**Dutch l’Abri Annual Report 2022**

In many ways since last April it has felt like we’ve gone back to ‘business as usual’, with busy terms, international guests and a good rhythm in the house. We are thankful for many points in the past several months.

**Property**

We have done a lot of work on the property this past year. Installing a new heat pump system, connecting new solar panels (a few more soon to come), and burning a lot of our own wood helped offset some of the rising energy costs. We have been a bit more deliberate with our care of the woods in general, working on the biodiveristy and brainstorming about how we could try some elements of the growing ‘food forest’ trend. We have also just spoken this week with an architect and Dutch l’abri fan who would like to create and build a ‘forest chapel’ for us with a grant from a recent prize he has won. It is satisfying to work on the unity of the property and mission in these ways.

Our biggest project, however, has been renovating the stairs and rooms on the top floor of the main house, a long-needed update. The carpet was expensive, but we received some timely gifts and see it as an important long-term investment in our hospitality! We do have some other pressing upkeep needs, and the Utrecht house continues to require regular repairs. We are praying for the right priorities and gifts to decide what is next.

**Program**

Last year we began an experiment in Eck en Wiel, rather than 3 intense theme weekends per term with 3 new lectures, a film and a service, we would instead offer six ‘hybrid’ weekends per term: one new lecture on Saturday morning, with day guests welcome to stay for lunch, and the regular l’Abri weekend schedule (always a lecture Friday evening, a film Saturday evening, a service Sunday morning) for anyone who wants to make a weekend of it. It was very successful and we repeated it for two more terms now. It gives each new lecture its own ‘spotlight’, spreads the intensity out a bit more and integrates the weekends more with our ongoing residential work. As we have had increasingly more long-term international guests again, this has been helpful in maintaining a more steady rhythm. Interestingly, there have been on average many more people coming out to Eck en Wiel for a day lecture and lunch, than there are attending our evenings in Utrecht (with the same new lectures). That is a new trend and we are praying how to read it.

We continue to see a lot of people disappointed with church, a large number who even as solid believers have not returned to services since the lockdowns. There is also a growing interest in ‘new spirituality’, leaving traditional forms and some traditional doctrines behind. We have also had more and more groups wanting to come for a retreat or a weekend, and we have learned to set some conditions for those: a relational link, at least one ‘organizer’ who has been to l’Abri before, and that they must take part in our regular rhythm with the other guests.

**Finances**

We are very thankful for how the finances have been blessed. We have seen steady donors continue and new ones begin from all generations, offerings from different churches, legacy gifts in last will and testaments, and two very large anonymous gifts. Beryl continues to help us with the monthly books and together with Henk applied for some important ‘paybacks’ from government taxes. The coming year could become more tight as we have spent more than usual on projects, energy and food costs, and three full household salaries. But we feel very carried and cared for by God through our givers.

**Prayer**

We would appreciate prayer in the coming year for a few larger themes. We are in the final year of Arthur and Mika’s work visa and pray for guidance about their calling in l’Abri and how to follow that. As there will be no l’Abri activities in Utrecht in the summer term (as always) and after a meager two seasons of evenings, we pray for guidance about the house and the work there. And that we each as households approaching ‘new chapters’ of emptier nests, fuller nests and older age would sense God’s active leading and nourishment.

Again very happy to host those who could come this year and missing those who could not, for the Dutch team,

Robb Ludwick

From the program in Utrecht and Eck en Wiel over the past year:

Wim The Uniqueness of Europe

Building Bridges for the Gospel (series based on N.T. Wright’s ‘Broken Signposts’)

Reflections on Life’s Direction and Destination

Film in Utrecht: ‘The Intern’

Henk Digital Technology and Spirituality

Freedom and Power: Do My Feelings Tell Me Who I am? (Broken Signposts series)

Does Art Make the World a Better Place?

Films in Utrecht: “Loving Vincent’, ‘Free Guy’, ‘C’mon C’mon’

Robb Why Stress is Good

The Search for Beauty and Spirituality in Nature (Broken Signposts series)

Personality Redeemed

Films in Utrecht: Del Toro’s ‘Pinocchio’, ‘My Octopus Teacher’, ‘Honeyland’

Christa Love and Relationships: the Search for Restoration (Broken Signposts series)

Arthur Images of Christians in Pop Culture

Everybody Wants to Rule the World: Justice in an Unjust World (Broken Signposts series)

‘It’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas… but it’s summer?’ Christian Traditions Around the World

Films in Utrecht: ‘The Two Popes’, ‘tick, tick…Boom!’, ‘To Kill a Mockingbird’

Mika Purpose-Driven Work versus Work-Driven Purpose

Film in Utrecht: ‘King Richard’