



Berdine van den Toren-Lekkerkerker

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Location: Netherlands



What I do: Living a life of mission, both locally in our community and globally as I support Christian leaders in Africa and Asia to resource others.



Empowering people pushed to the edges of life to release their God-given potential

Dear friends,

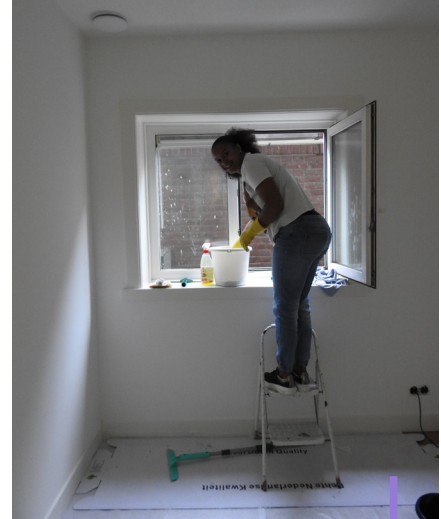
First of all, we wish you peace, hope and blessing for the New Year!

We live in uncertain times, yet in hope as children of another Kingdom.

This time, a letter written by Benno. I realised that it has been quite a while since we have shared some of our family news.

At the threshold of a new year, we look back with gratitude for all we have received. During Christmas, our family was together: Wiger and Wendy with Kayla and Damian, Derk Anne and Alexander, Marten and Tirtsa with Maria, who was born last March. What a joyful gift to them and to us. Derk Anne and Alexander have just bought their first house in Spijkenisse, where they hope to move in April. They will remain near to Wiger and Wendy on the south side of Rotterdam. Marten looks forward to the formal defence of his PhD thesis in February and enjoyed starting a new job with a Dutch mission organisation as relationship manager for Pakistan and Bangladesh. It is good that we now live closer to Benno's parents, who still live by themselves but are in their mid-eighties and increasingly frail.

Building work continues on our house on the Handelskade in Nieuwegein and we were able to move down one floor, to our own apartment. After our move from Groningen to the Utrecht region in 2023, we were able to acquire a large house in which we are now beginning to develop an intentional missional community. The community is called Ondersteboven (Upside Down), a reference to the Song of Mary in which God turns everything upside down, a pattern repeated in the gospels. Over the summer, we welcomed Jaron, Miriam and Amos to live with us and in November, Hannah moved into our temporary apartment. We hope that in the months to come, the renovation of the basement will also be complete, adding one more apartment and a common living area. We are praying for guidance on how our community and this space



Cleaning and preparing our apartment

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**With Jesus
With each other
To the edges**



can be a blessing to the people around us. As a community, we are closely connected to Cross Culture Nieuwegein, a youngish small international Christian community which we joined after our move.

Last year, Berdine started combining her work as director of the Netherlands Mission Council with a part-time position as assistant professor of missiology at the Theological University Utrecht. She thoroughly enjoys combining occasional stints of overseas teaching (this year in Bangui and Malaysia), reflections on the bigger questions concerning the role of mission organisations in Europe and the teaching of Dutch students. She has been appointed as a member of the

Committee on World Mission and Evangelism until the next general assembly of the World Council of Churches and was inspired by their first in-person meeting in Nairobi.

One year after our move to the Utrecht area for Berdine's work, the Protestant Theological University also moved from Amsterdam and Groningen to Utrecht, so we hope that from this year our lives will be more centred in one area. One of the exciting developments in Benno's work was his appointment as co-leader of a research project on future-oriented church, which has just received the green light. In the coming five years, a team from both the Protestant Church in the Netherlands and the Protestant University will be reflecting on how the church in post-Christian Europe should live, knowing that the future belongs to our God.

This Christmas season, we have been celebrating how God has entered our world and lives in order to share both our sorrows and our joys. God comes close to us in our individual lives. And God draws us out of our small worlds and makes us part of his bigger story with the people around us and creation at large. We pray that as this year unfolds, we all will discover his love, presence and purpose in new ways.

Berdine and Benno



Photos from top to bottom: Baby Maria slept through all the cleaning and tidying; Jaron, Miriam and Amos, who live with us in Ondersteboven; the latest family photo.



Empowering people pushed to the edges of life

I've been encouraged to hear recent mission stories from around my wider area of work. In South Sudan, communities have taken steps towards peace as pastors from different tribal groups reconciled, and my colleague Joan has shared a growing vision of a new tribe of peacemakers. Read more at churchmissionsociety.org/empower