

Dutch L'Abri branch report for members meeting 2015

2014 is a year that stands out for its many blessings. Where 2013 had been financially difficult because of issues with our charitable status, we had no shortages or salary cuts in 2014. We've also been blessed with a general sense of harmony in the team and some good helpers in the course of the year. The spring and summer terms were both maximally busy while in the fall term we had somewhat reduced guest numbers. This has also been true for the most of the spring term of 2015 though the last weeks of term were very busy again. As for this last point it is worth mentioning that though long term guests were fewer, the theme weekends were very well attended also the Utrecht lecture and film evenings were reasonably well attended though we sometimes had a feeling of hit and miss in this regard.

Program:

Over the last year the Dutch l'Abri has had three regular terms:

12 May – 4 August

8 September – 8 December

6 January – 6 April

The fall and spring terms each included a 5 day midterm break.

The programmed activities in Eck en Wiel included a total of 12 theme weekends and two work weekends. Theme weekends typically consisting of three lectures, a movie discussion and a service,.

The themes of these weekends:

- The riddle of Revelations: Dystopic or hopeful?
- How people grow...being human is to become human
- Arts weekend: Silver trumpets!
- Are all religions equal
- Film weekend: Alienation
- Compassion the new religion
- The art of uncertainty
- Film weekend: Connection
- Why I am not agnostic
- Seeking meaning... The art of holding on
- Film weekend: 'It is what it is....'
- Connecting: A lost art?

In Utrecht there were a total of 15 evening lectures and 12 movie discussion evenings (there are no Utrecht activities in June and July)

The lecture titles included:

May mini-lecture series:

- The meaning of history. How should we read Revelations? Wim Rietkerk
- Images of the apocalypse in movies. Henk Reitsema
- The end of history: not an end but a fulfilment. Wim Rietkerk

Fall lecture series:

- Compassion the new religion. A response to the work of Karen Armstrong. Wim Rietkerk

- Compassion according to the Dalai Lama. Is there a difference between compassion and pity? Robb Ludwick
- Compassion or care? Issues relating to life and death. Henk Reitsema
- 'Holy corners' in our thinking. What am I at least reasonably certain of? Robb Ludwick
- Expectations and what they do for our ability to experience God. Henk Reitsema
- Faith and doubt: Real enemies? Wim Rietkerk

Spring lecture series:

- The art of letting go revisited: Is it resignation? Wim rietkerk
- 'Help me in my unbelief' part 1: Doubt as freedom. Robb Ludwick
- Beyond apathy: How postmodern are we still? Henk Reitsema
- Utopia or Prophecy: about extravagant expectations. Wim Rietkerk
- 'Help me in my unbelief' part 2: Doubt as barrier. Robb Ludwick
- Easter in the history of Classical music. Henk Reitsema

Special projects

Though there have been many maintenance items that could be mentioned the ones that stand out are the investment in two woodstoves. Hans van Seventer who had been a worker here with his wife back in the early seventies, came and helped us install a woodstove in the chapel, and while he was at it, did a lecture for our students. In the main house we installed a new woodstove that is connected to the central heating system. It has a heat exchanger in the smoke channel that heats the water in the radiators. This is helping us achieve a significant reduction of our gas costs. Leon Spithoven who often does maintenance work for us, gifted us with his time for this project.

On another front we developed a streaming server for the audio lectures with the help of Folkert De Jong and Andrew Moise de Chaterreu. This has by now become an export product of the Dutch LÁbri.

In closing, we are exceedingly thankful for God's blessing over our work and thankful to be able to take on this challenge together.