

In Touch

in Christmas Time 2020/2021

Newsletter of All Lutheran Church of Brussels
Series 14 — Number 2 — www.alcb.be



ALL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF BRUSSELS



EDITORIAL

Dear Members and Friends of our All Lutheran Church of Brussels,

Here comes Number 2 of the new series of our newsletter “In Touch” – to stay in touch with you also during Christmas time. Apart from the usual devotion, information about the current time of the Ecclesiastical Year, and services, you will find the “restart” of our series about our members. The way is led by Mark, long-time member, and member of our Church Board. And you will find also information about OASIS. – We have already celebrated Christmas when you read this newsletter. The first time ever or at least for many years with two services – one digital and one “hybrid” with 12 people in the church and several more at home. We are still living in strange times. On the one hand we can be thankful for all the great technique that we can celebrate services with more people than would be allowed to meet with in the church and which offers new possibilities. On the other hand, the fellowship among us without meeting in person, chatting, having a cup of coffee after the service, and not least without Holy Communion is under pressure. There is hope that it will change in a few months. Let us try to stay in touch during these hard times. There is no power in the world which can take us out of God's hand. There, we are bound together as brothers and sisters. In this spirit,

Yours Pastor Johannes





Recently, we met our new future neighbours from across the street of our house. A friendly expat family. When we said hello to each other and when I stepped over to the other side of the street to meet them, the man reached out his hand to shake hands with me. I was irritated for a second. After almost nine months of not shaking hands with anybody else, it was an odd situation. But brains sometimes work fast, and my brain said to me: in the car you have disinfection gel, come on, shake hands! – It was a nice feeling to shake hands with someone, I can tell you! It is such an important gesture in our culture to greet someone in a friendly manner. (Of course, it is important to keep distance and we should not shake hands at the moment. But we should not forget that it is not the “normal way” – it is an important exception in difficult times.) More than ever during the last year, this moment showed me how important it is to have some “social proximity”. – Then the man said to us: “You don’t have to worry, because all the four of us have been infected with Covid19.” Thanks be to God that the virus did not hit them too hard. They won’t spread the virus and they cannot be infected again for the moment. Whew! What a relief!

If such a small gesture of a handshake can be such a relief, when you know there is no danger, just a friendly meeting, how much more precious is it to be gently touched, embraced when you are isolated and in darkness, when you should not be touched by someone else because you are so infectious? Right this is the message and the case of Christmas: Down to earth, in the darkness of this world and in the darkness of your life, the almighty, radiant God comes and moves in. If God were just a baby in nappies in the crib, it would not be sufficient. But He grew up and met people, not just in the house across the street but in *your house*. He turned to the needy, touched especially the sick, the infectious, the isolated – to bring healing and salvation from the deadly disease of our sin. A disease which causes so much “social distance”, harm to others and me, which destroys life and brings death. It was not necessary to say for Jesus “Don’t worry, I am immune.” No, the opposite was the case. Jesus Christ says to you: “Infect me with all your sickness! Give it to me in exchange of cure. I will struggle through all your diseases for you.” The wood of the crib became the wood of the cross. Then, the way which began on Christmas, arrived at its destination. With the moment of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ into our world, hope was born. A hope which is stronger than any affliction. I wish you that you may also – by listening to the wonderful Gospel of Christmas and the following Sundays, by singing the old, rich and strong hymns – be gently touched and vaccinated by this hope to receive the strength for your everyday life and that the light of Christmas will shine brightly into all your darkness. *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”* (John 3, 16)

Yours Pastor Johannes



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*The Son of God
became a man
to enable men to
become the sons
of God.* CSLEWIS

CHRISTMAS TIME

Christmas time begins with Christmas Eve. Right in the darkest days of the year, with the longest nights, we celebrate the “feast of the light”. The “second important feast” of Christianity after Easter is verifiably celebrated “only” since the 4th century when

the Christian faith became the legal, official religion in the Roman Empire. Since the beginning, two dates were celebrated. Already around the year 200, the 6th (or 10th) January was commemorated as the day of Jesus Christ’s Baptism. In the Orthodox traditions of the Eastern Church, it is until now the main Christmas Day and, in several countries (Italy, Spain...), the children receive their presents on this day. We celebrate the 6th of January as “Epiphany” (Greek for “appearance”), when we celebrate that the human child of the crib is God at the same time – “two natures in one person” as it is said in theology about Jesus Christ. The 25th of December was before in the pagan Roman Empire the main day of the cult of the god of the sun (“sol Invictus” = undefeated sun) because it is around midwinter, when the sun increases again. A perfect day to also celebrate Christmas on this day to show who actually is the bright light which shines in the darkness: Jesus Christ!

The main theme of the Christmas time and many Bible passages for this time is light. The light of the Christmas Star, the light of a candle, the light of the Transfiguration (= when Jesus Christ is shown and declared as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world; especially commemorated at the “Last Sunday after Epiphany”). This light is the symbol for the Gospel of Christmas. A light which illuminates the world and brings hope, as Jesus says himself: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me

will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” – Therefore, we light many candles and the lights on the Christmas tree. The liturgical colour in this time is white (and gold) for Christ, the salvation, and peace with God.

The Christmas time has two ends, if one may say so. One is the already mentioned “Last Sunday after Epiphany” or “Sunday of the Transfiguration” end of January or beginning of February. The other end is the feast of “The Purification of Mary and the Presentation of the Lord”. It is always on 2nd February, 40 days after Christmas, according to the Biblical (Jewish) law when a male firstborn must be offered and released in the Temple and the mother must do a “cleaning ritual” after giving birth. Traditionally celebrated with many candles, which shows the short name “Candlemass”.

Then follows the time of “Pre-Lent” as a period of transition to Lent.

MEMBERS' PAGE

Getting in touch with each other

I am Mark. I have lived in Brussels for 22 years; originally I am from South Africa. Half my adult life I was Roman Catholic, the other half Lutheran, i.e., Confessional Lutheran. I worked in the electronics and telecommunications sectors for 37 years. Currently I am designing a high end audio amplifier product range with hopes of commercial success.

I am married 37 years and have two adult children. I love music, and all animals, but especially cats. :)

At the moment, I am the only Elder of ALCB.





FROM THE CHURCH BOARD

As written in the last newsletter, the Church Board has dwindled to two remaining members, the Pastor and Mark. During the next Annual General Meeting we will elect one or, even better, two more new Elders. We have already one candidate: Erland is willing to stand for election and we are very pleased about it. Thank you beforehand!

The work contains to feel “a bit more responsible” for the congregation than the “normal” members by taking care of the processes on Sunday for example, or welcoming newcomers. Mainly it contains to support the Pastor with discussions and in decision-making (for example to decide when and where services shall take place or when services must be cancelled or what we want to spend money on). The Church Board meets unregularly a few times per year (per Zoom at the moment) and communicates apart from that via email. It is your chance to shape the church and to implement new ideas! Come, discover and use your talents! Please consider if this could be a job for you or suggest people from our congregation.

On Advent 4 we could enjoy the new purple altar antependium. It was a

donation to the congregation because the two old purple antependia we took over from the closed Lutheran congregation of Nestau in Germany are very old, a bit “shabby” and have German inscriptions. We hope and pray that it may be a solemn help to show the significance of our worship services and to help meditating the message of the Gospel. The next period we will see and use it is Lent.



Please pray for...

...that the vaccinations against Covid19 will be secure and successful to help and protect without bad side-effects.

...all who suffer from loneliness and isolation that they may find comfort in the Gospel of the “God with us” and that they endure until the time when we can meet again.

...all who suffer from manifold sicknesses that they will recover and more than that will find comfort in the insight that salvation is more than physical health.

...for all travellers that they have a safe journey.

...for the work of OASIS, especially among us here in Belgium.

...for the new year to come that it may be a year of blessing for the world.



Following Services

For the time being we must expect more services under restrictions. This means maximum 10 or maybe 15 people in the church and the rest joining from home via Zoom. We will do our best to broadcast the service with the best technique we can organise. From January on we should have a better laptop available to use the great camera and the mics in the German Church. Please let us know your experiences from joining the services via Zoom! Are they easy to follow or too long? How is the broadcasting quality? The following services are an advanced planning and must still be confirmed. The information given by the usual emails is the valid one.

Date	Sunday (Day)	Service (tbc!)	Topic
24.12	Christmas Eve	17:00 online devotion	Don't be afraid! God is in the world
25.12	Christmas Day	15:00 Service /Woluwe	Joy and peace to the world!
26.12	Boxing Day / St. Stephen	no service/devotion	Christmas for everyday life
27.12	1 st S. after Christmas	no service/devotion	Christmas changes people
01.01	New Year's Day	17:00 online devotion	Going with God into the new year
03.01	2 nd S. after Christmas	15:00 Service in Woluwe	Jesus is more than the child
06.01	Epiphany	17:00 online devotion	Worshipping the God and King
10.1.	1 st S. after Epiphany	15:00 Service /Woluwe	Jesus redeems
17.1.	2 nd S. after Epiphany	15:00 Service /Woluwe	Jesus brings joy
24.1.	3 rd S. after Epiphany	15:00 Service /Woluwe	Jesus loves and heals
31.1.	Transfiguration	15:00 Service /Woluwe	Jesus Christ, true God & Saviour



community. choice. hope.

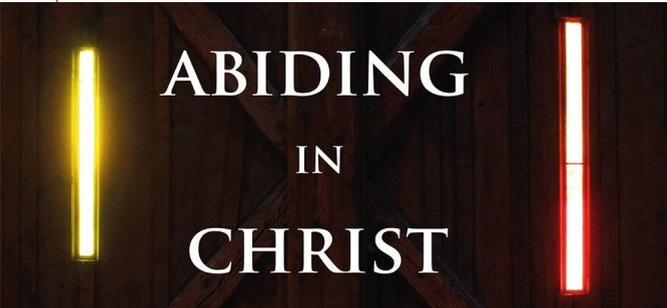
[OASIS]

In September we could welcome Reverend Phil Lane, the leader of OASIS Belgium, in our service. He shared the Gospel impressively with us in his sermon about the passage how Jesus feeds the four thousand (Mark 8, 1-9) and afterwards he gave us a report about OASIS and their work. OASIS is a Christian aid organisation, originally from the UK. "In Belgium, they run projects supporting the children of people without papers, helping them to stay in school, eat well and have stable accommodation whilst helping the parents to regularise their papers and find work. They also run a project that help women who have been trafficked to come out of exploitation, find community and employment. This project has also started to work with women experiencing domestic violence as a result of having immigrated to Belgium for marriage. For Oasis Belgium, the issue of excluded and lonely elderly people is also very important, so we have a project which helps to connect isolated elderly people to community." (quoted from the OASIS website) If you would like to know more about OASIS or if you would like to contact Rev Lane or donate, you may visit the website <https://oasisbe.com>

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2021

Since 1968, the working group “Faith and Order” of the World Council of Churches and the Roman-Catholic Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity organise each a year a worldwide week when around the globe local churches come together for an ecumenical service and pray for unity among Christians. In the northern hemisphere the week always takes place in the third week of January. Because this week is in the middle of the summer holidays in the southern hemisphere, they celebrate it traditionally at another time. Each year’s week stands under a Biblical word and theme. Since 1969, the week has been prepared in different countries and since 1975 one special group of Christians from a specific country or world region has prepared the material from their perspective. Last year, for example, the Christian churches from Malta prepared the material and liturgy under the theme “They showed us unusual kindness” (Acts 28:2) building on the story, when the Apostle Paul shipwrecked in Malta, combined with the Christian attitude to welcome foreigners, refugees and outcasts in their midst. This time, the week’s theme is „Abide in Christ“ (John 15) and the liturgy is prepared by the “Community of Grandchamp” in Switzerland. It is something like the female branch of the community of Taizé, a female, ecumenical Monastery, with a timeless, pure spirituality. – Traditionally, our church joins the local services on the Tuesday of this week in the region of Tervuren/Overijse with the local Roman Catholic congregations, the local Belgian Protestant congregation and the Anglican St. Paul’s church of Tervuren. This year, it is Pastor Johannes’ turn to preach in the service. The service is always bilingual Dutch/English. On the Thursday of this week, ALCB joins usually the very big service in Brussels with many different churches who are active in the city. – Due to the pandemic, it is not yet clear in which form the services will take place but in any case, whether personally in a church or “digital” via Zoom, you are warmly invited to join this important prayer service as Jesus Christ says it in the Gospel (John 17, 20-21): “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their

word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”



ABIDING
IN
CHRIST



Services

Usually each Sunday at 15:00
in the German Protestant
„Emmaus-Church“,
Avenue Salomé 7
in 1150 Woluwe-Saint-Pierre

Evangelisch-Lutherse Kerk in België – All Lutheran Church of Brussels

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The Evangelisch-Lutherse Kerk in België and as part of it the ALCB is a registered, legal church body in Belgium and part of the „Belgian Council of Churches to the State of Belgium.“

