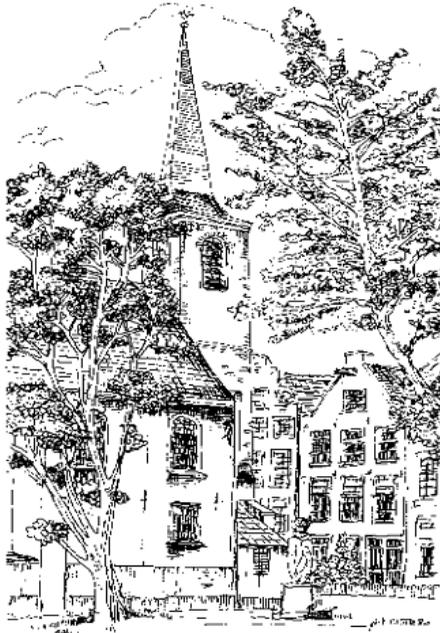




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The Record

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Minister's Letter

Dear Friends,

I write this letter a couple of days after my first Annual General Meeting as your minister and I want to begin by thanking all those who participated for the good meeting that it was, and for some very constructive discussion. For those unable to attend I thought I would use this letter to communicate a few proposals that were discussed.

Firstly, the suggestion that we move towards weekly coffee in the church after the service, possibly phased in by initially moving from once to twice per month, but aiming for weekly with one refinement (see below). The reason for this is simply that coffee in the church hall seems to have dropped off from previous days and relatively few now stay. This is such a shame as fellowship after the service is so important for us to get to know one another – especially newcomers and visitors. In previous churches I have sometimes felt that I should really say the blessing not at the end of the formal service but when the last drop has been drunk from the last coffee cup – as God is often so present in our gathering and conversation and sharing after the service. This will, of course, require more volunteers as there will be more clearing up to be done, but I'm confident that we have enough people to do this.

One refinement... I am delighted that we have now secured the use on Sundays of a wonderful resource much nearer to the church than the hall, the ABC Treehouse on the Voetboogstraat, across the Spui. Our Sunday School and Junior Church will begin meeting there on April 5th, Easter Sunday. These premises are great because they open out onto a street where many pass by. At the AGM we discussed the idea of having a lunch there once per month after the service (instead of coffee in the church) – possibly with music and an 'open door' (maybe not literally) to people passing by and a welcome to come in and join us. Again, this would need commitment and work from the congregation but I'm sure we could do this. I love the Begijnhof which is such a beautiful and peaceful setting but I think there is a need for us to get the church out from 'behind the wall' and 'onto the street' and this could be a great way of doing this.

Those were a couple of ideas discussed at the AGM and I was grateful for the positive and open response they received. They will now be taken back to the Consistory for fine-tuning. Watch this space!

As I write this Holy Week and Easter are approaching and it is good to be reminded that our risen Lord never lets us stay still for long. He is always pushing us in new ways and new directions, bursting old wine skins with the new wine of his risen presence. He keeps his church on the move and I hope that we can view new ideas and changes in that light.

I commend to you the Holy Week and Easter services and invite you to take time to immerse yourself fully in these astounding events around which our world and our lives revolve.

With very best wishes to you and the peace of the risen Lord!

Lance

Consistory Meetings of February & March

In the past months Consistory had to prepare for the Annual General Meeting (which was held before you will have read this), as well as for the quinquennial Local Church Review.

Judi Haynbes-Smart, Laura Elliott and Nick Thomas were welcomed to their first Consistory meeting after being ordained at the end of January.

Membership matters: *Sally Stone, Hanneliza van Zijl, Kathy and Kirk Jacobs and Prince Buwonekpo* were admitted into membership by resolution of Consistory. *Ferry Haris and Pratiwi Kartika (Tiwi)* will bring their son Martin for baptism in March They were also admitted into membership by resolution of Consistory.

Christa Oudshoorn-Hobo's surgery was planned for March 13th.

Lotty Veelbehr is back home after staying in a nursing home for rehabilitation. She will move to a more sheltered living facility in April.

Consistory received Olja Bučo's letter of resignation. We are sad to see her leaving after this summer, but are grateful for all the hard work, dedication and wonderful music she has given to the ERC in the past 18 years. We wish her every blessing in this new chapter of her life.

Away Days: Consistory had its first retreat at the end of January led by pastor Lance Stone. We discussed a number of topics regarding worship and fellowship. Some of these topics will have been taken to the AGM, such as the start of Church Meetings, an informal way of including the wider congregation in relevant topics and developments in church.

Local Church Review: Every five years our congregation is subjected to the Local Church Review, an in-depth audit of the life and organization of the church. The LCR is initiated by the International Presbytery (previously the Presbytery of Europe). The LCR committee, chaired by the Rev. Andrew Gardner from Brussels, will be with us the last weekend of April. As a preparation we submitted statistics and lots of information on our church's recent history, life of the worship, what we do, evangelism, etc., and had a preparatory meeting with Rev. Gardner on 13 March.

The findings of the LCR will help us develop as a congregation and can provide new ideas and inspiration to other churches in the Presbytery and beyond.

Property: The ABC Treehouse, on the Voetboogstraat just across the Spui from the entrance to the Begijnhof, will be used as a venue for Sunday School and Junior Church for the coming months. There are a number of issues with the Church Hall.

Other Matters: Consistory is investigating ways to employ a part time youth worker, if possible in cooperation with another congregation.

The next Consistory meeting will be held at the beginning of April. The exact date is still to be determined.

Heleen Koning

The AGM

Our church's Annual General Meeting took place on March 22nd after the service. The main topics in this meeting, chaired for the first time by Rev. Lance Stone, focused on inclusiveness: how can we reach as many people in our congregation as possible via communication (notice boards, church meetings), fellowship (coffee in the church instead of the church hall; a monthly lunch) and participation in a number of committees to be formed (Worship & Christian Education; Communication; Property; and a Fundraising Committee). Lance also informed participants about the change of venue for the Sunday School and Junior Church. As of April the ABC Treehouse will be used. The ideas brought forward during the AGM will be discussed in the upcoming Consistory meetings.

Our minister also presented a survey in the meeting. Everyone in the congregation is invited to fill out this survey in the coming weeks. You or can give Consistory your ideas about the activities and groups we have or that you would like to see developed. And if you want to actively participate in worship, fellowship or behind the scenes work, you can also indicate that. The survey will be handed out in church and made available to fill out online.

Of course the Treasurer, Thorsten König, presented the financial results of 2014. Explained how 2014 ended on a positive note after having a more negative forecast earlier in the year. With the help of so many contributing, we ended the year in a solid financial position, which enables us to look for a part time youth worker in 2015. The Audit Committee (Carla Bergsma and Henk Keizer) approved the accounts. Eduard Starrenburg will succeed Henk Keizer in the Audit Committee next year.

The Annual Report of 2014 also provided the congregation with the highlights of a number of groups in our congregation and a general overview of last year. If you are interested in receiving a copy, please send me an email (scriba@ercadam.nl) and you can receive the report either as a pdf file or a printed version. The report is also available on the website of the church, www.ercadam.nl.

Heleen Koning

The Bread Run!

Every Saturday someone from our church picks up the leftover bread products from a large bakery in the centre of Amsterdam and delivers it to a wonderful charity, also in the city centre, that provides a warm meal for homeless and needy folks every day.

A few members of our church have been helping out with this project for many years now. Unfortunately we do not always have enough volunteers to help pick up the bread. *Right now we are in dire need of one or two new volunteers!* If you have a car, or access to a car, and are able to help one Saturday each month for a pickup at either 8:00pm (off-season) or 9:00pm (high tourist season), or even if you can help every now and then, please consider chipping in to keep the important "bread run" going!

For more information please contact Gilles at 020-3882778 or email him at gilles@alice.nl. Thank you!

And Again: Visiting Mulanje Mission Hospital

When Ruth Shakespeare, the medical director of Mulanje Mission Hospital (MMH) in Malawi visited Amsterdam last year and met with pastor Lance for the first time, one thing became clear to Astrid and myself: we have to go to Mulanje in 2015 and take our new minister with us. Then he will have the opportunity to experience for real what an impact the support of our congregation has on life at Mulanje, and meet some of the great people there.

So on 12 February the three of us arrived via Nairobi in Blantyre, Malawi, with five huge boxes in our luggage, containing about 40,000 latex gloves (yes, that's forty thousand!) which had been stranded in Amsterdam since our last order of supplies for MMH. After some short discussions at Customs, off we went to pick up our 4x4 vehicle, loaded the boxes and our luggage, and then we were on our way to Mulanje, a 2-hour drive from Blantyre.

Approaching Mulanje Mountain and knowing that we have almost reached our final destination is always one of the most impressive moments. First thing was to drive directly to the hospital to unload the boxes and – of course – to say hello to Ruth and all the other friends there.

Ruth had prepared quite a comprehensive program for us to ensure that we used this one week most effectively: for Lance and me to get a detailed overview of all the facilities and programs of the hospital and to meet as many people as possible. Astrid had prepared a multi-day teaching program about hearing tests for members of the medical staff.

I will mention here only some of the highlights of our visit, otherwise this would fill pages and pages. But we are already planning a dedicated evening in the next few weeks, where we will tell more and show a lot of pictures – watch out for this!

The goal of our last MMH Concert was to create funds for the renewal of the water supply system. Wilson (a member of the maintenance team) showed us around: the new bore holes with new pumps down in the valley and the new water tanks (with no leakage anymore!) a little further up in the hills, finally securing the supply of fresh water for MMH. The second phase of the project – the installation of a waste water treatment system – will begin soon after the current rainy season. We also visited all the other projects which were accomplished in the last years with the help of our church.



At left, pastor Lance contemplates the new water tanks for the hospital, paid for with donations from our church.

Speaking of the rainy season: one day we met for breakfast with a number of Abussas (which is the title of a reverend in the local language, Chichewa) for us to understand the situation of the local churches. Most of the Abussas are in charge of at least three or four congregations. This means they have to travel long distances by bike or – if possible – by little commuter buses on muddy roads, which can take hours. We experienced what this means: after breakfast Astrid took up her teaching and Lance, four Abussas and myself stepped into our (quite big!) 4x4 car to visit some of the churches. And boy, was it raining! Most of the roads turned into not only muddy but soapy and slippery pathways. We got stuck in the mud several times and only by pushing the car could we get back on track. Lance's and my impression of the day was not only great respect and admiration for the dedication of the Abussas, but also for the commitment of the members of the congregations, living their faith and worshipping God with joy and happiness despite all the poverty.

Before we departed I had recommended to Lance that he should have a sermon 'ready in his pocket', as we would be special guests of honour in the services on Sunday at the Mulanje Mission church – the first one in English at 7:00am and the second one in Chichewa at around 9:00am. Visiting a service at MMH is always a great joy; the church is full of people enjoying worshipping. About four to six choirs are singing in each service, to the praise of God.

So Sunday at 6:30am: after meeting with the elders before the service we were not only invited to sit in the front next to the Abussa and the elders, but also to contribute to the service. I did the reading and Lance – guess what?—preached.



At left, the early Sunday church service at MMH, in English. The local Abussa, or minister, the reader (Thorsten), Astrid, and the preacher (Abussa Lance).

Another highlight of that day was the lunch at the lodge, together with the extended management team of MMH. This is now almost a tradition and one of the highlights of our visit. All the participants around the table really enjoyed the company. You really could sense how they felt honoured and rewarded by this (for us small) gesture – which was the least we could do to say, 'thank you'.

MMH also prepared a great treat for us: to kick off a big tree-planting project at the Mission School we were invited to plant the first three trees alongside the road to the hospital. As a result, there is now an 'Abussa Lance' tree in Mulanje, next to an 'Astrid'

one and a 'Thorsten' one. What an event, with all the shouting and running kids around us!

When we left Mulanje after a week, Astrid and I had the strong impression that we had accomplished our mission: to really bring to life for our new minister the MMH and the commitment of our congregation to this wonderful place.

Thorsten König

PS: Our next project for the MMH concert later this year will be the renovation of the pre-labour ward, where women in early stages of labour wait. This ward is currently overcrowded with women, some even lying on the bare floor!

PPS: A big thanks to Thijs Polstra for the logistics help in the Netherlands, enabling the 40,000 (about 120 kg) latex gloves to get a ride to Malawi within our luggage!

*I would like to thank you for all your well wishes and the interest you have shown during my stay in the hospital and rehabilitation ward of the Flevohuis, and after that at home. It was heart-warming. Thank you so much!
Lotty Veelbehr*



Coffee Mornings

The monthly Tuesday coffee mornings are open to anyone who would like to join in some informal fellowship. The gatherings are hosted by various people at their homes, or occasionally at other locations such as a cafe or restaurant. We begin at about 10:30am. If you would like more information about the coffee mornings, or if you would like to host a coffee morning at your home once in awhile, please contact either Elly Kalf (020 6479174) or Sies Plokker (020 4707944). We would love to have you join us!

Here are the dates and locations of the next coffee mornings:

14 April	Ineke Fraaij	Amsterdam
12 May	Sies Plokker	Amsterdam
2 June	Janet Dönszelmann	Amstelveen

There is a summer break in the months of July and August, and on September 1st the coffee mornings will begin again. We hope to see you there!

Concerts in our Church

4 April, 3:15pm: Iris de Koomen (soprano), Asa Olsson (alto), Niek Idelenburg (tenor), Sinan Vural (baritone): “Zapp Johannes”, singers & ensemble present a concert for the whole family inspired by Bach’s Johannes Passion.

7 April, 1:00pm: Vocal ensemble & chamber orchestra of Canyon Crest Academy, San Diego, California. Works by Vivaldi, Bach, Grainger, Pitoni, Leavitt, etc. *Free concert!*

11 April, 8:15pm: Chamber Choir Douce Memoire, “Peace”. A concert for the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands after World War II. Works by Pärt, Schönberg, Escher & van den Hombergh.

13 April, 1:00pm: Stormklang Choir from Raudeberg, Norway: Norwegian sacred music and favourite hymns. Works by Rutter, Larsen, Hovden, etc. *Free concert!*

18 April, 8:15pm: Trio Madamicella. Authentic Corsican polyphony. Works from many countries, with guest quartet “Rusalki”.

19 April, 3:15pm: The Lelichoir, “Romantic choir music from Northern Europe”. Works by Diepenbrock, Brahms, Elgar, Debussy, Poulenc, Vaughan Williams, etc.

25 April, 1:00pm: Choir of St. Birgitta Church, Stockholm: “Swedish folk songs & traditional choir music”. Works by Byrd, Harling, Sargent, Olsson, etc. *Free concert!*

1 May, 1:00pm: Mixed choir Røysterett For Alle, Norway, Norwegian folk songs & traditional choir music. Works by Beck, Sommerro, Elgar, Weiss, etc. *Free concert!*

2 May, 1:00pm: In Voco Parentis, choir from Cambridge, England. Works by Darke, Whitacre, Handel, Stainer, Brown, etc. *Free concert!*

30 May, 8:15pm: Raymond Honing: traverso, flute, alto flute, bass flute: “Operation Kriss Kross 3”, third in a series of three concerts. Works by Telemann, Valdapet, Dvorak; & arrangements of music from South America and the Balkans, for flute, accordion, contrabass and piano.

31 May, 3:15pm: Franz Liszt Chamber Choir, “Lobet, jauchzet... und singet!” Sacred and profane joyful sounds with works by Schein, Schütz and Mendelssohn.

Tickets can be purchased ½ hour before the concert. For more information on concerts at the ERC, see the folders in the church vestibule or check the website: www.ercadam.nl

De Kloof

De Kloof is a shelter for homeless people in the centre of Amsterdam. Our church is committed to cooking a warm lunch at the shelter every second Monday of the month. We need about three volunteers for this. The group begins cooking at around 9:00am and we are finished at about 3:00pm. It is fun to cook together, and it’s for a great cause. We will be needing more volunteers in May and June.

If you would like to help, or if you have any questions, please contact Gillian Walker at dekloof@ercadam.nl. We could use your help!

International Presbytery News

The March gathering of churches in our Presbytery, the International Presbytery of the Church of Scotland, took place in Fuengirola, Spain on the second weekend in March. There were representatives from all the churches, from Amsterdam to Gibraltar, from Trinidad to Sri Lanka, with Malta, Paris, Regensburg, Cyprus, Lausanne and many others in between! The following news is excerpted from the newsletter on the Presbytery's website: www.europepresbytery.net, where you can go to read the entire piece.

At its meeting the Presbytery tackled a series of issues arising from its continuing discussions with the central Councils and Committees of the Church of Scotland. Reporting on progress, Rev. Doug McRoberts confirmed that the new name [changing from 'Presbytery of Europe' to 'International Presbytery'] is accepted as being much more appropriate, and would be confirmed as part of an Act of the General Assembly in 2016, which will establish a new relationship between the Presbytery and the rest of the Church. He said: "New principles, recognising the maturity of the Presbytery and its unique and distinctive ministry and mission, are being agreed; the Presbytery will, in future, stand in a more direct relationship to both the General Assembly and the central Councils and Committees, and will continue to play a recognised key role in the Church's world mission. But it's also fair to state that the International Presbytery Working Group believes that an increase in contributions to the core work of our parent Church is both fair and scripturally justified."

In Jerusalem: Rev. Páraic Réamonn, who is now minister of St. Andrew's Scots Memorial Church in Jerusalem, told the Presbytery of the challenges faced every day, and every week, by Christians in the Holy Land. He encouraged congregations to think of establishing stronger relationships with Christians in both Israel and Palestine, and outlined a new proposal for developing what he called "Alternative pilgrimages – not so much looking at the dead stones of history, as meeting the living stones of Christ's land today."

Mission projects: The Presbytery's Mission Project 2014 was 'A Place at the Table' – and it set new records for the Presbytery – almost €12,000! This money has already gone to our partner church in Syria, to provide food and sanitation packs for refugees trapped within their own country by war.

The next project: The Presbytery Mission Project for 2015 is the *Word Made Flesh Romania* project, a Christian mission with the overall aim of helping to secure a better future for vulnerable children on the fringes of society. This specific project centres on the construction of an 'Earthship' – made from earth-filled tyres – which will house an aquaponics garden in which fish, marine and plant life sustain food growth. The Earthship is already nearly complete, and our money will help provide the aquaponics equipment. More information is available at www.wordmadeflesh.org/Romania.

At the meeting the Presbytery also said good-bye to two members who have left their respective churches and moved on: Rev. Barry Dunsmore was the minister at the Scots Kirk in Bermuda for 6 years and is now minister of St. Machar's Cathedral in Aberdeen; and Rev. Garwell Bacchas, minister of the Church of Scotland in Trinidad for nearly 10 years, has now returned to the United Church of Jamaica, where he is from.

Baptisms

Martin Alexander Tindaon Haris

8 February

*Nate Edward Osei Ampoma-
Nketia*

15 March

Church Library on the Website

Most of us know about the church library in the church hall. Many of us have borrowed books there, or just browsed through what's on offer. You are all welcome to make use of the library!

You can now look for books from our church library online, on the ERC website: www.ercadam.nl. When you click on 'library' you will first find an introduction, and then you can search for books by 'author' or 'categories'. Happy reading!

BREAD: Mid-Week Worship Services

supper with reflection and worship

The BREAD service is an informal meditative service led by members of the congregation using a blend of different worship styles and including a short meditation on a theme. It is held monthly at 7:30pm, beginning with soup and bread. The service itself starts at 8:00pm and lasts approximately 45 minutes. We end with coffee and perhaps something sweet.

The BREAD service usually takes place on the second Thursday of each month. The next BREAD services will be held on 9 April and 14 May. It would be great to see you there! For more information see Veronica Garcia Robles.

Jesus said, "I am the Bread of Life"

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The deadline for the next *Record* is May 20th...

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