



# 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,

It has been a long time since you received a link letter from me.

Sometimes life can take unexpected turns. We have had plenty of those in the past. Some of our unexpected turns have surprised us with joy, others were difficult and brought pain. But, looking back, in all of these we knew that we were not alone. God has always been our refuge and hope. We always knew that there was a loving and supportive community around us, together with whom we were part of a much greater story, God's story.

The long silence of the last year is also connected to an unexpected turn. In January of last year, I developed severe back pain and in March and April I needed emergency surgeries for a herniated disc in my lower back. I am deeply grateful that the pain has lessened and that I did not lose the use of my legs, as was feared. Yet, there is permanent neurological damage which results in chronic pain and cauda equina syndrome. At the end of the summer I will need another surgical intervention, in which the problematic disc will be taken out and two vertebrae in my lower back will be fixated.

One of the consequences of this is that over the last year and a half I have had to cancel my teaching assignments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in the Central African Republic and in Malaysia, as well as several meetings with the Commission for World Mission and Evangelism for the World Council of Churches. It has been hard to let these things go.

Yet, at the same time, we have been surprised by the ongoing opportunities here in the Netherlands. Our community, Ondersteboven (Upside Down), is becoming more and more established. We are now a community of seven adults and a child, and relationships with people in the neighbourhood are growing. In our shared living room we have a long table that seats 14 people. This table is often too small, because so many people join us.

In all of this we have come to the conclusion that this may be the time to also let go of my official role in CMS as a mission partner. One reason is that we don't know if I will ever be able to travel long distances again. Another reason is that I believe it is time to fully focus on my ministry here in the Netherlands with the Mission



*Het Pand, a church community Benno and I were previously part of in Groningen*

**Support Berdine van den Toren-Lekkerkerker:**  
[churchmissionsociety.org/vandentoren](https://churchmissionsociety.org/vandentoren)

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



Council, as assistant professor of missiology at Utrecht Theological University, and of course in our community, Ondersteboven.

Letting go is not easy. CMS, and especially the many people who make CMS the community that it is, has been a home to us, a place where we found friends, brothers and sisters. CMS has been a home that has helped us stay connected with the church worldwide, while at the same time being rooted in a local community. CMS has supported me faithfully through prayer and in many very practical ways in my ongoing work in missiological education in French-speaking Africa and Asia. And this has been especially important to me during the times that I stayed

in communities and places where I might not be as safe as in the UK or the Netherlands. Out of the deep conviction that within the church worldwide we belong to each other as brothers and sisters in Christ, and that when one suffers, we all suffer, CMS allowed me to go and made it possible. I am deeply grateful for this.

Sometimes we discuss the cost of mission. Looking back over the years, I would like to highlight the privilege of mission. I think of all the people I have been allowed to meet, of all the communities that have welcomed me in, and all the students that shared their wisdom and life experience in class so that together we could discover more of God, of God's world and our place and calling in it. And I realise that it has been a great blessing to be part of this movement of CMS, a privilege to be able to contribute to this community what I myself have received.

And more personally, you are also part of this community. Over the years you have travelled with me in your prayers and through your support. And I pray that this will have been a blessing to you also. I want to express my heartfelt thanks to you!

I am so grateful for your support over the years, and would like to invite you to continue your support for CMS once I have finished service. CMS will be in touch with you to discuss whether you would like to connect with another mission partner and continue your support for mission in this way.

This letter is not a farewell letter. Since CMS is not only a mission organisation, but a community, I will continue to be part of CMS and the CMS movement. Our ministry in the Netherlands, in our work and community, will continue to be inspired by and connected to the CMS community. And, God willing, new opportunities for connecting with the CMS community worldwide will also come along.

So... I am looking forward to meeting up again, to catching up again, to hear of the things God has prepared for you and for the communities and places in which God has placed you.

Paul wrote so beautifully to the Christian community in Philippi: "I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now." Philippians 1:3-5

With much love,

Berdine



**Photos from top to bottom:** A few more communities where I was invited to share what I have received and was deeply enriched by others' love, wisdom, faith and faithfulness: Bangui (Central African Republic); Bunia (DR Congo); Asia Gateway, Malaysia; Cross Culture Nieuwegein (Utrecht)



## Empowering people pushed to the edges of life

I hope that you're inspired as you read about Alison in Kyiv, Ukraine, who is seeing many answers to prayer as she faithfully serves God. And that you get a moment to read about the displaced disciples in Ethiopia – church leaders taking part in bespoke training designed for people living in refugee camps. Read more stories about empowering people pushed to the edges at [churchmissionsociety.org/empower](https://churchmissionsociety.org/empower)

Please note that opinions expressed in updates are those of mission partners, not necessarily of Church Mission Society. If you would like to discuss your mailings with us or to receive this update on a regular basis, please email [supporter.care@churchmissionsociety.org](mailto:supporter.care@churchmissionsociety.org) or call 01865 787400. Church Mission Society is a Registered Company No. 6985330 and Registered Charity No. 1131655 (England and Wales) and SC047163 (Scotland).