



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.

Dear Friends,

Over the last year, we have experienced many changes, in our family, in my work and in the place we call home.

Let me start with the joyful news that Benno and I have become grandparents again. Marten and Tirtsa are the proud parents of a beautiful girl, Maria. We are grateful that all is well with them! To me it is very moving, not only in the gift of new life, but also the wonder of new parenthood. Suddenly, our children are parents. The son becomes a father, the daughter becomes a mother. We are grateful to see God's grace and care in a new generation.

A second piece of joyful news is that I have received new opportunities in my work as director of the Mission Council in the Netherlands. The Mission Council is a network, where churches and mission organisations come together for the exchange of wisdom, experience and challenges, for shared reflection. The goal of the network is to help each other in the development of vision, strategies and best practices in mission, as part of the church worldwide.

Alongside leading this network, I have now been appointed as assistant professor of missiology at the Theological University Utrecht. This gives me the opportunity to work with students, many of whom become pastors or pioneers in mission. It also gives me the opportunity to do research, within the research programme of the missiology department. This allows me to develop a research programme together with our partners in the Mission Council, in which we will look at the relationships in mission in the church worldwide. How can these relationships reflect the values of God's Kingdom in a world of inequalities in resources and power? How does the heritage of historic injustices of colonialism and racism continue to affect these relationships and create barriers for the living and proclamation of the gospel? And what could be a way forward towards relationships that are signs of God's love and justice, in reciprocity and mutuality?

About the third change we feel both joy and ambivalence. Since my work is now fully based in Utrecht, we decided that we had to move there. Yet this also means moving away from Groningen and leaving our community there. Over the years, this community has become our home, the place where we were both welcomed and rooted, the place where we found friendships and experienced God at work, most often in places and people where we would least expect it. Leaving this behind has brought feelings of gratitude



Berdine the proud grandmother with baby Maria.

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



for all the good we received there, but also of loss and loneliness. It has reminded us that, as people in mission, we are pilgrims, people of the way.

Yet this move also brings us joy, as we were able to buy a house near the multicultural community Cross-Culture, a pioneering community within the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. On a Sunday it regularly happens that we sing in four different languages, we meet people from many different cultural backgrounds. And this church community has warmly welcomed us. Connected to Cross-Culture are two community houses, where people live together with a missional purpose. And the good news is that our house will be the third community house, since it is so big that we can build at least four (small) apartments in it.

While the renovation and re-building is still in preparation – waiting for permissions – we have already met a young family who were looking for a community house where they could live. They resonated deeply with our vision to become a community where Jesus is at the centre and where everyone is welcome. They were also looking for a space from which to start Christian community work in the neighbourhood and the communal space in our house could become perfect for that. Together we are now developing our mission vision, to become a community **in** the neighbourhood, **with** the neighbourhood and **together for** the neighbourhood.

Being uprooted and on the road again, we now feel that God is preparing a new home for us, a place where we can be part of God's mission in this city.

And as an extra gift of grace, I am still able to be part of God's mission in Africa and Asia as well. In June I will be teaching in the Central African Republic again and in November in Sri Lanka. In addition to all that, I have also been appointed to be a member of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism in the World Council of Churches.

In all these changes we value your prayers for us, that we will remain faithful to God's call in mission, both locally and in the church worldwide.

And we pray that our Risen Lord will give you joy, hope, and peace. We pray that we all will be blessed, while being a blessing in our broken world and polarised communities. ssion on the edges in a dynamic and supportive learning community. Find out more at pioneer.churchmissionsociety.org

Berdine



Theologische
Universiteit
Utrecht



Photos from top to bottom: The house we were able to buy and now hope to share with many people; the view from our new house – could it be any more Dutch?; with the Cross-Culture community where we have settled, sharing our reflections on the Scripture reading.



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