



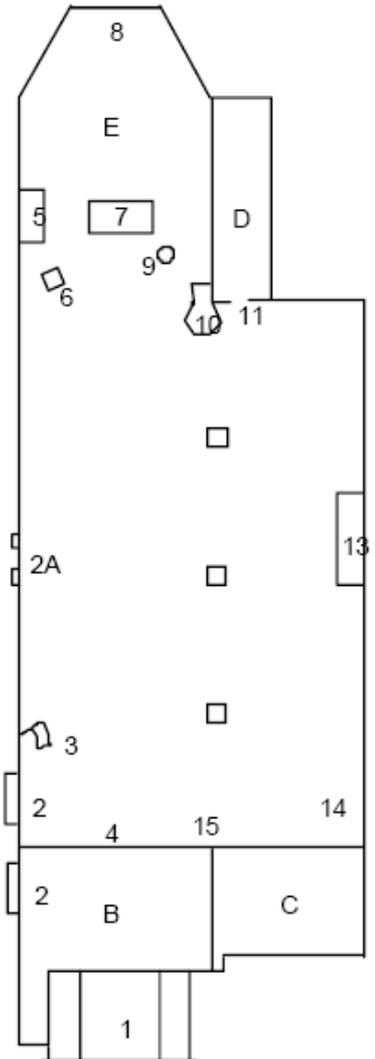
English Reformed Church in the Begijnhof, Amsterdam

Brief Guide for Visitors

“Tomorrow morning I am going to the English church; it lies there so peaceful in the evening in that silent Begijnhof among the thorn hedges, and seems to say: In loco isto dabo pacem: In this place I shall give peace, says the Lord. Amen, so be it.”

Vincent van Gogh

- 1 As you enter the inner porch (B), the door on your right leads to the Consistory Chamber (C). (The Consistory is not open to visitors.)
- 2 Going into the church, notice two attractive gothic windows, one in the porch, and the other just inside the church, both opened up again during the 1975 restoration. Beyond them are two smaller windows (2A), angled to give light to the pulpit when it stood between them.
- 3 There are several flags inside the church. The first is the Royal Standard of Scotland, and the second a replica of the battle standard of one of the Scottish regiments (the Mackay), one of those which fought in the Netherlands during the struggle for independence from Spain in the 16th century. Other flags are of the Netherlands, the House of Orange, the United Kingdom, Scotland and Canada.
- 4 When you reach the chancel (E), look back, and you will see at the rear of the church the 18th-century carved organ case, the work of Jacob Hulstman, which was restored in 1999. The organ was also rebuilt at the turn of the millennium by Flentrop of Zaandam to the original plans of the 18th century organ built in the church by Christian Müller.
- 5 & 6 In front of the small positive organ (also built by Flentrop), stands the lectern bearing the symbols of the four evangelists, carved in 1977 by Nico Onkenhout.
- 7 On the Communion Table stands one of our earliest Bibles, dated 1763.
- 8 At the back of the chancel is our only stained glass window, gifted in 1920 by Mr Edward Bok of the U.S. on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the departure of the Pilgrim Fathers from Leiden to the New World. Many of the Pilgrim Fathers had previously lived in Amsterdam.
- 9 Beside the pulpit steps is the font used in baptisms.
- 10 The pulpit is decorated with a set of carved panels designed by Piet Mondriaan and carved by Edema van der Tuuk to commemorate the accession to the throne in 1898 of Queen Wilhelmina. The Bible stands on a desk supported by a fine brass lectern donated to the church in 1689 by Stadholder William III of Orange and his wife Mary Stuart when they were called to be joint monarchs of Great Britain.
- 11 On the wall beside the pulpit hangs a Celtic cross, a gift from the Alle-Dag Kerk which has organised Dutch services on Wednesdays in our church for many years.
- 12 To the right of the pulpit a door leads into the Deaconry (D). Panels listing those who have served our congregation as deacons are mounted on the walls here, as well as on the church wall outside the Deaconry.
- 13 Along the south wall of the church stands the carved Burgomaster's Pew. When the pulpit was situated on the north wall (from 1607 to 1912), this faced it.
- 14 Further along, beside the cupboard in the corner, notice the Grim Reaper's sickle on one of the burial slabs. Beguines were buried beneath the floor of the church right up to 1818; others, the baroque composer Locatelli among them, were buried under the slabs as well, having bought their space from Consistory.
- 15 As you leave the church, on the back wall on the left is a framed facsimile of the first page of a minute, recording that John Paget preached his first sermon in the church on 5 February 1607.



Would you like to know more?

For more details of the rich history of the church, the Beguines and the Begijnhof, see *The English Reformed Church in the Begijnhof, its Setting and History*, on sale here.

“Within these walls let no one be a stranger”

HOME TO AN INTERNATIONAL CONGREGATION

The English Reformed Church is home to many people who wish to worship in English in Amsterdam. As well as Presbyterians from the U.K., the Netherlands, Canada, the U.S.A., Africa and Japan, many other denominations are represented in church on Sunday mornings. A recent survey revealed twenty-five nationalities present during a service from more than twenty denominations.

We are a mixed community: refugees and business professionals, musicians and lawyers, housewives and bankers, students, and many others, all gathering to worship and support one another. Some have been in the congregation all their lives, others came as adults to study or work in the Netherlands.

We keep in touch with members who are working out of the Netherlands with Médecins sans Frontières, and we raise funds to support the Mulanje Mission Hospital in Malawi.

WELCOME

We welcome all who wish to join us at our services on Sunday mornings at 10.30. All our services are in English; children are catered for by a crèche, Sunday School and Junior Church, so the whole family can come to church together. Following the service there is a coffee hour in the church hall for visitors and members of the congregation.

Holy Communion is celebrated on the first Sunday of each month, and on Maundy Thursday and Easter Sunday. There are other special services in Holy Week and at Christmas time. These are led by our choir, as are the services on the second Sunday of each month (except from July to September).

PEOPLE WITH A HISTORY

Our congregation has flourished over the years, keeping English worship in the heart of Amsterdam since 1607, except for a short period during German occupation in the Second World War.

The English Reformed Church was set up under the Reformed Church in the Netherlands, always with English and Scottish ministers. In the middle of the eighteenth century, the congregation established ties with Scotland; since then the minister has always come from Scotland.

The congregation is now fully part of the Church of Scotland in the Presbytery of Europe. At its twice yearly meetings the Presbytery is attended by representatives of the twelve Church of Scotland European congregations. The congregation is also represented by an elder at the Amsterdam Classis of the Netherlands Reformed Church.

We are a growing congregation of almost 400 members, and continue to reflect the international nature of Amsterdam and the world of the Christian Church. The Consistory which guides the congregation usually consists of twelve members, both deacons and elders, who represent the breadth of the congregation in age and background.

THE HISTORIC CHURCH IN THE BEGIJNHOF

The first church in the Begijnhof was consecrated in 1419 and provided a place of worship for the lay community of nuns, the Begijnen or Beguines, who lived in the court around. The wooden church, along with most of the Begijnhof and a significant part of Amsterdam was burnt down in the fire of 1421.

Towards the end of the fifteenth century, the Begijnhof and its chapel were rebuilt in brick and stone. During the Reformation the church was closed when the city fathers disallowed all but Reformed worship.

The building lay unused for some time, except as a storehouse and wash place for the Begijnhof. When English-speaking worshippers in Amsterdam petitioned for a place in which to worship, the city fathers decided to give them the use of the redundant building in the Begijnhof. The first service took place in February 1607.

The building was extended in the latter part of the seventeenth century, and officially became the property of the congregation in 1812. Its layout was changed in 1912 and it was restored in the 1970s.

A further major restoration of the foundations and renovation of the inside of the church was carried out in the summer and autumn of 2005. The congregation is currently raising funds to meet the deficit in the Restoration Appeal Fund.



For more information:

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