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The Record

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The English Reformed Church
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Minister's Letter

Dear Friends,

Recently I heard an interesting lecture by one of the world's leading religious philosophers, Nicholas Wolterstorff, formerly of Yale University. At one point he was discussing a topic widely associated with the Netherlands – *Tolerance*. The first point he made was that tolerance is not the same as indifference. In other words, if you put up with something that you have no particular feelings about – positive or negative – then that is not tolerance. But equally, if you put up with something that deep down you are very favourable towards and that you support – that is not tolerance either. Tolerance, said Wolterstorff, involves the acceptance of something you really dislike, something that you would prefer to do away with. Tolerance requires some negativity towards what you are being asked to accept.

I was struck by this because I think it applies to worship. I have often said, to all the congregations that I have served, that you have not really worshipped if there has not been at least something in a service that you have disliked. Perhaps that is putting it a little strongly, but the point is that worship is not all about ME! If I encounter something in worship that I don't like my first thought should be, 'I don't much care for this but perhaps someone else does.' And that is an exercise in community. It is a recognition that we are a widely diverse community in church with a wide range of tastes (some that we might consider 'bad' and some that we might consider 'good') and that community involves accepting things that I don't personally care for but that others do – i.e., tolerance! But more important still is the thought that really the only thing that matters about worship is that God enjoys it. We are not here to be entertained. We are here to offer the praise that is God's due and the chief goal of worship is that God should be blessed (and it is an amazing thought that God can be blessed by our worship). Any blessing that might come to us is a secondary matter.

Of course, there is worship that takes us too far outside our comfort zones. There are churches whose style and content are such that we would find it impossible to make an offering of worship out of what is going on. In that case it's best for us to leave and to find another church. But stretching the boundaries of our comfort zones, taking us into the area of 'dislike' from time to time in a service is an exercise in tolerance and community building

One of the wonderful things about the English Reformed Church is its glorious diversity. We are a diverse people – diverse in nationality and in taste and in talent. I believe that God is honoured and blessed when that diversity is expressed, but that takes tolerance!

With best wishes and with special thanks to all those who in so many ways contribute to our worship,

Lance

Piano for Sale!

Plans are afoot for replacing the church's grand piano. This means we will be disposing of our current Bechstein grand. We have not as yet set a price but anyone interested should contact Richard Zook to discuss the matter. Also, if you know of anyone who might be interested in buying the piano, please have them get in touch with us.

From Consistory

After the summer Consistory met again on 7 September. It was a summer in which the Reverend John Bell continued to preach in our church during our minister's holiday, as he has done for so many years. After the summer we said farewell to Olja Bučo, who is starting a new chapter in her life, and we welcomed Richard Zook as our new Organist and Music Director. We changed to having coffee in the church instead of the church hall, in order to provide fellowship for more people; and we began taking the necessary steps to find a Lay Assistant.

In the meeting we of course remembered Beryl Winter, who passed away two days after the last Consistory meeting in July. The funeral was attended by many. We also looked into ways to assist members of the congregation in need or otherwise special circumstances.

We looked back at a great farewell concert and reception for Olja on August 30th. Our thanks go to all musicians involved and a special thank you to all who helped organising, serving, and clearing up.

With the closing date a week after the meeting, we received a number of applications for the Lay Assistant position. To refresh your memory: after an evaluation of the position of Youth Worker (as was filled in the past by Oliver Lewis and Celeste Majcher) and taking into account changes in the "make up" of the congregation, it was felt that *Youth Worker* did not cover the support needed in the areas of family work, worship and Christian education, and so we decided to create the position of *Lay Assistant*. A small committee will review the applications and interview the selected candidates so that Consistory can be presented with one candidate, hopefully in the October meeting.

In April of this year, the ERC was reviewed by a committee formed of four ministers and elders from the International Presbytery of the Church of Scotland, as is carried out every five years. The draft report of the Local Church Review committee, led by the Rev. Andrew Gardner from Brussels, was discussed. It gives the Presbytery a good insight into how the ERC is at the end of one long ministry and at the start of a new one. It is always the question about timing (though there probably never is a 'best time') as our church inevitably needs a bit of time to settle down with a new minister, and it is going to take a while to see how some new things (like the committees, etc.) work. Plus, of course, there is also the fact that we have a new musical director who started this month, which in a church like ours counts for a lot due to the musical tradition. In a time of transition it would be good to see how we have developed in a couple of years.

We will of course be looking into the goals the committee proposed. We will start with the goals regarding outreach, broadening the support for the property convener and safeguarding.

The Income & Expenditure sheet of July was discussed. Financially we are in better shape than some months ago. Our income has gone up, mainly thanks to an increase of donations, and some of our regular expenditures are less than budgeted.

The idea of a prayer meeting before or after the service was brought forward by some participants of the Ladies Fellowship. Consistory welcomes the initiative. Pastor Lance will follow up on this.

The committees Worship & Christian Education, Publicity, Outreach & Social Events are slowly taking shape. Their first meetings have already taken place or are planned soon. The Property Committee will start in October.

The next Consistory meetings will be held on October 5, November 2 and December 7. If you have any questions or would like to bring a topic to the meeting, please feel free to contact me.

Heleen Koning (scriba@ercadam.nl)

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!

Here are the locations for the coming months:

6 October	Ans & Charles van Saagsvelt	Hoofddorp
3 November	Sies Plokker	Amsterdam
1 December	Pat Rood-van Beem	Sassenheim

A Couple of ideas...

Recently I have been approached by people with a couple of ideas:

- i) **A theological book reading circle.** This would involve a group deciding on a book of some theological nature (don't be put off by the 't' word, it doesn't have to be heavy going or dull!) and we would read a chapter or two and then discuss it together, maybe meeting once per month.
- ii) **A men's group.** After all, the women in the church have a wonderful fellowship group, but what about the men? Maybe we could meet once a month in a pub in the centre of town and talk about things that men want to talk about!

There is much going on in our church at the moment and I'm wary of adding more. But both of these ideas have been suggested to me by more than one person – so over to you! Anyone who is interested in pursuing either of these ideas, please let me know.

Lance



Olja's Farewell Concert and Party

At the end of August we held a farewell concert and party in the church to celebrate the 18 years that Olja Bučo was our organist and music director, and to wish her all the best in this new chapter of her life.

I'm sure that all of you who were there would agree that it was a great success and a very memorable occasion! We had a turnout of almost 180 people, the music was wonderful, the food and wine were great and everyone really had a good time – especially, and most importantly, Olja.

The programme was very varied, bringing together Olja's organ teacher, a few of her students and many of those who have made music with her over the years, all of which made it a very personal and touching tribute.

On behalf of the 'Farewell Committee' and Consistory, I would like to thank EVERYONE who played a part in making this such a special occasion and who gave so generously of their time and talents. Thanks to all of you, the whole thing went off smoothly and seemingly effortlessly, which is no small achievement.

I could try mentioning everyone by name but the list is really long and there's always a risk that someone is overlooked. So I would rather highlight the many aspects which all combined to create the wonderful spirit of the event and its success by saying a more general but very heartfelt THANK YOU to:

- everyone who helped with creative input, ideas and suggestions;
- everyone who helped with all the various aspects of organisation, from recruiting volunteers and printing programmes to setting up the 'stage', coordinating rehearsals and looking after the participants;
- everyone who helped with various aspects of the catering, from planning menus, shopping and organising, to making and presenting the food and serving the drinks;

- everyone who helped behind the scenes, from coordinating the various activities to setting up beforehand and clearing up afterwards;
- all the musicians who contributed their talents so enthusiastically!

Thank you ALL once again.

Judi Haynes-Smart



Photos by Jens Anders Wejsmark Sørensen



Above, Pastor Lance talks to the children about being thankful, at our Harvest Thanksgiving service at the end of September. The harvest table, at right, reminded us all of the bounty of our blessings!

*Mulanje Mission Hospital
Benefit Concert
Friday 27 November at 19.30*



Ricky Ross

An evening with lead singer, song-writer and driving force behind Deacon Blue, one of the most successful UK bands of recent years.

English Reformed Church
Begijnhof 48, 1012 WV Amsterdam
Ticket donation € 40 incl. refreshments
Contact Ingrid Sorensen
friendsofmmh@ercadam.nl / Tel: 0207 701341

Bread Service / Taizé Service

For the next few months the Bread Service will continue to be a Taizé service, but rather a case of ‘Taizé-lite’, as we will try to incorporate into it a bit of the worship style of the Bread Service. The service will be at 7.30, *normally* on the second Thursday of the month, and always announced the Sunday before. Refreshments will follow. Come along and give it a try!

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 in November and December. This is a great way to help folks who are in need!

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!

American Thanksgiving Service

There will be a service in our church on Saturday, 21 November to celebrate American Thanksgiving Day.

Beginning at 3:00pm, this is an annual, interfaith service with participants from Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and other backgrounds. It is open to everyone, and refreshments will be served after the service. We hope to see you there!

Concerts in our Church

11 October, 3:15pm: Vrouwenkoor Nordlys, conducted by Ulrikke Reed Findenegg with poet Kira Wuck: “Aurora”, works by Eriksen (Norway), Holten (Denmark), Rautavaara (Finland) and Australian composers Leek and Hopkins.

22 October, 1:00pm: Music students from Mill Hill School, London: works by Mozart, Purcell, Bach, Pitoni, Palestrina, Rheinberger, etc. *Free ERC concert!*

1 November, 3:15pm: Concerto d’Amsterdam, conducted by Stefano Rossi: works by Telemann, Handel, Bach, etc.

8 November, 3:15pm: Merel Naomi, harp: harp concert with pastries during the break! Works by Handel, Bach, and including Russian romantic waltzes.

14 November, 3:15pm: Netherlands Mandolin Chamber Orchestra 25th anniversary, conducted by Alex Timmerman and featuring counter tenor Sytse Buwalda: works by Mozart, Kuwahara, Piazzolla, etc.

15 November, 3:15pm: Leids Barok Ensemble, conducted by Roelof Balk and featuring Lisa Buckland, baroque oboe: works by Mozart, Telemann, Purcell, Avison, etc. *Free concert with retiring collection.*

20 November, 1:00pm: Michael Sellers, piano: works by Scarlatti, Haydn, Schumann, Liszt, Shostakovitch and Chopin. *Free concert with retiring collection.*

20 November, 8:15pm: Loman Ensemble and Klaver Koper Consort, Anniversary concert: works by Purcell, Lauridsen and Wiegerink.

21 November, 8:15pm: Vocal Ensemble Tien, conducted by Felix van den Hombergh. *Laulan!:* a capella programme with music from Estonia and Finland. Works by Sibelius, Rautavaara, Tormis, etc.

22 November, 3:15pm: Augusto Valença, tenor, and Allan Segall, piano: *My friend must be a bird: Songs of Love and Friendship.* Works by Beethoven, Strauss and Segall.

27 November, 7:30pm: The Mulanje Concert, with Ricky Ross! ERC’s annual benefit concert to support Mulanje Mission Hospital in Malawi. An evening with singer, songwriter and driving force behind *Deacon Blue*, one of the most successful UK bands of the last years. *ERC Concert!*

28 November, 8:15pm: Vocal Ensemble Lassus Consort, conducted by Enrico Ruggieri: *The Evora School: the golden age of Portuguese polyphony.* Works by de Cristo, Lobo, de Brito, Cardoso, di Lasso, etc.

29 November, 3:15pm: Vocal Ensemble Cappella Nova, conducted by Jurjen Vis with Piet Hulsbos on organ: *But joy comes in the morning.* Anthems and songs by Byrd, Morley and Gibbons.

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

Baptism

Bas Pauls Alle Franke Beeres

23 August

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!

A Paperless Record

The Record is also available by e-mail. If you would like to receive your copy of *The Record* by e-mail instead of through the post, please let Susan Polstra know. Her contact details are on the inside back page of this *Record*.

Warm Clothing

This year we will again be gathering warm clothes for the homeless in Amsterdam and surroundings. If you have extra warm clothing, especially coats and jackets, scarves, hats and gloves, you are welcome to bring them along to the church service and give them to Susan Polstra or one of the people on duty at the church entrance.

Editor:

Susan Polstra

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

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