



One Day at a Time

As with other churches around the world, the ERC has adjusted its services and gatherings to suit Corona times. Amsterdam has been in a general lockdown for about six months, with rules being changed every few weeks.

The RIVM, the governmental body responsible for public health, gives regular updates. The Prime Minister and the minister heading up the Covid response team give televised press conferences whenever rules change. In the past six months we have gone through regulations restricting travel, requiring masks in certain areas, requiring social distancing everywhere, and swinging back and forth when it comes to numbers of people who can gather.

Through all of this the ERC has continued to function as extensively as possible. Consistory meetings have been held online, occasional small groups have been allowed to gather one month and then prohibited the next, and several religious offerings have gone online. There was no annual general meeting in April, but the reports were circulated as much as possible. Our church hall, which is normally used by many different AA groups throughout the week, has been closed since mid-March. Our church choir met a few times via Zoom, just to keep up with each other until semi-normal rehearsals began again in August.

During the first 6 months or so of the lockdown services were pre-recorded in the church with a small group, and our organist/choir director, Richard Zook, spent hours splicing together a service, making use of sound recordings from previous years. The finished services were put online at 10:30 every Sunday morning, and were available through our website as well as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Each week the online services were 'attended' by an average of 200 people around the world.

Going Virtual

Several of the ERC's groups which normally met regularly either in the church, the manse or elsewhere, have continued to do so in various ways.

There is still Psalm recitation every Tuesday morning in the church, because it is a very small group. There is a Compline service on Thursday and Sunday evenings on Zoom. The KnitIn still takes place in the church every Monday afternoon, with a maximum of about 5 people (its first get-together in March was via Zoom). Fortnightly (sometimes weekly) Zoom Bible Studies have seen a big increase in numbers, including

people from the UK, the USA and Germany. Various other Christian education groups have met 'in person' but distanced: Book Groups, 20s-30s discussions, a 'Further in the Faith' study group.

The monthly Coffee Mornings, for 20-25 people, took place in the church in July, August and September, but will not meet in October. And the men's group has met once or twice—a small group playing bowls on the grassy Museum Square.

Money Matters

Since March there have been various changes in church income. On the whole, collections have gone down significantly, of course. But donations to the ERC have gone up.

There were several concerts and weddings planned for the months since March, and all but one wedding were cancelled or postponed. In the past six months there have been three hirings of the church: one wedding and two funeral services (neither Covid related).

Since our former Treasurer, Thorsten Konig, has left Amsterdam to pursue his study for the ministry in Glasgow, we have a new Treasurer, Charles Vanderpuye. Charles has taken his duties smoothly and efficiently in this strange and difficult time..

Lay Assistant

For about two years we had received funding from the Salvesen Trust to pay for a Lay Assistant. Veronica Garcia-Robles, an American married to a Dutch national, had assumed the duties for this. She organised the Sunday School materials and teachers, assisted the Junior Church group and organised gatherings for the 20s-30s group. She also put together monthly Taizé services together with our Catholic neighbours across the courtyard.

Now that the Salvesen grant has ended, Veronica gets to be a regular ERC member again. But she will still be involve with some of her formerly 'official' duties.

Mulanje Connection

One of our online services featured Dr. Arie Glas, medical director at Mulanje Mission Hospital. On 10 May Arie joined the service to preach and to fill us in on the situation in Mulanje and Malawi. Being in a vulnerable position, in a poor country with few

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medical options available to the population, the
Mission is of course more important now than ever.