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The Record

June & July 2015
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The English Reformed Church
Begijnhof 48, 1012 WV Amsterdam
www.ercadam.nl

Rev. Dr. Lance Stone
Minister
minister@ercadam.nl

Heleen Koning
Scriba
scriba@ercadam.nl

Thorsten König
Treasurer
treasury@ercadam.nl

Susan Polstra
Church Officer, Letting for Weddings
churchofficer@ercadam.nl

Olja Bučo
Organist, Choir Director
organist@ercadam.nl

Kenneth Ewen
Concert Manager

Christa Oudshoorn-Hobo &
Veronica Garcia Robles
Sunday School Superintendents

Nancy Sekyere Owusu
Crèche Duty Rota
creche@ercadam.nl

Astrid König
Junior Church Coordinator
juniorchurch@ercadam.nl

Els Nooij, Church Guiding Coordinator
Jens Anders Wejsmark Sørensen, Webmaster

Church

IBAN: NL44 ABNA 0547 6235 50
SWIFT address: ABNANL2A

Friends of the English Reformed Church
IBAN: NL90 ABNA 0624 1800 69

Church Hall

J.W.Brouwersstraat 9
1071 LH Amsterdam
020 6722288

Wittgensteinlaan 161
1062 KD Amsterdam
06 13097756

C.P. Van der Leestraat 36
1396 JP Baambrugge
0294 772934

Marnixkade 67-2
1015 XX Amsterdam
020 6224158

Hemonystraat 26c
1074 BR Amsterdam
020 4701980

concertorganiser@ercadam.nl

sundayschool@ercadam.nl

Roomtuintjes 197
1093 TB Amsterdam
020 6933521

C.P. Van der Leestraat 36
1396 JP Baambrugge
0294 772934

openchurch@ercadam.nl

webmaster@ercadam.nl

Begijnhof 48
1012 WV Amsterdam
020 6249665

NZ Voorburgwal 282A
1012 RT Amsterdam

Minister's Letter

Dear Friends,

I hope I will be forgiven for beginning this letter by referring to the recent General Election held in the UK, but it has been much on my mind. There are several reasons why it will be long remembered and the result could yet prove to be significant for the rest of Europe, including the Netherlands, as one outcome looks certain to be the in/out referendum on membership of the European Union that the winning Conservative party made part of their manifesto. If that leads to the withdrawal of the UK from the EU then the effects will be far-reaching.

I had a personal interest in the election as my son works for one of the few Liberal Democrat MPs who kept their seat. The calamitous results for that party of course led to the resignation of their leader, Nick Clegg, but there was something that he said in his resignation speech which I think bears quoting. Speaking of political leaders, he referred to 'the disastrous consequences for our way of life and the integrity of the UK if they continue to appeal to grievance rather than generosity...' That is so well put for, sadly, too much of the campaign rhetoric – by some more than others – was marked by exactly that appeal to grievance and to fear, and such sentiments are not confined to the UK. Too often political discourse is rife with appeals to narrow self-interest, a scapegoating of the most vulnerable and a meanness of spirit.

With that in mind it is interesting that Ascension Day has come just one week after that General Election and I am writing this on the eve of that important day in the Christian year. Ascension Day reminds us of the limitations of human, earthly power, the fact that Jesus is Lord and that ultimately the government of this world rests in his hands and not the hands of politicians. But we are reminded too of the nature of Christ's rule. One of my favourite psalms is Psalm 72 which pictures the rule of the ideal king and it just oozes generosity and open-handedness:

'May he judge your people with righteousness,
and your poor with justice.

May the mountains yield prosperity for the people
and the hills in righteousness... (v.2-3)

Generosity and abundance rather than grievance and fear are hall-marks of Christ's rule. Indeed that is why Ascension Day is followed by Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit comes bearing gifts for the church – all the resources we need to be the people of God bearing witness to the rule of God in the midst of a troubled and broken world.

I would hope and pray that the Church would be a place where grievance is challenged by generosity, where an abundance of gifts are finding expression and where we are free in our giving of our selves and our time and our money. I would hope and pray that in its generous and open-handed life the church might demonstrate a different politics to the austerity and mean-mindedness that characterises far too much of our political life.

With my very best wishes,

Lance

Consistory Meetings of April & May

In April a committee formed by four members of the International Presbytery of the Church of Scotland and chaired by Rev. Andrew Gardner from Brussels visited our congregation to perform the Local Church Review, an audit that is performed once every five years in each congregation of our presbytery. During the various interviews lots of topics were discussed regarding worship, fellowship and property. The topics discussed in the Annual General Meeting in March were also addressed. The results of the Review are expected by the end of June.

Membership matters: Sarah Wangyin, Emma Kabila Pancras Dijk & Katka Balatkova were admitted into membership by resolution of Consistory.

Anne and Patrick Brown had a baby girl, Greta Estelle, born on 6 May.

AGM follow-up: The Annual General Meeting, held in March, laid out some of the topics that Consistory members had discussed during their ‘away day’ earlier on in January: the pros and cons of having coffee time more often in the church rather than the church hall; using the ABC Treehouse for Sunday School & Junior Church; communication and publicity and inviting more members of the congregation to contribute to the life and work in the church by establishing committees on a number of topics. And the ‘church meeting’ was introduced, an informal discussion with the congregation, about various topics, to be held regularly during coffee time after the service.

Pastor Lance also introduced the church survey as a means of gathering information from members of the congregation. In the May Consistory meeting the first results of the survey were discussed. You will find more information in a separate article in this *Record* (page 8). The first church meeting (after the Pentecost family service on 24 May) was prepared. The following committees will be formed:

*Worship & Christian Education (*convener Pastor Lance Stone*)

*Publicity (website, notice board, IT, *The Record*, etc., *convener Laura Elliott*)

*Property (*convener Seppo Stout*)

*Fundraising for specific projects (*convener Baafi Sekyere*)

*Outreach and social events (*convener Thijs Glasz*)

Finance: The income and expenditures of the first quarter were discussed. We end the first quarter with a surplus of about €11,000 as a result of two one-off items: the appeal fund and a return on energy taxes. When this amount is taken out, our income is just a bit above budget. Expenses are in line with the budget. It is too early in the year, however, to extrapolate and come to a solid forecast.

Property: Some maintenance work will be carried out in and outside of the church (without scaffolding) during the summer.

Other matters: The Mulanje charity concert will be held on 27 November (a string ensemble, and Ricky Ross—lead singer of the band *Deacon Blue*).

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After having decided on a revised job description for the position of organist/choir director, a committee with representatives from the choir and Consistory was created to advise Consistory on the process of filling the vacancy.

Baafi reported back from the last International Presbytery meeting in April. Alec Grant (Presbytery Elder from Brussels) was appointed Moderator of the Presbytery for the coming year.

Heleen Koning

Finance Report

January – March 2015, Amounts in €

	<u>2015</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015 vs 2014</u>
Income			
Donations	32.638,08	14.367,68	18.270,40
Collections	7.140,60	10.044,87	- 2.904,27
Church hire	7.274,83	5.866,95	1.407,88
Concerts	1.077,50	3.050,50	- 1.973,00
Weddings	-	2.625,00	- 2.625,00
Church shop	-	55,00	- 55,00
Flowers	96,21	167,50	- 71,29
Extraordinary Income	7.671,00	-	-
	55.898,22	36.177,50	12.049,72

Our income in the first quarter of this year was significantly higher compared with 2014, which is great. Despite this good news, we must acknowledge that this was mainly caused by two extraordinary, one-off sources: first of all, the appeal fund we started last year resulted in additional donations of €4.130 (thanks to all donators who contributed to this!); secondly, we received €7.671 in tax returns (energy taxes for the last 5 years). Taking these amounts into account, our regular income for the first quarter of this year is €44.097.

Our expenses for the first three month of this year were in line with the budget.

Consistory has been discussing for some time the employment of a Youth Worker or Assistant Minister to support our ministry within our congregation and beyond. Considering our current financial situation we are in a position to proceed with this project. Nevertheless, as your steward for the financial health of our congregation, I also want to remind us all that this employment would require not only our ongoing commitment, but also our generosity.

I am delighted and thankful that GOD gives us all the required gifts and talents to enable us to spread and live HIS good plan - within our congregation and beyond. It continues to be true, and becomes ever more known, that: “Within these walls let no-one be a stranger”.

As always, if you have any questions or comments please feel free to contact me anytime at treasurer@ercadam.nl or (0294) 77 29 34.

Thorsten König, Treasurer

Mulanje Mission Concert – Ricky Ross

Friday November 27th, 7.30 pm

The congregation of the English Reformed Church has a historical attachment to the Mulanje Mission Hospital (MMH), located at the foot of the Mulanje Mountain in southern Malawi. The hospital provides primary health care to 75,000 people in 72 villages. Together with our supporters at the Rotary Club Amsterdam International and *Wilde Ganzen*, we have been successful in greatly improving resources and conditions there for both patients and staff.

As well as making regular, monthly donations, each year the church organizes a concert to raise funds for a particular project, and this year our focus will be on making essential improvements to the antenatal ward. Last year we had jazz and this year will be something different again. If song titles like ‘Real Gone Kid’ or ‘Dignity’ or ‘Wages Day’ ring any bells with you, then chances are that you are familiar with one of the most successful bands that emerged in the UK in the 1980s, *Deacon Blue*. An all-Scottish outfit, *Deacon Blue* had a string of hit records including a No.1 album, and they were well-known and very popular on the Continent as well as at home. *Deacon Blue* split in the 1990s but have regularly re-formed to record and tour, and they are as popular as ever.

The lead singer, chief songwriter and driving force behind *Deacon Blue* is Ricky Ross, who hails from Dundee. As well as writing songs for a host of well-known singers and fronting a very popular weekly radio show, Ricky also has a solo singing career. I have known Ricky for many years and was delighted when he agreed to perform at this year’s benefit concert. With the strong Scottish links to the Mission, it will be very appropriate for Ricky to headline this event. He is an excellent musician, performer and songwriter, and we are in for a great evening.

To broaden the appeal, we will also be featuring a classical ensemble who will play and hopefully combine with Ricky on one or two numbers. **Friday Nov 27th, 7.30 pm at the church.** Ticket details to follow. Don’t miss it!



If you want to help, please contact us via email: friendsofmmh@ercadam.nl or 0207701341 (evenings).
Lance Stone

Midweek Fellowship

The God Question

Wednesdays, 7.30 pm

at the Manse,

9-11 Jan Willem Brouwersstraat in Amsterdam

June 3rd, 17th, July 1st, 15th

All welcome!

Can Science and Faith meet?



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 service will be held on 11 June, and it will be in the style of Taizé, as was our May service. This was well attended by a very international congregation of people, some unconnected to our church, and indicates that we should continue to offer this type of worship opportunity- whether as the BREAD service or otherwise. Either way, in June and July the BREAD service will be Taizé style and if you are not familiar with this, come and give it a try!

After a short summer break the fellowship services will begin again in September. For more information see the minister, or speak to Veronica Garcia Robles.

Jesus said, "I am the Bread of Life"

Congregational Survey 2015

preliminary results

In April all worshippers were invited to fill out the congregational survey. Questions were asked about various topics: contact details, demographic information, comments on worship, possible new ideas and activities, the way we communicate with people inside and outside church, and interest in committees and church activities.

The survey could be filled out via computer (the survey was sent via the email addresses we had available) or on paper copies available in church. We received 79 full responses (of which 56 electronic).

At the time of writing this article we are still going through all the information to put together a more detailed report.

Outcomes and actions:

The results of the survey will help us in various ways:

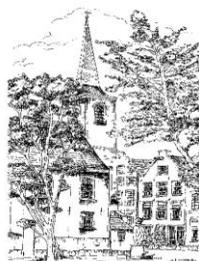
- We will update our contact list and addresses where necessary;
- We will establish committees, rotas and co-ordinators / convenors on a number of topics. Lots of you showed interest in being involved.
- With the demographic information (children, age groups, addresses) we can focus on various activities.
- New ideas and activities were brought forward, which will be discussed in Consistory and with the congregation
- Our ways of communication will be updated, e.g. a number of members have expressed a wish to receive information via email
- We will talk to respondents personally to follow up on expressed interests and suggestions made.

In the upcoming Church Meeting of 24 May we will elaborate more on the results of the survey.

We would like to thank all respondents for the time they took in filling in the survey and for sharing their ideas, concerns and wishes. We would like to emphasize the fact that the survey is not the only way of giving your input: as of 24May the church meetings will be held on a regular basis, and you can always speak to a member of Consistory or put forward your ideas to the Consistory at one of their meetings.

We thank Laura Elliott for her advice in compiling the survey and Pamela Woolley for her help in digitalising the survey and gathering the information.

Lance Stone
Heleen Koning



Concerts in our Church

5 June, 8:15pm: AUK Chamber Choir, conducted by Alfrun Schmid: 'Of Love and Grief', concerning the 16th-century *Lamentations* by Robert White, a capella program with works from the Renaissance and modern times: works by Gjeilo, Tavener, Skempton, Lang, etc.

6 June, 1:00pm: Vår Frelasers Kirkes Kantori, Norwegian choir, conducted by Goos ten Napel, organ: Jan Hamberg. Works from the Scandinavian choir tradition and with works by Duruflé & Rheinberger. *Free concert!*

7 June, 3:15pm: Amsterdam Bach Consort, conducted by Boudewijn Jansen: 'Stabat Mater Stabat Pater'. Works by Scarlatti & Kracht.

June 12, 1:00pm: Fleet Choral Society from Hampshire, England, conducted by Gwyn Parry-Jones. Works by Goodall, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Elgar, Rutter, Langford, Chilcott, etc. *Free concert!*

June 13, 8:15pm: Coro Encanto, conducted by Felix van den Hombergh with Liesbeth Vreeburg, harp. 'Chant des Oiseaux', French/Spanish works by Janequin, Poulenc, Ravel, Debussy, Fletxa, De Victoria, etc.

June 14, 3:15pm: Purcell Chamber Orchestra conducted by Nico Brandon, with soloists from the Purcell Chamber Choir: 'Netherlands Composers': works by Anders, de Fesch, Locatelli & Count Unico of Wassenaar.

June 27, 1:00pm: Overijssels Chamber Choir conducted by Eugene van Boheemen with Paula Hopster, piano. 'Let us Garlands bring': works by Ziolkowski, Hamilton, Rutter, Lindberg, Scroggins, Shearing, etc. *Free concert!*

June 28, 3:15pm: Plantage Choir and Vocal Ensemble Amadeus, with instrumental ensemble conducted by Bert 't Hart and Rocus van den Heuvel, organ: works by Mozart, Saint Saëns, Fauré, Poulenc & Andriessen.

July 5, 3:15pm: Choir & ensembles of the Malvern St. James Girls School, England. Works by Vivaldi, Elgar, Bojesen, Bach, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, etc. *Free concert!*

July 6, 1:00pm: Lady Eleanor Holles Junior Choir, England, conducted by Veronica Barnes. Spirituals & folk songs from the Netherlands, Russia, Africa and England, with songs from musicals such as *Oliver & My Fair Lady*. *Free concert!*

July 7, 1:00pm: Hudson Mohawk Chorale from the U.S.A., conducted by Susan Hermance Fedak with Alfred V. Fedak, organ. Works by Billings, Dietterich, Fedak, Parker, Ellington, etc., with African American spirituals. *Free concert!*

August 23, 3:15pm: Barock Sommer Orchestra, conducted by Simon Murphy. Works include Symphony nr. 84, 'In nomine domini' by Joseph Haydn.

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

Cooking at ***De Kloof!*** *De Kloof* is a shelter for homeless people in the centre of Amsterdam. Our church is committed to cooking lunch at the shelter every second Monday of the month. If you are interested in helping, or would like to know more about this project, please contact Gillian Walker at dekloof@eradam.nl. We will be needing volunteers for 8 June, 13 July and 10 August. We will also be having a **Meet 'n Greet** on Sunday, 28 June during the coffee time in the church after the service. This is an opportunity to find out more about De Kloof if it's new to you; to meet faces attached to email addresses for those already involved; and to exchange ideas.

Keeping the Church Open!

Our church stays open for visitors for several hours each week. For most of the year this brings thousands of people into the ERC each week. There are tour groups, folks who enter in droves, take a quick look and leave; there are school groups from various neighbouring countries that come in and listen to their teachers explain the Beguines, or the Reformation, or Protestantism to them; and there are visitors who come in by themselves or in two's or three's, who take one of our guides (in 34 languages!) and walk around or sit down and read about the church. There are occasionally people who come and ask one of the volunteers questions about the history of the church or about our services. There are many people who leave donations in the big chest in the vestibule. And there are always folks who ask what time the Sunday service begins, and who come back to worship with us.

It's an important part of our church: keeping it open for people to come inside. Luckily we have a small group of volunteers who are able to do this for a few hours, for four or five days a week. But the group is too small, and we would love to have new volunteers to help us out! If you have two or three hours free one day a week, or even every now and again, please consider joining our group of enthusiastic volunteers. There are always at least two people keeping the church open at any given time, and often there are one or two more, so you are never alone. If you are interested, please see Els Nooij or email her at openchurch@ercadam.nl, or just ask the minister about it. We would love to have you join us!

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 for you to come along!

The next coffee morning will be held at the home of Janet Dönszelmann in Amstelveen on Tuesday, 2 June.

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!

Birth

Greta Estelle Harcourt Brown

6 May

Food Bank

These are hard times for a lot of people in our city. If you would like to help out those who are going through difficulties financially, a good way is to help stock the Food Bank (*Voedselbank*) in Amsterdam. You are welcome to bring non-perishable food items and other household items such as toothpaste, soap, etc. to our church on Sundays. A box will be provided in the vestibule of the church for these items. It's a good way to help our neighbours!

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!

Flower List

There is a flower list hanging in the Consistory room in our church. If you would like to sponsor flowers for a certain Sunday, you are welcome to add your name next to the date you choose. We ask for a €15 donation to cover the costs of fresh flowers each Sunday. You can transfer this donation using the church's bank account listed inside the cover of this *Record*, or you can give a cash donation on Sunday to either Susan Polstra or one of the Consistory members on duty. Thank you for your support!

Editor:

Susan Polstra
 Marnixkade 67-2
 1015 XX Amsterdam
churchofficer@ercadam.nl

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

Members of Consistory

Laura Elliott	Marnixstraat 281 1015 WK Amsterdam 06 26423799
Mattia Falcone	Amstelkade 166-III 1078 AX Amsterdam 06 27853671
Giles Francis	Nieuwe Uilenburgerstraat 3-H 1011 LM Amsterdam 020 3200197
Thijs Glasz	J. Israelslaan 12 1401 CP Bussum 035 6910408
Judi Haynes-Smart	Vechtstraat 32-1 1078 RG Amsterdam 06 10242250
Thorsten König <i>Treasurer</i>	C.P. van der Leestraat 36 1396 JP Baambrugge 0294 772934
Heleen Koning <i>Scriba</i>	Wittgensteinlaan 161 1062 KD Amsterdam 06 13097756
Peggy Krol	Biesboschstraat 22-3 1078 MS Amsterdam 020 6767804
Christa Oudshoorn-Hobo	De Wijde Blik 22 1189 WK Nes a/d Amstel 0297 775877
Baafi Sekyere	Roomtuintjes 197 1093 TB Amsterdam 020 6933521
Rev. Dr. Lance Stone <i>Minister</i>	J.W. Brouwersstraat 9 1071 LH Amsterdam 020 6722288
Seppo Stout <i>Property Convener</i>	Roeselarestraat 17 1066 SW Amsterdam 020 6798698
Nick Thomas	Buiten Bantammerstraat 1 1011 AX Amsterdam 06 11885017