WP Amsterdam 020 3880996
Anja Polstra Church Officer, letting for weddings <i>churchofficer@erc.amsterdam</i>	Marnixkade 67-2 1015 XX Amsterdam 020 6224158
Richard Zook Music Director <i>organist@erc.amsterdam</i>	Bloemgracht 85 1502 VB Zaandam 075 6311419
Nancy Sekyere Owusu Crèche Duty Rota <i>creche@erc.amsterdam</i>	Roomtuintjes 197 1093 TB Amsterdam 020 6933521
Els Nooij Church Guiding Coordinator	<i>openchurch@erc.amsterdam</i>
Webteam	<i>webmaster@erc.amsterdam</i>

Church
Begijnhof 48
1012 WV Amsterdam
T 020 6249665
info@erc.amsterdam

English Reformed Church
NL44 ABNA 05476235 50
SWIFT address: ABNANL2A

**Friends of the English
Reformed Church**
NL90 ABNA 0624 1800 69

Minister's Letter

Musings from the Manse. March 2022...

Dear Friends,

I ought to start with some words of introduction. I am Gillean, the minister of the Scots Kirk in Lausanne. I was inducted to the charge in mid 2019 and have been in full time ministry for just short of 30 years. I was asked to be your Interim Moderator in January of this year and I look forward to getting to know you all better over the next few months.

My previous roles of this type involved a short drive through the Scottish countryside. I never for a moment thought that I would be conducting meetings by 'Zoom' nor did I think that I would need to take a plane to see people face to face.

As I write we are at the beginning of the season of Lent and it is traditional to think of giving something up during this time. I joked that I might like to give up travelling long distances but I guess that is not going to be achievable for now!

For me, it is a time to add something in, rather than take something out and I often remind myself of the little boy that I met early on in my ministry. I was challenging the children in our local primary school to think of one small thing that they might do to help a neighbour. Robert was swift to respond! He told me his neighbour was a 'grumpy old lady' and he didn't think she would like any help.

Years later I came across him in another capacity, now serving as a police officer. He remembered me and told me the story of how he and the 'grumpy old lady' had become firm friends when he offered to help her take her rubbish bin out. He did this for many years and in her final days he was her constant companion and dear friend. He discovered that her 'grumpy' appearance was born out of loneliness.

His friendship with his elderly neighbour had changed the way he saw his community and now influenced his role as a community police officer.

Each encounter that we make with others as Christians and as human beings is so important. There is a saying in the North-East of Scotland 'mony a mickle maks a muckle'. It reminds us that all the little things really matter and when added up can make a huge difference. No matter our situation in life we can all do something small to make life better for those around us.

So if you haven't given something up this Lent and Easter time then how about adding something in, who knows what might come out of it?

Blessings from our hearth to yours,

Gillean

Consistory Report

In an international church like the ERC we always have change; people coming in and people leaving after a period in the Netherlands. However, with Covid rules going from closing the church in December to an almost complete relaxation in February, new members admitted, changes in locum ministers, members of consistory and the interim moderator, change has been very much at the forefront.

Membership issues

Helen Christine Voos and her mother Mirza Voos Lago were both admitted into membership. Consistory welcomed them both at the 5 December service. Mirza became member via transfer from her Lutheran Church in Brazil, Helen Christine by Profession of Faith.

Bruno Zijp passed away on October 31 at the age of 90. Mr. Zijp was a long-time member of the ERC.

Budget 2022

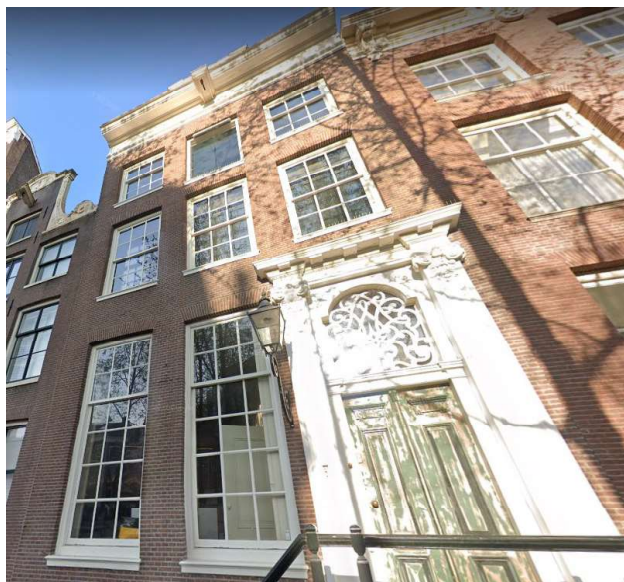
Charles presented the budget proposal for the year 2022 in the December meeting. The projected results of 2021 (including the costs for maintenance work on the church that was carried out in 2021 instead 2022 because of the lockdown and the expected rise of the costs in 2022), the continued decline in income and the vacancy period were important factors for this proposal.

The budget for 2022 reflects a conservative income, but also the assumption that we will be able to open the church again and have more concerts and other rentals.

Consistory approved the budget proposal for 2022 and thanked Charles and the Finance Committee for their work on this.

Church Hall to reopen

The church hall on the Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 282A was closed from March 2020 for all the groups that used it because of the Covid rules. This meant not only a difficult period for the 12-Step



groups in particular that were using the hall for their meetings, but also for the church because we had to pay the rent of the hall without receiving fees from the groups to contribute towards this. For most of 2021 the owner took over the lease, but at the end of 2021 the ERC was given back the hall. In the January meeting a proposal to end the lease because of the financial risks for the church was

discussed. Although we have a financial buffer, we should be able to cover our costs from our annual income. Since we stopped having coffee in the hall after the church service, the premises disappeared from the consciousness of the congregation; many people are oblivious of its existence. We could try to engage the congregation and make it plain that the hall is part of our mission outreach. The idea was raised to continue for another year in which effort needs to be put in to make it flourish again.

After the discussion a vote was taken: 6 elders voted against the proposal of ending the lease as of 1 May 2022, 5 elders voted in favour. We will therefore continue leasing the church hall from Stadsherstel. Gillian Walker and Maeve Quigley volunteered to see what could be done in a coordinated approach to spark our mission outreach and make the hall work, in terms of outreach, finances etc.

Covid measures from lockdown to relaxation

The ERC has followed the guidelines of the government and the advice of the Protestantse Kerk Nederland regarding Covid measures.

In the January meeting, it was brought forward by a member of the congregation that the reasons on which decisions from Consistory around Covid rules are based are not clear to a number of members of the congregation. She requested better communication. We agreed to work on this, using the website, our Facebook page and the weekly letter as channels of communication.

After having to close the church yet again before Christmas (as well as cancelling the Carols by Candlelight service and having a Christmas Eve service in the afternoon due to a lockdown after 5pm), we were happy that we could hold worship with 50 people again in January. We also started coffee after the service at the end of January. Since the end of February, all restrictions have been relaxed. We will however continue to ensure that we also have a space for people who wish to maintain a distance of 1.5 metres.

Vacancy Period

At the end of January the ERC bid farewell to the Very Rev Dr Russell Barr, who served our congregation as locum minister from November 2021, along with his wife Margaret.

In February we welcomed back Rev Dr David McMillan and his wife Dr Dorothy McMillan. David and Dorothy will be with us until Easter.

In the January meeting, Rev Eric Foggitt informed Consistory that he would step down as interim moderator for our congregation as

of 1 February 2022. Presbytery decided to appoint Rev Foggitt as interim moderator of the congregation in Colombo (which he has served as a locum in the past).

Rev Gillean MacLean from the Church of Scotland congregation in Lausanne was appointed to take over as interim moderator for the English Reformed Church as of 1 February 2022.

Gillean moderated her first Consistory meeting in the ERC in February. Prior to the meeting, Gillian Walker informed Consistory that she had decided to resign from Consistory expressing the feeling that her place in church is not as an elder. Gillian will continue with her work for the church hall and the Facebook page.



Rev MacLean also brought us up to speed on the developments regarding the Presbytery Planning Group. The International Presbytery, which we are part of, needs to draft a Presbytery Mission Plan on how to allocate the 5 fte of Church of Scotland (CoS) ministers that it can employ in the future. It is a CoS-wide intervention to address the shortage of CoS ministers in the future.

One of the developments is that the CoS has agreed to employ ministers from outside the CoS without an extended period of familiarisation in Scotland. The International Presbytery is now assessing the legal ramifications (labour laws etc).

We decided that, although we cannot start the nominating process yet because of the presbytery planning process, we will do all the necessary preparatory work in order to be ready the moment we can go ahead with the procedure of finding a new minister.

One of the documents required by the Presbytery is our constitution. We assessed that we needed an updated one. At this moment we are discussing a draft constitution. The constitution will need the approval of the congregation.

Annual General Meeting

On March 27 we will once again hold a live Annual General Meeting in church after the service - the first one since 2019! In 2021 we organised a Congregational meeting via Zoom.

Media Team

Laura convened her last meeting of the Media Team in November. Laura stepped down as convener as of January 1. Gillian took on the Facebook page for a trial period. Annemiek Sinnige joined the Media Team (with Thijs P. and Heleen). The team will look at its remit in the next meeting and then present a proposal to

Consistory.

Please note that the meetings of Consistory are held on the second Thursday of the month until further notice. As of March, we will be meeting again in the church. Consistory also has a short informal gathering via Zoom on the other Thursday evenings.

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

Music Notes



As you read this, Spring is here! And this year it seems even more like coming out of the long, dark winter than usual, as we come out of a two-year pandemic as well. We at the church have been challenged, to say the least, by the constantly shifting situation, rules, limitations, exceptions, and requirements, but we have done our best to ensure that the ERC could continue to provide a complete worship service every week, whether live or pre-recorded. I know you have appreciated and enjoyed our efforts. But now it's pay-back time!

Let's take stock. Over the course of the past two years there has not been one week of the pandemic when I was not in the church to record or prepare music. There have been 32 completely pre-recorded church services. There have been 77 live services, of which I have played for 66. The choir, whenever permitted, has gladly rehearsed, and has met in the church for 36 rehearsals. The choir has sung in 23 live services. So now the question: When will we see you in the church again? Hmm? We are OPEN! We are there. We would so like to see YOU again! (END OF SCOLDING)

The choir, as you might expect, has been busily preparing music for the services leading up to and culminating in Easter Sunday. We were there for Russell's last two services in January, one Sunday in February, and there will be two more in March. Then Holy Week is upon us. That is always a very special season for the choir. Palm Sunday celebrates the entry into Jerusalem with the children of the Sunday school processing around the church and the choir splashing out with songs of "Hosanna!" This year Persephone Abbott will again be joining us for Gounod's "Jerusalem" and we will also be dipping into the Messiah for one of Handel's best-loved choruses, "Lift Up Your Heads". On Good Friday the choir follows the story to its dramatic climax, singing some of the most darkly evocative and moving music. Then Easter Sunday triumphs over all, with the most festive and jubilant music of the year - including, of course, your chance to join all together in Handel's Hallelujah! chorus. We need you there and you won't want to miss it. We've missed TWO Easters and we've missed YOU! Looking forward to seeing you and hearing your voices raised again together in song,

Richard and The Choir



Welcome David and Dorothy McMillan



Can you give a little background about life, study, work?

Dorothy and I both grew up and studied in Belfast, Northern Ireland. After university I worked for some years in sales and then returned to theological study, pastoral ministry and theological education. Dorothy trained as a primary school teacher and worked in various schools and preschools before moving to university teaching for the last 12 years of her working life. She is now retired.

What was drawing you to Amsterdam?

We lived in the Netherlands from 2016 to 2020 and while we were here we attended the ERC and benefitted from Lance's ministry and the fellowship in the church. When I was approached about filling a locum slot we felt that it was an opportunity to give something back and make a contribution to the life of the church during the vacancy.

Which congregation did you lead until 2022?

In Northern Ireland I was minister of two Baptist churches over a period of 22 years. In 2009 I became involved with the International Baptist Theological Seminary (IBTS) in Prague and in 2014 I was responsible for its relocation to the Netherlands as a PhD research facility and as a partner within the Faculty of Theology at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Most of my time in recent years has been spent working with IBTS and a mission agency called BMS World Mission.

Do Presbyterians and Baptists differ, or have much in common?

Presbyterians and Baptists have much in common but also some clear distinctives. The fact that Dorothy grew up in a Presbyterian church and I grew up in a Baptist church and we've been married over forty years suggests that it is possible for Presbyterians and Baptists to get on well together! Presbyterians and Baptists share all the elements of the Apostles Creed and a strong commitment to the importance of the Bible and Christian mission. Perhaps the main differences have to do with views on baptism, church membership and church governance. In the Baptist tradition baptism is administered on the request of an individual on profession of their faith in Jesus Christ. It is known as believer's baptism and generally administered by full immersion in water. Membership of the church normally follows believers baptism. In most Baptist communities the local church is fully autonomous. Churches generally join together in voluntary Associations or Unions but there is no

presbytery system or General Assembly or Synod with the degree of influence as in Presbyterianism. There are many varieties of Baptists around the world and they can be very different from one another.

What will you miss when not in Ireland?

Not the weather - it is wet and windy in Ireland right now! We miss our family - our daughter, son-in-law and two grandsons live near us and we usually see them often. Our second daughter, son-in-law and two granddaughters are in England. We look forward to seeing them all after Easter.

Thank you!

Sascha Sizoo

Finance Report

January – December 2021, Amounts in €

<u>Income</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>Change</u>
Donations	109.606,80	105.759,43	3.847,37
Collections	3.250,00	12.335,47	-9.085,47
Church hire	17.723,00	18.048,00	-325,00
Concerts	3.659,00	2.333,00	1.326,00
Weddings	0,00	100,00	-100,00
Church shop	0,00	0,00	0,00
Flowers	0,00	-16,00	16,00
	134.238,80	138.559,90	-4.321,10

Since we are barely 2 months into 2022, it is not reasonable to present you with just the January figures. I would therefore like to share with you a short summary of our income in 2021. I will present the full report at the AGM later this year.

As you can see, our total income fell about 3% in 2021 compared to 2020. Although donations increased by 3.5%, the lost income from church collections due to reduced attendance in church, in connection with Covid-restrictions last year, resulted in a 3% shortfall.

I would like to thank all members who donated via Tikkie or Bank transfer to our church last year and are still committed to donating regularly to our church. I hope others will follow this method as well. Also, thanks to our staff and all who voluntarily support our congregation in various ways (from Sound, Live-streaming, right down to serving tea and coffee every Sunday). I encourage those who are yet to contribute 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

Update from Mulanje Mission Hospital

Together with the management team of MMH we set out to explore how the relationship between the ERC and MMH could further develop beyond the one-way donations.

The donations are vital for the hospital and the management team conveyed that the ERC has been the most reliable supporter of MMH for over 20 years.



However, giving and receiving is a complex issue, and we looked for ways to make the relationship more reciprocal, without asking hospital staff to do things which are not in line with their primary task. This challenge has not yet been met and will keep us sharp for the time being.

Most of the activities in the ERC in aid of MMH centred around music. We are very glad that Wilde Ganzen has remained our trusted partner in these projects, without whom it would have been more difficult to reach the targets.

Apart from that, every monthly collection is dedicated to MMH, and is used to pay for drugs, equipment and other hospital needs.

Earlier this month South East Africa was hit by the tropical storm Ana, which caused casualties and a lot of damage, mainly in the Shire valley, in the South of Malawi. However, in the catchment area of MMH, damage was done to pit latrines, which are essential in the prevention of communicable diseases like cholera. An estimated 5000 latrines have collapsed during storm Ana. These need urgent replacement to prevent outbreaks of typhoid fever and cholera. Contaminated sources of water such as wells need improvement and a covered borehole with handpump. Such boreholes withstand heavy weather well. Also, trees along riverbanks need to be replanted this rainy season to avoid even more damage to the banks and riverside gardens in future. It will cost € 36 to provide the community with materials to build a pit latrine. A covered borehole with pump is more costly at € 4,250 whilst the planting of a tree can be done for € 4.50.

Doctor Arie explained that the Omicron variant of Covid-19 is milder. There were few Covid-related admissions in December. However, 40% of the staff is not vaccinated, mostly because people are apprehensive due to all the negative publicity about vaccinations. This apprehension has also led to a reduction in general and maternal admissions. People fear that once they are admitted they will be vaccinated against their will. There are 15% fewer deliveries and the antenatal care attendance is significantly reduced.

Bram Sizoo

Annual General Meeting

This year's Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held on Sunday March 27 after the church service (around noon). In this official meeting, Consistory informs the congregation about the past year in an annual report. We also present the financial accounts, as well as the results of the Audit Committee after reviewing the accounts.

In 2020, we had to cancel the AGM because of Covid-19 restrictions. We did however make the annual report available. In 2021, restrictions once again prevented a live meeting and we decided to have a "congregational meeting" via Zoom.

We are happy that we have the opportunity to meet again live! We hope that you will join. Everyone (members, adherents, regular visitors to the church) is welcome to participate in the meeting. Only members are allowed to vote.

Not only will we present our reports and inform you about the vacancy and the process we will follow, we would love to hear from you too. Please bring your questions, ideas and comments. After two years of very limited possibilities, we are also looking for your help in reinstating old activities and starting up new ones.

The meeting will be chaired by Rev Gillean MacLean, our interim moderator.

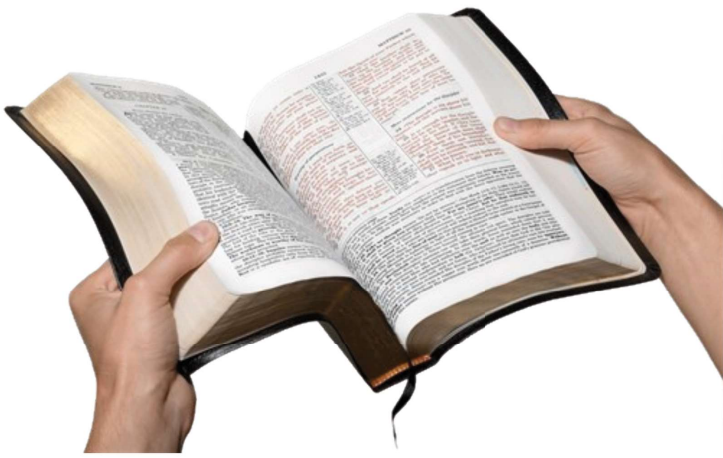
The agenda and the reports will be made available around March 13.

On behalf of Consistory

Heleen

scriba@erc.amsterdam





Christian Education

The Bible Study, led by David McMillan, continues throughout Lent every Wednesday at 19:30 via Zoom.

Church life

20s&30s group: contact Elisabeth IJmker, updates on Facebook. On the first Sunday of each month, we meet for lunch.

The group has arranged a short evening act of worship, **Compline**, on the first Sunday of each month at 21:00 via Zoom.

The church is open!

The ERC is open for live services and coffee and tea are again on offer afterwards.

The recording of services continues but without texts; you can use the order of service for this.

Coffee Morning

After the last lockdown, we resumed our monthly coffee mornings in February. We are very pleased to be able to meet each other regularly again. This is an open meeting and you are welcome to come along if you are interested in having more social contact. In the following months we will meet on:

April 5, May 3 and June 7.

After a summer break we will resume meetings in September. We will continue meeting in church.

For more information contact Sies Plokker or Joke de Bruin

Easter Services



Maundy Thursday
14th April, 20:00

Good Friday
15th April, 20:00

Renewal of Baptismal vows
16th April, 21:00

Easter Sunday
17th April, 10:30

All are welcome

Junior Church Lunch

We had a Junior Church lunch in the church after the communion service on Sunday March 6th for potential teens and teachers to get to know each other after two years of inactivity due to the Covid pandemic.

We quickly realised that there were many new faces! In the time that's elapsed, our Junior Church kids have moved on from school to college, or away from Amsterdam; & this was also true of the teachers. So, it was very much a new start - much in the way that all aspects of our church are experiencing.

It was great fun and members of the congregation came over from the coffee gathering to chat and help with finishing all the food!

David Macmillan said a few words of introduction to us and Veronica gave each of the teens a Bible bookmark as encouragement. The plan is to have Junior Church every two weeks and gradually build up from there. John-Harmen Valk will be giving a talk on Lent as part of the first Junior Church meeting on Sunday March 20th during the service. If anyone knows of children aged 12-16 who might be interested, please do get in touch with me or with John-Harmen.

Many thanks!

Giles Francis

Goodbye from Eric

Thank you for the opportunity to serve at Interim Moderator with you at ERC. Apart from chairing the Consistory, my role has been to arrange locum ministers to provide pastoral support and lead worship. I hope that the locums I have organised will offer you a chance to experience different kinds of ministry, because as we look to the future it's important that everyone in ERC has a chance to influence the future direction of the church. I'm confident that the locums we have planned for the coming months will enable you to prayerfully decide on the future needs of the church.

ERC will be seeking to establish a Constitution, to ensure fairness and proper, open decision-making - which are very much part of the ethos of the Church of Scotland. No doubt you'll be hearing more about that: it's a process which your sister church in Rotterdam - the Scots International Church - has recently successfully undergone.

As we emerge, blinking, somewhat battered and yet hopeful for the future, from the impact of the Covid-19 crisis, I hope that many more members of ERC step forward to take on roles and tasks within the church, and not leave this to the minority of hard-working individuals who have been doing this for a while now. The Church, as St Paul outlines in his letters to the Corinthians, is a body in which all the parts are dependent on each other and each must function properly for the whole to thrive.

My term as Interim Moderator came to a very quick end, due to the timing of Presbytery's Committee and the needs of the Scottish church in Colombo, Sri Lanka (*pictured below*), which I am now attending to. I'm sure that Rev Gillean Maclean will be very able to help you move on to the next step in your journey as a church fellowship.

With every blessing,

Eric Foggitt



Membership

New Members

Helen Christine Voos and Mirza Voos Lago

5 December 2021

Baptism

Elijah Martey Digber

son of Ivan Tetteh Digber and Naa Densua Decardi-Nelson

23 January 2022

In memoriam

Mr Bruno Zijp

24 December 1930 – 31 October 2021



Next edition of the Record:
June 2022

Please send your contribution
to
sascha.sizoo@erc.amsterdam

Deadline: May 27th

Members of Consistory

Andreas Decker	06 83172702
Mattia Falcone	06 27853671
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
<i>Minister, the Manse</i>	020 6722288
Charles Vanderpuye, <i>treasurer</i>	06 28066821
Giles Francis	06 21401420



English Reformed
Church Amsterdam

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