

Branch report Dutch L'Abri 2016-17

To start with I will mention the features of the past year that stand out:

I think the most noteworthy observation is that the fall term 2016 was one of the busiest terms (in terms of number of guests) that we have had in a good number of years. This was a great encouragement to us.

My second observation is one that we used for an overarching theme of our lecture series in Utrecht in the Spring term, that is that increasing numbers of our guests suffer from anxiety, some even from full blown anxiety disorders. The Utrecht series of lectures was attended unusually well indicating that indeed many recognise this phenomenon.

My third observation is that our finances have been more *even-keel* than in recent years. No really major gift amounts but overall stability in giving from a large number of donors. It is not that we are seeing a surplus but that our needs are being well met.

Workers

Our team has been stable as ever with the current configuration being intact for at least 15 years. Wim has handed over the responsibilities of coordinating the branch to Robb and Henk but together Wim and Greta are present as ever in our Monday workers meetings and Wim is doing his share of lecturing both in Utrecht and at the theme weekends.

Beryl has been very active in her local church, the ICF Veenendaal, providing stability as they have gone through the process of saying farewell to the pastor who started their church and finding a replacement for him. Her contribution to our community life with special mention of the bookkeeping side of things, has been invaluable.

The Ludwicks have gotten to see their kids flourish as they work hard at school and Miriam will also be going to high school this coming year. Both Christa and Robb have done their share of speaking outside of the l'Abri context during the year. Christa remains involved with local school boards and committees, and Robb remains on the advisory board of Veritas Netherlands and has joined the board of ArtWay.

The Reitsema's are steeling themselves ☺ for Babette to go to university in the fall. She intends to go to the University College in Utrecht which we are pleased with. The past year has had its tough sides for us as a friend who went through a stage of psychological instability spent a lot of time with us here at l'Abri, made an end to his life shortly after he left us. For the rest the year has been full with responsibilities, Riana being involved with the organizing core group of a ministry amongst women in the local region, Henk being Chair of the eldership at the ICF Wageningen, and the usual speaking engagements and input in the anti-euthanasia movement, along with some other board responsibilities.

Projects

We have gotten to resurface the long driveway with a new layer of tar, something that was long overdue, paint the outside of the house in Utrecht, and complete a lean to structure over the length of the back of the barn for wood storage. Also we have installed a new gas-powered central heating for the main house, to work in tandem with the woodstove that is also connected to the central heating, this was to replace the huge old gas furnaces in the basement, dating from the early 80's.

Themes and activities

The theme weekends in Eck en Wiel and movie nights and lecture evenings in Utrecht have been well attended (more than in the previous year). This coming term our overarching theme will be freedom and autonomy as the Netherlands has such an extreme bias towards absolute autonomy as is clear with the new *Completed Life* discussion.

In the summer last year we dealt with a variety of themes, *The art of holding on*, *The self(ie) obsessed generation*, *The roots of evil*, *boundaries etc.*

In the fall term we did a series in Utrecht on the impact of the Christian heritage on the city of Utrecht called *Speaking Stones*, and harvested related themes from that for our theme weekends.

All in all it has been a good year in terms of the l'Abri and we are very thankful to the Lord for his provision for our work.

Henk Reitsema