

# In Touch

in Lent 2021

Newsletter of All Lutheran Church of Brussels  
Series 14 — Number 3 — [www.alcb.be](http://www.alcb.be)



ALL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF BRUSSELS



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## EDITORIAL

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

With a few days' delay (my apologies) this new "In Touch" comes to you for the time of Lent. But therefore, it is again packed with articles and information. Spring is upon us, again a bit too early and way too warm. Let's hope and pray that a late frost will not harm the sprouting nature. Like nature we are on the cusp of a change. The vaccinations against Covid have already started, life is regaining one area of life after the next. But the "new peace" is still fragile. Like a late frost can destroy the young plants, we must pay attention not to fall back in fighting the virus. We must stay patient for a little while. But we can also already envisage the time afterwards. It could help to overcome the rest of the pandemic, to lighten the mood, and to strengthen our patience like the sun outside. One goal is to await the feast of Easter when we plan to celebrate Holy Communion again. Another goal could be a nice get-together, our traditional spring picnic, as soon as possible. In this edition you will find, besides the usual spiritual thoughts and information about the time of the year, a presentation of some of our members. Following a long-time member last time, some newcomers this time: Anne and Renaud. And additional to that you will be introduced to members of the first hour, yes, rather founders of ALCB! Recently, I got in touch "coincidentally" and independently of each other with two US families who were here during the 70s and who established our congregation. I wish you all an inspiring lecture and a blessed Lent,

*Yours Pastor Johannes*





The watchword (see box next page!) for the Last Sunday before Lent and Ash Wednesday is Luke 18, 31: Jesus says: “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.” – It is a kind of headline and program for Lent. The human life and the life in faith is a process, like wandering on a long way. Leading sometimes through nice green pastures and sometimes through dark valleys (Psalm 23). Sometimes it is easy to walk, a nice walk, sometimes it is a difficult hike on stony mountain paths. And several times in life we arrive at crossroads where we must choose the right track, or must decide if we go on, even if the way is hard to go. Meanders and detours are usually included. The destination is the unity with God in heaven.

In which direction does my life steer? Which thoughts and longings govern me? Which are the crossroads in my life and which way do I choose? Typically human is it often to forget the positive things, to concentrate on the hardships: sickness, conflict, unemployment, a lack of positive future prospects, broken dreams can lead me off the right track. In the Bible, we find the didactic novel

## **Watchword**

To some of you, the system of “watchwords” is familiar, to some not so much. It is a quite old tradition, originally from the Christian church/group of the so-called “Moravians”. In fact, this Christian denomination comes from two ethnic groups, the Moravians, and the Bohemians. The capital of Bohemia is Prague and both regions are today part of the Czech Republic. Some of them spoke German as their mother tongue and the regions were during the Middle Ages part of the Holy Roman Empire of German Nation and later part of the big Habsburg empire, Austria. Among the Bohemians and Moravians, pre-reformatory movements were very active, foremost the pre-reformer Jan Hus became a leader of them, and they were called “Hussites”. They had the first non-Catholic king in Europe during the 15<sup>th</sup> century. At the beginning of the Thirty Years’ War, they were exiled to protestant regions, Saxony for example, where they built own colonies. One of the landlords who let them settle on his grounds was Nikolaus Earl of Zinzendorf (1700-1760). He supported the Moravians and influenced them by Lutheran, pietist theological positions. Later he became their Bishop. From there, the Moravians established one of the first and biggest Christian Missions in the world and therefore, the Moravians are a worldwide Protestant Church today. On 3 May 1728, they started the tradition of publishing a daily “watchword”, a verse from the Old Testament drawn by lot as a motto for the day. In addition, they set a fitting verse from the New Testament aside the watchword. Since then, the watchwords have been drawn for every day of a year and are distributed all over the world in many languages. The English version is known under the title “The Moravian Daily Texts” and can be found here: <https://www.moravian.org/the-daily-texts/>

In Germany, the tradition became a big influence on the Christian churches and the ecumenical movement. In the style of the Moravian watchwords for each day, an ecumenical commission chooses (not drawn by lot) a watchword for each year and each month. There is also a watchword for each Sunday and new week, usually printed on top of our Sunday service bulletins. It is a kind of title for the Sunday.

about Job (see the book of Job). Job was a blameless, pious, rich man. He was tested by the devil because the devil bet that Job would swear off his faith in God because of all his troubles. But Job did not. He did not want to accept his destiny. He did not see the reason for it. And he started to dispute with God. He knew very well: over all, there is just one master of life and death, the almighty God in heaven. He alone has my life in His hands, and He can change my destiny. If I would swear off God, I would lose the only possibility of life. God alone is the sovereign over all creation. God does not do something because it is right and good, it is right and good because God does it. We can never understand God and His decisions.

The question is how I deal with the life I have. And if we read the Bible precisely, we do not learn that believing in God means to have a better life, better health, more wealth or whatever. The great questions of life and suffering will not be answered in this life and time. This is not promised.

But in the Bible and in the narrative about Job I meet “a God, who does not apathetically bring sufferings over people, but who shares the sufferings which are caused by us and the sufferings not explainable. He becomes personable, “sympathetic” – this means He suffers with us. Sympathy instead of apathy!”, as a Christian writer said it. “Believing means, in desperation measuring the distance to God and by mourning, by praying, by keeping silence, by singing, and by sighing building shelters for the night in which our harmed mind can have a rest and await the dawning day.”

This is what we are doing especially during Lent, and this is what Jesus himself did by praying the Psalms in His agony (Psalm 22, 1-6+11+14-15+19-22):

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?

2 O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.

3 Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.

4 In you our fathers trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them.

5 To you they cried and were rescued; in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

6 But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people. [...] Be not far from me, for trouble is near, and there is none to help. [...] I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. [...] But you, O Lord, do not be far off! O you my help, come quickly to my aid!

20 Deliver my soul from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dog!

21 Save me from the mouth of the lion! You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen!

22 I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you”.

Faith means keeping the faith in God against all temptation. Faith means to choose the track which does not lead away from God (by stopping to join in the community, to pray, to sing, to believe). Lent could be such a crossroad for us. Keep the faith and trust in God,



*Yours Pastor Johannes*

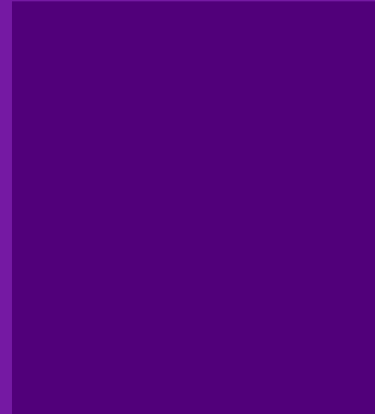


times a bit melancholy services. The liturgical colour of purple underlines this feeling. At first glance the big overall topic is “sin”, our sin, how bad humans can behave towards themselves and each other, and that sin causes death and condemnation.

Sin as the quality of our human existence which propels us to try to live our lives alone, without God. The character to trust the answers of the world and myself more than God. The description of the typical human character of blaming God for a lot of things but forgetting His blessings and that He is sovereign.

The word sin comes from the old Germanic word “sunt/sund”, new English “sound”. It describes a sea gate or strait between shores and is probably also related to the old Nordish word “sundr” which means “divided/separated”.

Sin is primarily not a particular kind of mistake or crime I commit but the description of the status of the relationship between me and God because of my false



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## LENT

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Lent is maybe the most intense and determined time of the Church Year. Seven weeks of more quiet, solemn, some-

acting. My “thoughts, words, and deeds” which do not follow the will and good commandments of God, cause the sin, the gap, and separation from God. And I cannot cross it with my power. If we would remain at this point, just focusing on the/our sin, Lent would be a despairing time indeed. But the important topic behind it is how God reacts to our sin. God wants to rescue us from the godforsaken side of the sound. He wants us to be with Him on His side of life. Therefore, He has sent His son Jesus Christ to cross the gap. He brings word from God and takes the consequences of our sin upon himself. The Holy Spirit creates faith in us – the “cure” against sin. Faith means to have a relationship with God, the opposition to sin. – The time of Lent reminds us of this deed of mercy and love for us by God. Yes, it is a solemn time, but it must not be ruled by grief. The Sundays in Lent are also commemoration days for Easter Sunday. Also in Lent, the Gospel of Life predominates over the Law of sin. Yes, especially when we meditate the reason and kind of Jesus Christ’s rescuing mission because of our sin, the Gospel shines more brightly. Let us take this chance to deepen our understanding and our faith! By the way, the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent is called “Laetare”, “Rejoice” – it is a foretaste of the coming Easter celebration. On this Sunday, the liturgical colour is pink, the purple of Lent lightened by the white of Easter.

The Sundays until Easter and also after Easter have strange traditional Latin names. They consist of one or more words of the particular Psalm of the Sunday and Week. Their names are a sort of title for the topic of the Sunday. There is a mnemonic or memory trick to memorise the Sundays and the right order.

**Invocavit** (“When he calls to me” – Ps 91, 15)

**Reminiscere** (“Remember” – Ps 25, 6)

**Oculi** (“My eyes” – Ps 25, 15)

**Laetare** (“Rejoice” – Is 66, 10)

**Judica** (“Vindicate” – Ps 43, 1)

**Palmarum** (Palm Sunday) (name because of the Palm branches the people used to greet Jesus with)

➤ **In Right Order Learn Jesus’ Passion.**

This mnemonic summarises the subject of Lent in a good way because if we consider or meditate on Jesus’ Passion, his deed for us, we are on the right path, the cross always in our view.



## FROM THE CHURCH BOARD

The nearing spring always means to plan the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of our congregation. Our constitution says it should be held in March. Besides the fact that we are still not legally recognised as an independent “church factory” (as it is called in Belgium) and therefore we are still a part of the congregation in Antwerp, we are not forced by law to have an AGM. This releases us in ongoing times of confinement to find solutions to meet in any case. On the other hand, an orderly held AGM could also be a good tool to strengthen the community of a small congregation like ours.



We meet with each other to build our congregation together, to think about our current situation and to develop ideas and plans for the future. Additionally, we should normally meet to elect a church board.



The constitution envisages three elders for the Board besides the pastor. For about two years we have had just two, recently just one remaining elder. That is not fatal due to the fact that the board has just few things to do. The members of the Board “just” should 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 and communicates apart from that via email.

At the moment, after Wendy's removal back to Germany, Mark is the only member of our Church Board and Erland is willing to stand for election. Due to the situation, and the fact that we are not legally bound to the constitution, **the Church Board decided with President van Hattem to “co-opt” Erland for Wendy instead of holding an election.** Erland will fulfil the period of three years according to the constitution until early 2023. Erland will be installed on the Sunday of the AGM. – If someone else would like to serve as an elder or if someone would like to propose somebody, please contact the Church Board!

Furthermore, the Church Board has discussed and decided to envisage to celebrate **Holy Communion for the first time after months on Easter.** Hopefully, the conditions then will be better than now and it would be a strong sign of a new start and strengthening our community after a long time of “fasting” and after the Passion tide.

Additionally, the Church Board decided to **renew the Zoom license for another year** to continue with the live broadcasts of the service and for all other purposes like evening prayers or meetings. Because the Antwerp congregation also uses the license each Sunday, we will share the costs.

Last but not least, we could envisage to have a **cup of coffee again after service** when the weather is good enough to meet outside!?



**Herewith, the ALCB Church Board duly convenes the Annual General Meeting 2021 for Sunday, 21 March after a shorter service (service starts as usual at 15:00).**

The AGM will be planned as a “hybrid” meeting, some in church, some at home via Zoom.

The preliminary items are:

1. Pastor’s report about 2020
2. Statistics
3. Financial report
5. Perspective 2021
6. Miscellaneous



<b>Date</b>	<b>Sunday (Day)</b>	<b>Service (tbc!)</b>
21.2.	Invocavit	15:00 Service in Woluwe
28.2.	Reminiscere	15:00 Service in Woluwe
07.3.	Oculi	15:00 Service in Woluwe
14.3.	Laetare	15:00 Service in Woluwe
21.3.	Judica	15:00 Service in Woluwe afterwards AGM!
28.3.	Palm Sunday	15:00 Service in Woluwe
01.4.	Maundy Thursday	19:30 online devotion
02.4.	Good Friday	15:00 Service in Woluwe (t
3./4.4.	Easter	15:00 Service in Woluwe (t
11.4.	Quasimodo Geniti	15:00 Service in Woluwe (t

# Following Services

We are still allowed to physically meet with a maximum of 15 people for the services. Empirically, we are usually a bit less. Thanks to the very good, high-quality technique of the German Church and increasing routine, we can broadcast all services with less problems. Together with the people in church and at home, we have been usually around 20 attendees for several weeks – not less than before the pandemic. That is great! Nevertheless, we are looking forward to the end of the confinement, especially for the celebration of Holy Communion. Let us hope and pray that we can celebrate Easter all together at the Lord’s table! – As always: If you have critical remarks, ideas or wishes for the services or if you would like to be more involved in planning and celebrating the services, let the pastor know! He is happy about every response.

	<b>Topic</b>
	The Original Sin
	God has us in mind. We are not forgotten.
	Look ahead to Jesus! There is help.
	Rejoice, there is life after death!
	Jesus serves us and justifies us.
	The King is at hand – redemption near.
	Holy Supper – Jesus sacrifices himself
bc!)	The life, given for us.
bc!)	Great joy! Life overcame death.
bc!)	A new start into life as God’s children.

## Members' Page

### *Anne and Renaud*

Anne says about Renaud and herself: We met 34 years ago and were in love from the beginning, but we went on our different ways throughout marriage and parenthood, work, and



religions. Renaud has now 2 all true and loving sons, of whom he is so proud. I have 4 children living with their Iranian father. A difficult and hurting story...

Renaud is a true generous and wonderful man (here he doesn't agree with me), with a beautiful mind and big question "Am I doing rightly?" (more than "doing well"). Because of this question, he studied philosophy at the university, concluded with a doctoral degree, and he by himself he studied philosophies and religions of the world. He is very much concerned about the racism and censorship coming from "political correctness". His feeling of the infiniteness of ethics, the subject of his dissertation, leads him to engage into social activities like ruling street educator teams, the SAMU Social association for the homeless people.

Not long ago, I escaped very terrible life conditions and I am very grateful that I got in touch again with Renaud who helped me a lot by talking to me, letting me see what true love is and the freedom of speech and thinking. I am thankful for his patience with me. I continue my work as a physician at the Burn Unit of Brussels and thanks to the trustful impulse of Renaud, I am learning hypnosis for victims of trauma of body and soul. Renaud is now a psychoanalyst, ready to help patients from all horizons. He is planning to study Lutheran Theology and is considering becoming a pastor, maybe in prison or for homeless people. Since a few weeks, we have a puppy Jack Russell, called "Winston". As soon as we can, Renaud and I will marry. Even our broken stories need the FATHER's blessing.

### *Linda and Wolfram Kollacks*

Prior to our arrival in late 1975, Lutherans were being served by a visiting military pastor from Frankfurt every few months. Upon our arrival, a former LCA pastor who was working for IBM (Brussels) and was approved by the LCA, offered twice monthly communion services. The follo-



wing year, he was transferred back to the USA, and this required a decision as to whether we could continue to exist. With his connections to LCA, it was logical to appeal to this church body (at this time, the LCMS was embroiled in a controversy begun at the Concordia Seminary resulting in schism). We hoped to establish ourselves as a mission church, and we formed a task force to set this into motion. My husband and I served on this task force.

Our group unanimously wanted to maintain our presence in Brussels, and have weekly services with a full time pastor. Thus, when LCA agreed to sponsor us as a mission church, the fledgling group of 20 active families, called their first pastor. In November of 1976, Pastor Kenneth Nelson and his wife, Judy, arrived to begin their ministry with us. As 1976 drew to a close, average attendance had risen to the 60's, and Christmas Eve found 82 persons in church. In early 1977 the parish began the final preparations for the founding date of the American Lutheran Church of Brussels on May 1, 1977. Prayers through faith had been answered, and our congregation established with a goal of becoming financially self sufficient by 1979.



*Warm regards, Linda and Wolf Kollacks*

*Karen and John Armbrust (The designers of our church flag!)*



We, John, Karen and two elementary aged sons, Trent and Kevin attended worship in the early 80's. Yes, we wore coats and gloves at times but were so thankful for our Belgium Lutheran family! We still are in contact with friends from those days. Our son, Rev. Dr. Kevin Armbrust, Editorial at LCMS Headquarters in St. Louis and Adjunct Professor at the St. Louis Seminary teaching Greek, learned so much during his formative years in worship at ALCB. The US Air Force sent us to Belgium for 3 wonderful years. We travelled back with 10 of our extended family to show the grandchildren where their fathers grew up. Great memories relived. We are now what some call retired, in Manhattan, KS, and are trying to stay well! *In Christ, Karen and John Armbrust*

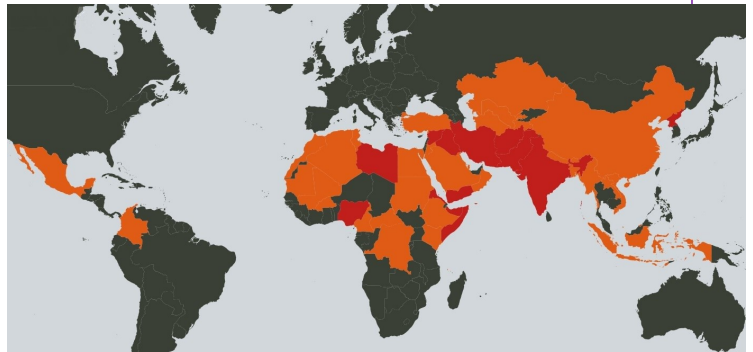


# Open Doors

Serving persecuted Christians worldwide

In the last newsletter, we were introduced to OASIS, a Christian aid organisation which works in Brussels and Belgium in different ways. The 2nd Sunday in Lent is traditionally called “Reminiscere” which comes from Latin and means “Remember me (O Lord)!” It is the call of the forsaken, the needy, the oppressed for relief. For several years, this Sunday has especially been promoted to remember the persecuted Christians in the world –more than 309 million people in the world! Christendom is the most persecuted religious group in the world. Therefore, in this newsletter, we will be introduced to Open Doors. Open Doors is a worldwide organisation that helps Christians who are persecuted because of their faith in Jesus Christ. They work “in over 60 countries, supplying Bibles, training church leaders, providing practical support and emergency relief, and supporting Christians who suffer for their faith [...] and raise awareness of global persecution, mobilising prayer, support and action among Christians.” (from the website of Open Doors UK/Ireland). The roots of Open Doors go back to 1955 when a young Dutchman, later called “Brother Andrew”, travelled through the states of Eastern Europe smuggling Bibles and other Christian scriptures to the persecuted churches in the underground with his little VW Beetle. Open Doors grew into a big international organisation. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, Open Doors

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## 2021 rankings

1 [North Korea](#)

2 [Afghanistan](#)

3 [Somalia](#)

4 [Libya](#)

5 [Pakistan](#)

6 [Eritrea](#)

7 [Yemen](#)

8 [Iran](#)

prioritized its work to Muslim areas. Another hotspot of Christian persecution and for the work of Open Doors is North Korea, the country with the most terrible persecution of Christians. Each year they publish a World Watch List, a ranking of 50 countries where Christians face the most extreme persecution. If you would like to know more about the different tasks of Open Doors, surf to [www.opendoors.org](http://www.opendoors.org) and click on your country/language. We could think about inviting a speaker from Open Doors in the nearer future.

LET'S PRAY...



...that the pandemic can be narrowed down effectively and that we can have more freedom again.

...for 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 the work of our congregation that our ALCB may be blessed with the Holy Spirit and becomes and remains an “anchor place abroad” for many. Let us give thanks for all former members, a thank you for their engagement at ALCB and that they may find a new spiritual home at their new destinations.

...for the work of Open Doors and all who care for our persecuted Christian Brothers and Sisters in the world.

...for all who are persecuted because of their Christian confession that they may stay faithful and keep their faith, hope, and love in Christ Jesus, and for their persecutors that their hearts may be changed to the way of life and that they are hindered in their crimes.

...for a solemn, beneficial Lent season and all of us that we may experience the call to repentance and into the discipleship of 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.“

