

In Touch

in Advent 2020

Newsletter of All Lutheran Church of Brussels
Series 14 — Number 1 — www.alcb.be



ALL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF BRUSSELS



EDITORIAL FROM THE PARSONAGE

Dear Members and Friends of our All Lutheran Church of Brussels, after three months you finally hold a new “In Touch” newsletter “in your hands” respectively you read it on your computer, tablet, or phone. I am very sorry that the newsletter has not been published more regularly during the last year.

I have already started now into my fourth year as an “interim pastor” of ALCB on the basis “to do what I am able to do.” What this precisely means you can read under “Financial Situation”.

Especially this waning year was an incisive year for the congregation and for me personally as well, not alone because of Covid19.

The congregation has changed a lot through several departures and accrual, also in its character. In just one year we have lost (or will lose very soon) 19 members – and all were active members. The departures also affect our Church Board - you can read more on that further below. On the other hand, we welcomed 7 new members among us who enrich our services.



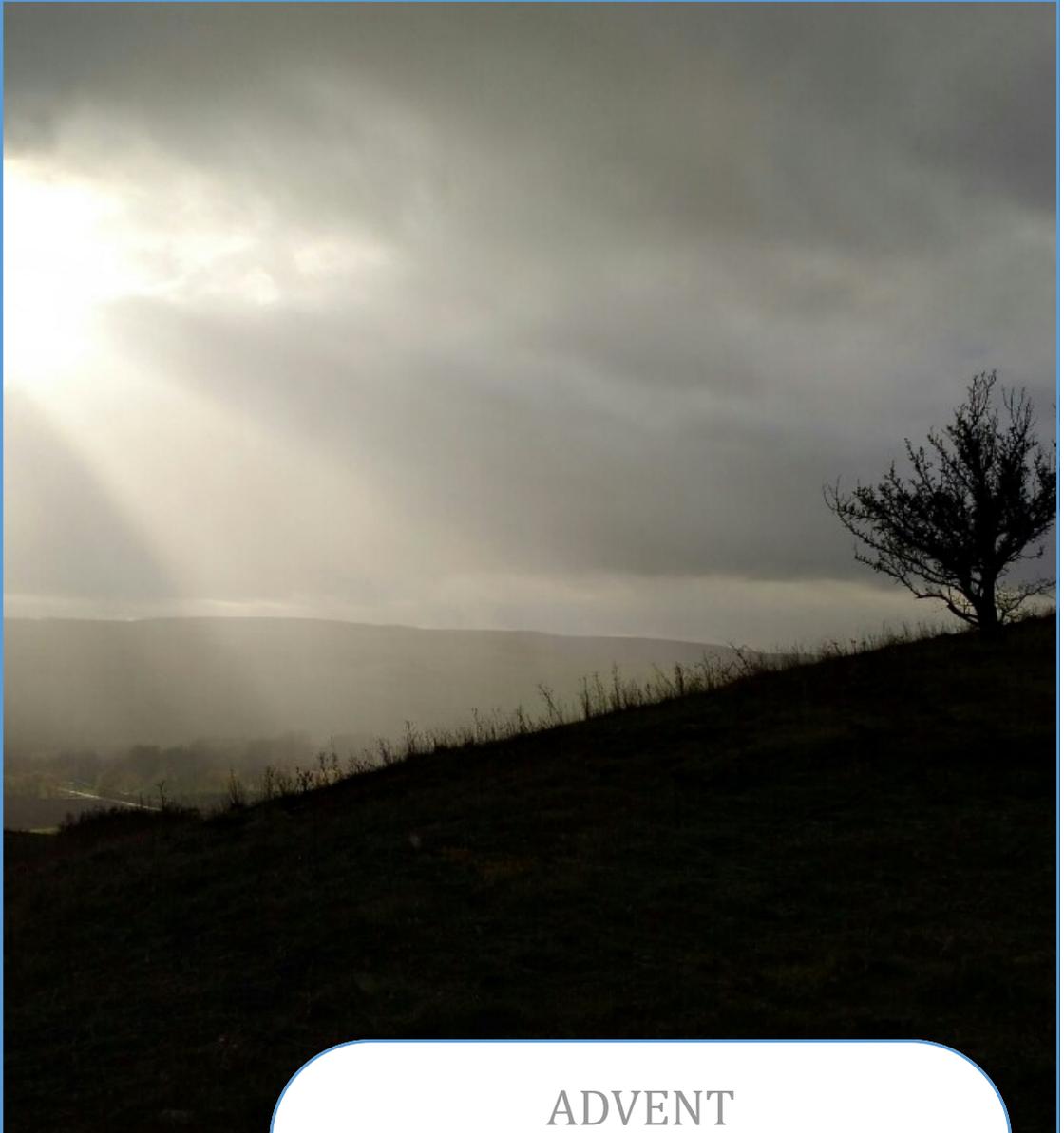
“Disrupted” services – without Holy Communion at the moment, just few mask-wearing people in church and sometimes few, sometimes more at home via Zoom. – In any case, it was a busy year, organising and learning new techniques for internet services, caring for the personal needs of and trying to stay in contact with the scattered members by personal address, planning services appropriate for online *and* local use, not to mention the private challenges.



All this led me to the decision to “rework” or “adapt” this newsletter which was started on a monthly basis in 2008. The idea is to publish one newly designed newsletter according to the different church year seasons (six numbers per year). – Please let me know your opinions and feelings about it!
To your ministry,

Yours Pastor Johannes

If you want to meet others, get in touch with friends, family, and especially new contacts of course, you need a “channel”, how the communication scientists say. This could be a digital channel like a telephone link or a Zoom call. But a much better and more direct channel in this sense is a face-to-face meeting and a talk, and in a broader sense also a physical touch, a friendly handshake, a gentle hug, a heart-warming kiss. Through these channels we can hear, see, and sense: I am not alone. There is someone else related to me, hopefully friendly and devoted to me. We need such communication with others like clear water and healthy food. Without such communication channels to others we get sick very fast. In these times with restricted community, masks, “social” distance, a direct, human communication is limited, thrown back to the basics. A poor, provisional communication. Nevertheless, it seems to be necessary to protect our community in general. However, we hope and pray that we can get back to a normal life as soon as possible. It is so necessary to build bridges across the gaps of limited communication, across these “broken channels”. – This limited communication we experience now could be a good picture for our lives, our contacts to our neighbours and to God. We are limited to meet our neighbour with the helping fondness he needs, we are limited by our sin to meet with God. Remaining in this status for a longer time makes us sick, remaining in it forever means death. We need someone who builds a bridge for us to fix the broken channel, to cross the limiting gaps between each other and especially to God. The one is Jesus Christ. Therefore, He was sent to earth on Christmas like a mighty technician, like a genius scientist who invents the right vaccination against this lethal virus called sin. In this dark time God breaks through the darkness with His living light.



© Susi Schaefer—Thanks!

ADVENT TIME TO BUILD BRIDGES

He builds a bridge across the abyss of sin and death from heaven to earth. It has happened once and it became reality for you too today, now, in each service, in each speaking Bible phrase, in each prayer, in each touching spiritual song, it happens even in your small chamber.



Angels and Prophets of old proclaim the near salvation. Listen to it, when it says *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he”* (Zachariah 9, 9) and *“Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.”* (Psalm 24, 7)! God comes to look you directly and friendly into your eyes, He speaks to you, like the Archangel Gabriel once spoke to Mary, He talks to you and says:

*“Straighten up and raise your head,
because your redemption is drawing near.”*



Since April we have used Zoom to broadcast services and devotions and for meetings. The Church Board evaluated the system and decided to keep it for the time being. Especially under the current restrictions it is the only possibility to keep services running. The license for a year amounts to €154. Nevertheless, we know that the technique and the use of it could be improved. *Please let us know your experiences, ideas, and wishes!*

Member's page

Due to data protection (and because the membership list is rather incomplete) we “close” the overview about the birthdays of our members. But the idea is to re-start the former series to introduce people in our midst. It will start with the next number and more space.



FROM THE CHURCH BOARD

Because of the highly changed composition of our congregation here is some short information about “who we actually are,” because we are no lonely strangers as it may sometimes seem.

We are and have community and a history. Our congregation was established about more than 40 years ago as “American Lutheran Church of Brussels”, short “ALCB” by US-American Christians who had also a pastor from the USA until the 90s. Right from the beginning they met in the German Protestant Church in Woluwe and even Raymond has played the organ since then. In 1992 the congregation lost its pastor and got in touch with Pastor van Hattem from Antwerp who took over the ministry. In this time, we had service fortnightly, but always with a pot-luck dinner afterwards or at least coffee. Because the composition of the congregation changed and more people from other countries came, the congregation changed its name from “American” into “A// Lutheran” (which explains the incorrect grammar). ALCB became a “branch” or “daughter congregation” of the Lutheran congregation of “Heilige Drievuldigheid” (“Holy Trinity”) in Antwerp, at this time part of the “Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Synod of France and Belgium” and a “confessional Lutheran” congregation, embedded in the worldwide “International Lutheran Council” which currently has 45 full and 15 associating or observing members, representing over 7 million Lutherans.

ALCB is officially still “just” a branch of Antwerp and not its own legally acknowledged congregation. In May 2002, the congregation of Antwerp (and therewith also Brussels) became independent from the French synod and established its own church body, the “Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Belgium”. The church is an officially registered church body in Belgium and receives a financial substitution to pay a pastor.

In November 2007 we started a mission project in Brussels together with our partner churches in the USA and Germany who financed it for the biggest part. Pastor Matthias Tepper was sent to build up a congregation which could provide for itself. Since then

we offer weekly services. After ten years we had to stop this project without having reached the ultimate goal. In summer 2017 Pastor Matthias was called back to Germany. Because we had an ordained Lutheran theologian in ALCB with Pastor Johannes, he has taken over the ministry for the time being. Until today he does it just as an “interim pastor” and has not been officially called by the congregation. Meanwhile, we as ALCB applied also to be a legally recognised congregation to receive full salary for a pastor but have been waiting for it for almost four years now...



Since the beginning, ALCB has been a church for (Lutheran) foreigners, as our church flag motto says: “Anchored in the Lord, Called to Brussels”. The lion’s

share of our members were expats, living in Brussels just for very few years, with well paid jobs and not much time during the week to be more involved, but very faithful attendees in the services. During the last few years this changed. Now we have quite a few “long-term members” who have been living in Brussels for many years, who may be (by now) Belgian citizens, who have “normal” or even no jobs.

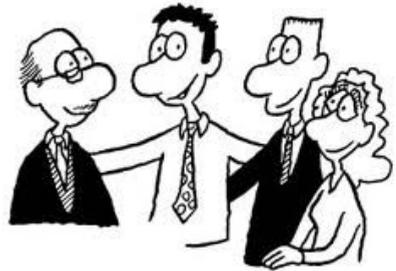
ALCB also has a constitution. This says that the congregation is led by a Church Board of three members plus the pastor. For about two years we have had just two elders - Wendy and Mark - plus the pastor. Now, sadly we must say goodbye to Wendy who is moving back to Germany with her family. **Therefore we need at least one, better two new candidates. The next election would take place at the Annual General Meeting in spring 2021. Could you imagine serving our church as an Elder or do you have a proposal who could? Please contact the Pastor or Mark!**



Wendy

A CHURCH ALIVE

As you know, we have no offers during the week, no Bible-Study-Group, no “Men’s Circle”, or a choir or whatever. Even the weekly Evening Prayer we had until the summer break has not started yet again. This has different reasons: On the one hand there was always just little attendance, and on the other hand it was too much for the Pastor to organise, and last but not least it is difficult without having a church hall. But this does not mean that it must remain this way! In fact, there have been always people who search such offers. If you ever would be interested in something (or also if you would like to start something!), please talk to the Pastor! Together we could also emblaze some life into our congregation during the week and find a way how to do! – Especially, if you would like to have a regular online Evening Prayer again, let the Pastor know your wishes and ideas!



Farewells – Welcomes – ...and a Baby!

We are happy to welcome our youngest member **Frederik Lieven**, son of Wendy and Jens, born on 5 November, in our midst and on earth! May God bless and preserve him, his parents, and two older sisters richly for his whole life! – We also welcome our newcomers **Anne and Renaud** from Belgium, **Francesco** from Italy, and the Herfindahl family with **Erland, Esther, Nils, and Ove** from the USA warmly among us. May they find a spiritual home with Brothers and Sisters in our church. – Sadly, we already had to say goodbye to the **Ellingstad family** and the **Kovar family** in summer. They moved on to the next destination respectively back home after several years in Brussels. All the three girls of the Ellingstads and the two oldest girls of the Kovars were confirmed in ALCB. Now we unfortunately have to say goodbye to the Thiede **family** whose two daughters were baptized in our congregation. We wish all of them “Godspeed”!

As mentioned above, we are still waiting for the acknowledgment by the Belgian State as a “real” church to receive substitutions in form of a salary for the Pastor. Now we are still paying our “interim pastor” a small honorarium (about one-third of a normal full net salary). The plan was that he does as much as he can. Momentarily, the Pastor works a bit more than 20 hours per week for the congregation. Next to it, Pastor Johannes teaches religious education at the European Schools for 2,5 hours per week. Because of his current family situation he is not able to do much more for the congregation. Furthermore we have the usual expenses for the rent of the church (each Sunday €87,50) and the fee for the organ player (each Sunday €65), next to purchases or travel costs (€0,25 per km) etc. During the lockdown we could save some money when we did not have services in the church. But generally, apart from that temporary exception, we need usually more money than we have collected during the year. The financial planning for this year displays a needed budget of €18.000 (€1.500/ month). At the end of October we still had savings of around €7.000 with a monthly income of about €800 in September and October. Without this changing (or the official recognition) we will run out of savings in the medium term (second half of 2021).



FINANCIAL UPDATE

Please, if it is possible for you, consider donating to our ALCB regularly each month via bank transfer or offering to make sure that we can keep operating the congregation! Thank you for every Euro!



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.“

