

Pastor's Report to 2020 Annual General Meeting of Trinity Church Eindhoven

*Presented by Francis Noordanus
March 2020*

Dear Trinity Church,

This is my 18th opportunity to write a report about what I have been busy with in the proceeding year and say a few things about us as Trinity Church.

We recently bid farewell to a very long-standing member of Trinity Church. Rita Jason left in good time before travel restrictions would have prevented her crossing the Atlantic. Rita would sometimes come to me before a service and ask of me: "Is everything under control?" That question always tickled me. The truthful answer was often: "May-be, but I suspect not!" A similar question to me could be: "Do you know what is happening?" That would also be a: "May-be, but I suspect not!"

It is now at least 5 years since we grew beyond the dynamics of a pastor-centered church when we maxed at 150 on a Sunday and my phone ran hot with first hand communications. What follows are a few things that were significant in the last year. They are more comments from within the Trinity Church Family than perspectives from the top.

I set out to disciple people for Jesus within the life and opportunities afforded by an international church in a post-Christian environment. Looking through that lens it is not obvious how to assess the last year. St Paul says it's like the builder whose quality of work is made clear in the storm or fire of calamity. Even without that level of testing several features do stand out as being significant and worth celebrating.

Trinity met every Sunday for worship until Covid-19 interrupted physical gatherings this month. God's praises were sung, prayers were prayed, sacraments administered, the scriptures were read, expounded and applied. All this took place among adults, youth and children. That was before mingling over coffee, playing in the Sports Hall and sometimes loitering socially in the car-park.

An encouragement is that the number of people taking part in this continues to grow. Putting a number to this arrives at a long-term average of 7% increase in attendance per year. The last figure I had for how many were youth and children is 80. They are not often all together and spread through four ministries or 'congregations'.

This year saw the return of an Alpha program lead by Joan and Hsiang-Ling Schutte. I was very pleased to be involved in the weekend ministry where I saw the fruits of what had happened with the promise of more to come. This was very encouraging to see and I commend Joan and Hsiang-ling for making this happen.

As has become standard practice there was a Council Away Day held in June (see Council Report). A priority set at this day was strengthening the small groups we know as 'cell groups'. Consequently, Barbara and I have been running a number of training sessions to encourage leaders in this vital aspect of our church life. Cell groups are the front line in pastoral connectedness and care when needed. If you are in a cell group please support those who lead and if not, ask Barbara which group you might join?

In May we commended Jo Groenendijk to God's eternal care. She was a very long-term member. Through various circumstances we as Trinity Church took up the role of being her legal family so we could ensure she had a Christian funeral. This was a precious outworking of our church life. It came with some unexpected costs that the Council were prepared to underwrite at short notice. In the event an online appeal through our web facility raised the €4000 needed to cover all costs. It is sobering to realize the extent that Trinity Church can be all the family people have! Jo's passing represents the closing of an era when Trinity Church was an English cultural haven for those shaped in historic forms and styles. With her passing I felt we moved into a new era.

Not long before this AGM the Council, represented by Wardens and myself, were able to sign a role description agreement with Pamela Armstrong for the role of Youth Ministry Pastoral Support Person [YMPSP]. The process towards this was slow requiring much consultation and thought about words and sentences. At the next opportunity, the plan is to prayerfully commission Pamela for this assignment. AGM Sunday was going to be the day before Covid-19 disrupted plans. I look forward to seeing our youth ministries grow in strength and confidence through Pamela's support.

Some churches measure effectiveness with reference to how many pastors or priests they produce. Adult baptisms are another possible indication reflecting a ministry of the Gospel effectively conveying God's call to Christ. In this regard we continue to have two adult baptism services per year in response to people seeking baptism. Another relevant indicator is that we have in the last year and a half sent two parties into global mission. Hwee-Chong continues his service with Operation Mobilization on ship-based ministry while Joe and Anna Beswick were sent out by us to trial a mission assignment in Cape Town, South Africa.

Looking forward I would point to the significant work as reported by the Building Acquisition Committee as a sub committee of Council. A report from this group -which included me- is included for this AGM. Buying a building has in the past been too big a challenge for us to process. It was a wall that we would bounce off. I am now hopeful that the challenges have been scoped and recognized by a group who can take steps forward and pursue opportunities.

For myself I have enjoyed several big experiences in the last year. Barbara and I began 2020 by becoming grandparents. Baby Ada lives in Lausanne, Switzerland and provides a blessing of joy and satisfaction.

Our study tours of archeological sites in Jordan, Israel and Athens in 2019 were very significant. As may have been noticed in my preaching, these experiences provided immediacy and grounding in the world of the Bible as walked by Jesus, Paul and the people of Israel.

Within the wider church I have served the last year as a member of the Archdeaconry Standing Committee and the Diocesan Synod. These wider processes sometimes have relevance to Trinity Church and are good for my wider awareness.

I recently received a message of thanks expressed to me 'and my team'. I found that heart-warming as it appears that Trinity Church reflects a team effort. That is a very welcome observation to receive. I wonder how many people consider themselves part of 'my team' as opposed to simply serving God in their own right or in a lesser vein, doing what they like to do? Mindful of getting it wrong by some I would like to thank all those who serve alongside me as part of my 'team'. I count that collaboration in ministry as very precious. I feel trust and confidence have grown greatly over the years. Thank you to those who support worship in many ways, support fellowship events, attend to the building, serve in administration, sit on Council, at Archdeaconry Synod, and: an extra big thank you to Monica who brings me a life-saving coffee most Sundays at the end of the service.

Few may realize it but living with a pastor can be demanding, so I'd like to thank Barbara my wife and 'Assistant Chaplain'. Her study is in the next room from mine and our coffee breaks are usually consultations around issues and developments. Thank you Barbara.

Thank you for your consideration.

With prayers for Trinity Church to become all it can in God's calling.

Yours, 