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# The Record

June 2022  
Vol. 2022/2



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

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**Night of the refugee**  
**18-19 June 2022. Support the ERC team!**

# Minister's Letter

Dear Friends. While preparing for our annual Pentecost Celebration in the Scots Kirk in Lausanne, I came across this quote. I don't know who wrote it but it inspired me!

*Love, peace and unity, the language of the Holy Spirit pouring out among us.*

*Whatever our lifestyles or cultures, whatever our beliefs, abilities or disabilities,*

*God meets us in the midst of our dialects*

*whether spoken or signing, simple or complicated.*

*There is one language that God uses.*

*God does not speak in prejudice.*

*God does not speak in hatred.*

*God does not speak in segregation.*

*God speaks in the language of love, peace and unity.*

I particularly liked the last line and I couldn't help reflecting on the historic agreement just signed recently at the General Assembly between ourselves, The Church of Scotland, and the Catholic Church. The Saint Margaret Declaration.

Of course we have many differences but the agreement recognises that we have the same origins, the same mission and are in receipt of the same Holy Spirit. Here is a quote from the agreement

“We wish to express our friendship and respect for one another as fellow Christians, citizens and partners in announcing the kingdom of God in our land.”

My own congregation in Lausanne is currently working together with our local Catholic and Anglican churches to run a Day Centre for Ukrainian Refugees. There is no way we could do this on our own. We have found that we don't have time to discuss our differences we are simply responding, we believe, to the nudgings of the Holy Spirit to help those in need. We have been offered an opportunity to get to know each other, to discover our similarities rather than spend time concentrating on our differences. We have found a new way to touch the hearts of all in this time of crisis.

It has been difficult and challenging work but it reminded me of something I experienced as a child of 4 or 5 years old. I was attending an agricultural show when a calf was born unexpectedly. I had never seen anything like it. It was at once miraculous and frightening. It was noisy and messy, difficult to put into words and clearly hard work for the calf and its mother.

In Church circles anything new will always have its difficulties. It might be a bit frightening. It could even be noisy, a bit messy and certainly hard work but, if we rely on the Holy Spirit, that Spirit of Pentecost that “speaks in the language of love, peace and unity,” then something miraculous is bound to be born.

Perhaps we might approach the changes that we face in all our churches at this time in that same spirit of co-operation and in the language of love, peace and unity?

Many Blessings,

*Gillean*

# Consistory Report

*In March, April and May, Consistory was able to meet in person again. With all Covid-related restrictions having been relaxed, we are looking for ways to build up our community and fellowship. Not only by starting up familiar activities and gatherings, but also by looking for new ways to involve all members of the congregation in the life and organisation of the church.*

**Building Community:** Consistory would like to develop the idea of committees or teams for the ERC as a way of involving more people of the congregation in the work of the church. The next step would be to draft remits of the various teams. We are kicking off with the Pentecost Festival to showcase the activities and get the ball rolling.

**Livestream:** Henk, Annemiek and Thijs P. presented a very insightful memo regarding the livestream in the May meeting of Consistory. The services live-streamed via YouTube reach, on average, 150-250 people of whom 20-30 follow the entire service live and another 20-40 people watch almost the entire stream later on. Since we know that people watch together, the number of people reached is likely larger. The current technical setup is a hassle for the volunteers operating it, prone to technical issues, not very dynamic and does not give the preferred basic quality. A proposal for improving the technical equipment was discussed. Of course the question of whether we see a need to continue the livestreamed services should be addressed first.

Given that the livestream provides an important service to members who are housebound, but also reaches people who do not have a direct link with our church, and given that we do not know what the fall/winter might bring in terms of possible covid-restrictions, we have decided to continue livestreaming and invest in better equipment, which can also be used for weddings, concerts and the other congregations, which can all contribute towards the costs.

Consistory thanked Henk, Annemiek and Thijs and all the other volunteers, past and present, for all the hard work they continue to put into making the services available for all who cannot come to church.

**Vacancy Period:** In the months of February to April Rev David MacMillan and his wife Dorothy saw us through Lent with a weekly Bible study, Holy Week (with a Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and a service of Light and Renewal of Baptismal vows on



Saturday) and a glorious Easter service, with the choir, and singing Handel's Hallelujah in a packed church.

Rev Denis Campbell had his first service with us on 24 April. Denis and his wife Hilary will be with us until June 19.

The service on June 26 will be taken by Ds. Marjolein de Waal. In July through September Rev Scott Guy will serve as locum, followed by Rev Dr John Cowie.

Some progress was made in the process to settle on a Presbytery Plan for the allocation of 5fte of Church of Scotland (CoS) ministers in our Presbytery. There seems to be more willingness at the head offices of the CoS to look at the specific situation of the International Presbytery in comparison to the Scottish presbyteries.

Andreas Decker from our congregation is now a member of the Presbytery Planning Committee. On May 15 we had a preliminary meeting with representatives of the Planning Committee in which we made our case. The proposals of the Planning Committee will be discussed in the upcoming Presbytery meeting from 10-12 June in Bochum, Germany.

**Annual General Meeting:** On March 27 the Annual General Meeting was held again in church after the service - the first one since 2019. The accounts of 2021 were approved, as well as the March 2022 version of the constitution. See the article for a report of the meeting.

**Working together with Mulanje Mission Hospital:** Bram Sizoo, non-serving elder and liaison with the Mulanje Mission Hospital, informed Consistory in the March meeting about the current situation and developments in Mulanje Mission Hospital. Bram explained the challenges of giving and receiving in the context of working on the reciprocity of the relationship with the people from the MMH. In the discussion that followed it was stated that we should see giving and receiving in a Christian sense: the giving is based on the good news. It is not only about sharing our bounty in earthly matters and money, but the ERC learning from the Christian faith put in practice in Malawi. MMH can support us as well in prayers.

Bram participated in a MMH Management team meeting. We are looking forward to his report.

**Access to the Begijnhof:** With the numbers of tourists rising, the Stichting Begijnhof proposed a new policy regarding opening the Begijnhof, which took effect as of April.

Main points were that the Steeg door will function as the main entrance during the day. In the evenings the normal routine (programming the Spuiport for access) will stay in place. On





Sunday mornings church goers can enter via the Spuiport using the black knob until 10:30 hrs. The Steegpoort will be open from 09:30 hrs. We will evaluate the new situation in a few months.

*Please note that the meetings of Consistory are held on the second Thursday of the month until further notice, except in June, then the meeting is on the 16th. The other weeks Consistory has a short informal gathering via Zoom on Thursday evening.*

*If you would like to participate in a Consistory meeting (formal or informal) or bring forward a topic, please let us know by email: [scriba@erc.amsterdam](mailto:scriba@erc.amsterdam)*

*Heleen Koning*

*'De Begijnensteeg met de ingang van het Begijnhof',  
painting by Rienk Jelgerhuis (1729 - 1806)*

## Cooking at 'de Kloof'

At de Kloof, lunch is cooked for the homeless people of Amsterdam. The church encourages people to take part.

We had four very worthy volunteers on May 14th- Pamela, Sarah, Sandra and Lydia. They all had a great time cooking together!

Things are back to normal at de Kloof, so please do not hesitate to offer your services on June 11th, or later in the year. Many thanks,

*Giles*

[gilesf@telfort.nl](mailto:gilesf@telfort.nl)



# Finance Report

January - April 2022, Amounts in €

<b>Income</b>	2022	2021	2022 vs 2021
Donations	26.220,15	32.028,70	-5.808,55
Collections	4.955,00	0,00	4.955,00
Church hire	6.317,60	5.515,20	802,40
Concerts	861,00	0,00	861,00
Weddings	0,00	0,00	0,00
Church shop	0,00	0,00	0,00
Flowers	0,00	0,00	0,00
	<b>38.353,75</b>	<b>37.543,90</b>	<b>809,85</b>

Covid restrictions have been lifted and we are almost back to normal. However, our income so far is almost flat compared to the same time last year. € 38.353,75 this year and € 37.543,90 last year. It looks like we are not yet back to our pre-covid level. Although we reasonably don't expect to be at pre-covid levels, it will be encouraging to end this year better than the last two years. Donations have dropped by 18% but collections and concerts have made up for the shortfall in our income.

Our expenses so far are less than last year and expectation. Nevertheless, we have a deficit of about € 1.900 at the end of April. The Church Hall had been an irrecoverable expenditure the last two years after the hall was closed for use, but we are now getting some income thanks to the efforts put in by Gillian Walker, although not yet the total cost.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank everyone for your contribution to our congregation. However, I would encourage everyone to make either a fixed or variable financial contribution via bank transfer or Tikkie to our church. I also urge those who are yet to contribute to kindly reflect on doing their part.

Donations can be made to: English Reformed Church, IBAN

NL44 ABNA 0547 6235 50.

*Charles Vanderpuye, treasurer*

# Music Notes

Summer is here! How did that happen? As the choir winds up another season we will be singing for Pentecost on the first Sunday of June, and then again on the last Sunday, before taking our summer break. To conclude that service on the 26th the choir will sing a special benediction for the congregation as we end our season, and directly after the service we will all walk over to the front of the Lutheran Church across the Spui for a joint celebration with our sister congregations of the H4H - De Heilige VierHoek - The Sacred Quadrangle. (Believe me, it works in Dutch.) We will all join together in singing a hymn, receiving a benediction from the pastors of all four churches, and then we'll enjoy fellowship and coffee together. What better way for us and our neighbors to mark the end of the season?

Pentecost is also a special Sunday for the choir and, I believe, for our church especially. What occasion could more reflect our congregation? It marks the time when all the different peoples of the city were speaking in their own languages and still they could all understand each other as the spirit of the Lord descended upon them. That's the perfect holiday for the ERC! Denis will be concentrating on "Getting the Spirit." The spirit will certainly be in the choir's music and we want your voices there, too!

It's been a challenging year but the choir has been active, rehearsing and participating in the services throughout the entire season. We've had no restrictions of any kind for months now: coffee, fellowship, sitting and worshipping and singing together. You cannot get that via a live stream! We still, I'm very sorry to say, have only half the attendance we had pre-pandemic. That's no exaggeration: I count from upstairs. If you haven't been back to the church because you've gotten out of the habit or it's just "easier" to watch the live stream, I can only say this: If we don't have people in the church there will be no live stream and no ERC. We cannot survive as an on-line church. We miss you!!

Looking forward to seeing you all in June,

Richard and The Choir



*The choir on Easter Sunday, photograph by Sascha Sizoo*



# Annual General Meeting

*On March 27 we had the Annual General Meeting live in church for the first time in three years. In 2020 and 2021 we could not hold an official AGM due to lockdown. Last year we did have a congregational gathering with video reports, which was great fun; but after so many months of Zoom meetings, it was good to have a live meeting again with a good turnout.*

The Reverend Gillean MacLean, interim moderator, moderated the meeting and she explained the route we have to follow regarding the Presbytery Mission Plan, which is a prerequisite for the nominating procedure in order to fill the vacancy we have for a minister. She also put the developments in perspective, explaining how things looked for a lot of Scottish congregations with dwindling numbers and resources. Gillean also advised the congregation to make good use of the locums we have. “The process (towards the Presbytery Plan) is the presbyterian way: it is a bit slower, but we are moving together”.

Charles presented the audited accounts of 2021. The general income of the church decreased, mainly because of the closing of the church during the pandemic. The decision was made to carry out necessary maintenance work to the church, which played a big part in the deficit. We were able to draw from our buffer. The auditors, Eduard Starrenburg and Victoria Lavelle, were satisfied with the bookkeeping and the accounts were approved by the meeting.

The Constitution was accepted in the AGM. The document will now be sent to Rev. Derek Lawson, Presbytery clerk, for approval of the Presbytery of International Charges.

I gave a general overview of the last year with a special word of thanks for Anja Polstra who stepped in to substitute for Susan during her sick leave and also took on the position of Concert Manager, for Richard Zook who lets the church benefit from more gifts than directing the choir, playing the organ and being in charge of the musical part of our worship, for Susan Polstra who will resume her tasks as church officer gradually, and for all volunteers, too many to name them all.

The idea was born to organise a gathering after a church service where all church groups can showcase themselves and members can join in. Besides the existing groups, there will also be room for new initiatives.



This initiative will build on the conclusion of the AGM that we will organise ways to discuss and act on building up community (or koinonia) following the long period of restrictions that the church endured during the pandemic. The gathering will take the form of a Pentecost Festival and will be held on June 12 after the church service.

If you would like to receive the annual report digitally or in print, please contact me by phone or via [scriba@erc.amsterdam](mailto:scriba@erc.amsterdam)

*Heleen Koning*

# MMH Benefit Concert - 8 October, 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 1st Prize in the Inaugural Philip Jones International Brass Ensemble Competition 2019. Vibrant, spirited and bold...

Best laid plans.... This MMH concert had been originally planned for last winter, but the pandemic got in the way. You will have then read this article in the December issue of The Record announcing the rescheduled date in February. Alas, that also fell victim to covid limitations. But now it is finally HERE! The next Mulanje Mission Hospital Benefit Concert will be live in the church on Saturday, October 8, 2022, at 20:00 hrs. Our church has for years supported this hospital in Malawi. 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!

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 the summer 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 last year. Those concerts are still available via the church website. Please listen if you missed any of them!

*Connaught Brass:*

- \* *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 at Wigmore Hall, March 2022*
  - *City Music Foundations Artists for 2021*

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## Coffee mornings

On the 7th of June, a coffee morning was held in the church.

There will be no coffee mornings in July and August due to the summer break.

In September we would like to organize our yearly gathering at a special location like we used to do every year before the pandemic. Details will follow.

*Joke de Bruin and Sies Plokker.*





# Welcome Denis and Hilary

*Reverend Denis Macmillan and his wife Hilary will be with us till June 19. If you have not met them in person, here is some background information on their life & work:*

I grew up in County Antrim and studied Classics in Belfast and Theology in Edinburgh. When I was an assistant minister in a Belfast church, I noticed a pretty girl in the congregation. My mind should have been on higher things! Anyway, I can boast in the words of a famous novelist: 'Reader, I married her!' Hilary trained as a primary school teacher and has taught in Ireland, England and Canada. While in Dublin she found teaching children and young adults with cerebral palsy to be especially rewarding.



We have two children. Our son, Colin, went to Glasgow University where he met Cathy, an Edinburgh girl. I conducted their wedding ceremony in 2006. They live in Edinburgh and have a nine-year-old daughter, Isla, who is without doubt the most mischievous girl in Scotland! Colin now works in community development with a Christian charity. Our daughter, Adele, also lives in the Scottish capital, where she works in publications for Edinburgh University.

After our marriage Hilary and I went to County Donegal, where I was minister of two country parishes. We were there for seven years, a period in which we came to appreciate the warmth, the friendliness and the down-to-earth virtues of farming people.

In 1986 we moved to a suburban church in Dublin. We found life in Ireland's capital always stimulating and challenging. Outside the parish I served as a chaplain in a university hospital and as a member of the board of two schools. I was also chairperson of the Irish Council of Christians and Jews and travelled abroad to several inter-faith conferences. The International Council of Christians and Jews is committed to interfaith dialogue and includes Muslims in its consultations.

After twenty-seven happy years in Dublin we retired to County Down, where I am glad to help local ministers in pastoral care and by conducting worship. Soon after retirement I was asked to be locum at the Church of Scotland vacant congregation on the Costa del Sol. So began a long and happy association with that congregation and with the International Presbytery. I served briefly in the ERC just before Lance was appointed. That short period left a lasting impression. I admired the friendliness and openness of the people, the multinational character of the congregation and the reverence and dignity of worship, helped in no small measure by



the high quality of the music.

In 2019 I was locum in St. Andrew's Brussels and in 2020 I was due to serve in Rotterdam but the pandemic intervened. I provided YouTube services for four months for the Costa del Sol church.

Our hobbies are walking the coastal path, theatre, orchestral concerts and keeping in touch with family and friends. I am a bookworm while Hilary enjoys cooking, reading and gardening and recently has been project managing an extension to our home. We have spent more holidays abroad in Greece than in any other country. As a result both of our children read Classics at university.

*Denis*

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## Pentecost Festival

In the spirit of inviting God's Holy Spirit to unfurl love, energy and creativity in our community, we would like to invite the whole congregation to participate in a Pentecost Festival, on Sunday, June 12th, immediately following the church service.

What is a Pentecost Festival? A Pentecost Festival is essentially a church activity fair!

Did you know that our church has around 20 different community groups? Neither did we until we started organizing this event!

We have invited all ERC community groups to briefly present to the congregation, followed by a mix-and-mingle session where congregants can sign up to join. For example: Cooking at De Kloof, coffee after the service, Women's Fellowship and Men's Fellowship.

We will also have a brainstorm session if you want to start something new in our community. All you have to do is stick around for coffee hour after church and bring your curiosity and creativity!

Contact Maeve Quigley [maeve.quigley@erc.amsterdam](mailto:maeve.quigley@erc.amsterdam) or Heleen Koning [heleen.koning@erc.amsterdam](mailto:heleen.koning@erc.amsterdam) if you have any questions!

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## H4H Bus Excursion

This year's H4H (Sacred Quadrangle) bus excursion is planned for Thursday, 1 September. This is an all-day outing organized by our sister congregations the Lutheran Church (Spui), the Singel Kerk (Mennonite) and the Krijtberg (RC on the Singel).

This year's trip will be a visit to Twente (in the east of the country). Details will follow later in the month but you can mark the date on your calendar!



# The Church Hall

Many of us aren't aware that the church rents a meeting room on the Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal - we call it the church hall. In the past we used it for Sunday School, coffee, parties and other gatherings.

It's not very accessible involving a walk from the church and a climb up a quite lengthy stairway. For some time the church hadn't used it but did make it available to 12-Step Programme groups (known to most as "the AA").

During the pandemic the hall had to be closed; the 12-Step groups met online. After some discussion in Consistory in January it was decided to reopen the church hall to the 12-Step groups. The

reason for hesitation was the financing - the church leases the hall but it was uncertain whether enough groups would return to cover the costs. We took the risk, put much effort into cleaning the hall, getting in supplies, putting out the word amongst the groups, drawing up new contracts, sorting out keys, installing Wi-Fi.

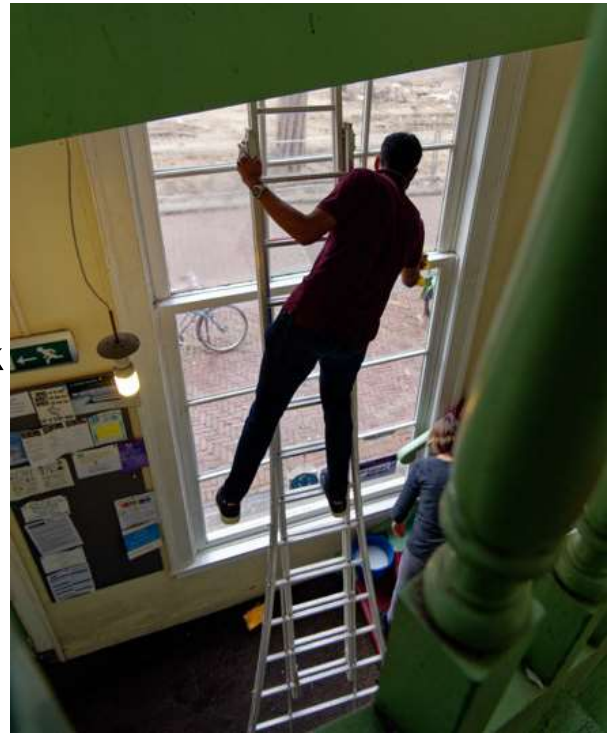
On March 1st the first groups returned; since then there has been a steady stream of returning groups. To minimize any deficit we are looking to make the hall available to other non-profit groups for a small donation.

So if you know of anyone looking for a place to gather, please get in touch.

The best thing about this has been to see how delighted the groups are who have returned. The hall itself is in need of an uplift (no funds) and to most people it looks pretty depressing. However to many 12-Step groups it has great significance - the first place many stopped drinking or using drugs. It has been a great joy to see how this (currently!) grim place has meant and still does mean much to many. Many thanks to all those who have helped re-start this and continue to do so.

If you have any questions, ideas please get in touch with *Gillian*

[gillian.walker@erc.amsterdam](mailto:gillian.walker@erc.amsterdam)



# Christian Education

The Bible Study, led by our locum minister, continues on Wednesday at 19:30 hrs 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 hrs via Zoom.



## The church is open!

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



**12 June 2022:**

Dr Arie Glas, medical director of Mulanje Mission Hospital, Malawi will attend the service and give us an update on the hospital.



## Births

**Isla**, born on March 15, 2022,  
daughter of Jo Matthews and Koji Hayashi

**Madelief**, born on May 28, 2022,  
daughter of Anniek van Engelenburg-Pascoe and David Pascoe



Next edition of the Record: September 2022  
Please send your contribution  
to

[sascha.sizoo@erc.amsterdam](mailto:sascha.sizoo@erc.amsterdam)

Deadline: August 25th

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English Reformed  
Church Amsterdam

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