



Full of hope

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OF THE PROTESTANT CHURCH



Lans Bovenberg:

“Hope is: knowing there will be a better future”



Annemiek Schrijver:

“Hope is Gods love which is always within us”



Keith Bakker:

“I hope I don't screw up”

EVERYONE
is welcome on
START SUNDAY

This is 'Full of hope'

Hope; it is a word which describes an expectation.

You can hope for a fine day, a good life, a better world. Hope is more than optimism. Even if the circumstances counteract, you can hope against all odds for a positive outcome. Hope gives perspective. Man lives by hope.

"Hope is a quality of the soul and not dependent of what is happening in the world," the Czech former president Václav Havel once said. Hope is for all people of all ages. This goes to show from the stories of well-known and lesser prominent Dutch people in this paper. With the financial crisis in mind economist Lans Bovenberg hopes we as Dutchmen learn to give again. Mariecke van der Glas, closely involved in the earthquake in Haiti, hopes the Haitians pick up their lives again after the earthquake. Retired Member of Parliament Bas van der Vlies hopes for renewed attention for what is really important. And Annemiek Schrijver perceives hope as a powerful weapon against despair and cynicism. The other people who are speaking in this paper hope for something or someone. Hope keeps you going.

For everyone

You received this paper in church or found it in the mail. In the last case a church in your neighbourhood delivered the paper to you. This paper is a publication of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands¹ on Startzondag² 2010, a Sunday in the month of September when the religious season starts again. Churches show what they do, for children, adolescents, elderly people and everyone in between.



¹ With 2.1 million members and about 1800 local congregations the Protestant Church in the Netherlands is the largest Protestant denomination in the Netherlands. The Protestant Church wants to be involved with God, with each other and with the world. Want to know more? Look at www.pkn.nl for more information or find a church in your neighbourhood at www.pkn.nl/kerkzoeker.

² Startzondag = Start-Sunday

Lydia de Wilde

“I hope, for a brief moment, they can be carefree children”

For six months Lydia de Wilde is in Cambodia, via youth-exchange-project ‘Togetthere’, where she contributes to the Hope-program of World Relief. “I love children and other cultures. And I want to make myself useful and strengthen my relationship with God.”

“If I just keep talking with God it is going to be all right”

Two days a week I work with aids-patients, mainly women and children. For example we make postcards. This is relaxing and useful at the same time, because they can sell the cards. Other days I work with adolescents. It is a 45 minutes-drive by moped to the slums of Phnom Penh. When school is over we are outside. If we get there later, the children are already at work. We take them along to a fixed location. Our horn is already famous in the neighbourhood: the adolescents know where to find us. I read from the Scripture and teach them to pray. We talk and play volleyball. It is so important they can be carefree children for a brief moment.

Poverty is everywhere. In town there are brick houses, but as soon as you leave town you see the dumpsites, naked children and sheds, made of waste-material. There is a lot of aids, especially among women and children. The other day a small boy died, which I held in my arms the week before. Of course we also give financial aid, but mainly we tell them about God. In Cambodia there are a lot of single mothers and orphans. I hope they may get to know Gods fatherly love. And that they may learn from this to take care of each other. And I hope I will get to know God better. If I just keep talking with Him, it is going to be all right.”



Ruben van Zwieten

Hope in the financial heart of the Netherlands

“To show another reality in the middle of the world”

Ruben van Zwieten is the owner of the recruitment agency Van Zwieten & Company. He is also a minister. He combines both working areas in a unique manner: he organizes bible studies and reflection activities for business people on the Amsterdam Zuidas³.



Ruben: “Eighty percent of all the people I reach is not familiar with the Bible. The other twenty percent knows about it, but often they do not feel at home in religious Holland. I want to bring them into contact with the Bible and hope to show them something of another reality.

I myself perceive faith as being profoundly known by God. It is a very fundamental feeling that He has his eye upon me. Sometimes through prayer, Scripture texts and special encounters I see a glimpse of Gods Kingdom lighting up. Keeping the dream of the promised land alive. To me this is the heart of faith. The most special thing of biblical faith is that God knows every human being by name and goes a path with him/her.

Reading the Bible together is very interesting. Highly educated people, such as lawyers and bankers, initially read to improve their general education, but find out the Bible is about themselves and has a meaning for today's life.

We give a concrete follow up. Recently on Valentines day we organized an afternoon where senior and young business people met with each other. It was beautiful. They made time for each other. As a result the initiative had additional value for both groups.

My hope for the future is we let our thinking be permanently disorganized. By the Bible and our prayer to God. It is the task of the churches to show another reality in the middle of the world.”

³ Amsterdams Zuidas = developing business district in Amsterdam

Annemiek Schrijver

“Hope is a powerful weapon against despair and cynicism”



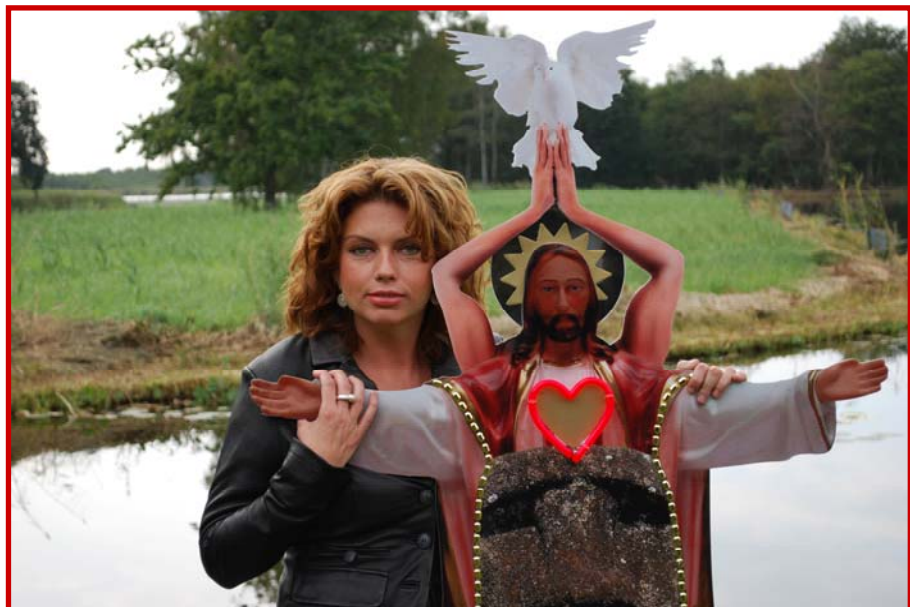
To author and anchorwoman Annemiek Schrijver hope is not in the future, but an indisputable reality. She does not frequent a gym.

“I meditate and train my spirit.”

“Hope is a quality of the soul and not dependent of what is happening in the world,” the Czech former president Václav Havel writes. Annemiek gladly joins up with this. “Hope is often used as sop, which distracts from the present. As if reality is not good enough. But Christian hope is not a promise for the future. In Romans 5 Paul writes this ‘hope doesn’t disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts’. Hope is Gods love itself, which is always within us. Labour from this hope is significant, regardless the result. Therefore good works are not dependant on the chance of succeeding.”

Annemiek loves music. Successfully she completed the academy of music. “Music is pre-eminently the means to express our desire and hope. And music reconciles. Watch the community singing in church. Or how we feel when the national hymn sounds at the World Championships Football. At times like this I am convinced that every human being is capable of unconditional love.

We are allowed to examine our own minds. Because there is work to do. I myself use meditation. Spiritual exercises give me courage and compassion. And I notice my hope is less and less dependant of others. If I accept reality and let go of my hope and fear I really become alive. This hope is not in the future, but awareness. An indisputable knowledge and certain trust.”



Jan Gruiters

“Hope springs everywhere”

Jan Gruiters, director of the peace movement IKV Pax Christi⁴, is an inspired man always hoping for peace. He grew up in the sixties and remembers the debate on WWII from this period. Did we do enough to prevent the persecution of the Jews? This question was the cause that he himself wanted to contribute to peace.



“Important to be present in areas of conflict”

“We work on peace in the tension between ideal and reality. Between the hope for peace and the reality of a broken world. During my visits to war zones I always find people which keep hoping for a peaceful future, despite of everything. Loosing this hope is a luxury they can not afford. Our involvement keeps their hope alive! Therefore it is important to be present in areas of conflict.

Sometimes it is hard to keep hope. I was born in 1956, the year the war in Sudan started. The situation there is still defined by persistent violence and injustice, without perspective of peace. Then I hold on to the hope which is described in Isaiah 43: ‘Behold, I will do a new thing; now shall it spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.’

Hope springs everywhere. A new generation of peace workers has risen. Young people join Pax-it, the youth-branch of IKV Pax Christi, from the notion citizens can make a difference. Citizens initiative is also asked by the Peace week 2010 with the slogan: Neighbourhoods for peace! Precisely now it is important people meet each other. Building bridges between population groups and communities is also a necessity in the Netherlands and makes it possible to be citizens of one country together.”

www.ikvpaxchristi.nl

⁴ IKV = Interkerkelijk Vredesberaad = interreligious peace movement

Christien Niemeijer

“In the encounter you can show something of God”

Christien Niemeijer works with JOP, the youth organization of the Protestant Church. With heart and soul she devotes herself to give adolescents faith along.

“Suddenly there was the awareness ‘God simply exists’”

Christien: “It attracts a lot of adolescents. They have to make many choices. In order to be able to do this well, they need a basis. As youth worker in the Protestant Church I am allowed to build on this basis. I hope the adolescents I work with get a relationship with God. That they find happiness and support in Him. If they know themselves to be the beloved children of God, young people can be self-confident. And I wish it for them heartily. I am convinced this it is essential to have real relationships with adolescents. In the encounter you can show something of God.

When I myself was about sixteen I was completely through with the church. I was so disappointed that the people there would often be so dishonest with one and other. Later, during an internship in Austria, I found my faith again. From a distance I looked at the city of Innsbruck and suddenly there was the awareness ‘God simply exists’.

On my return in the Netherlands I went back to the 16plusclub of the church and subsequently learned a lot from the people I met.

The church is not very appealing to the adolescents. And yet I see the methods of JOP for catechism etceteras take. In this way JOP gives me hope as well. Earlier I thought I was the only one, but at JOP work enthusiastic and motivated people with the same goal: to give young people the hope of the gospel along”.

Keith Bakker

“I hope I don’t screw up”



After a year-long addiction on alcohol, cocaine and heroin Keith Bakker has been clean since August 1, 1998. Meanwhile he has his own clinic and television programme on NCRV, called Family Matters. ‘My faith is not a drug, not a remedy to make me feel better. It is much more than this: the basic principle of everything I do.’

“I call the higher power God”

“As drug addict I had no perspective for the future. Only until I started to believe, I thought for the first time there might be something bigger than myself. I realized I need grace. Then I had a good reason to quit and to change. Not to earn grace, but to get started from there. Hope is believing in things not yet seen, you know. Something is happening in our clinics. Some call it the coaching skills or the group-power. I call this higher power God.

I started to study European law to charge the Dutch state: there had to be more possibilities for addicts. I won. I have been able to help thousands of people in my clinic and hundred thousands watch my programme Family Matters. But I do not have the illusion I can take credit for this. Who am I? I did not even finish my high school. If there is no God, this is impossible.

After an overdose and a nearly-dead experience I was in the intensive care in Scotland for eight weeks. I had nothing, except for an old walkman and a cassette-tape of the Christian rock band Delirious. I have listened to it at least 250 times and their lyrics stuck in my mind: ‘I’m gonna be a history maker.’ My greatest hope is I don’t screw up. If I do not get in the way of God and His plans, the most wonderful things can happen. Therefore I pray every morning: Please God, don’t let me screw it up today. And at the end of the day, if I get it right I say: Thank You. That’s it.”

Teun Stortenbeker

“There is hope for everyone”

Teun Stortenbeker is the man behind Stichting De Hoop⁵, centre for addiction recovery and care. But mainly he is a man with hope. “Because God has hope for me too”.

“Especially addicts often have profound vital questions”

“Our name does not symbolize a high-ranking ideal, as many people think. We simply derive our name from the air shaft “De Hoop”, where we opened our first shelter in 1976. I never dreamed the work would develop like this. We started with addicts rehabilitation. Until we found a couple with a baby on our doorstep. So we started a family-shelter and a nursery. A training-centre, job-experience-workplaces, social care, children- and youth ministry, a youth-clinic. We are still growing.

Especially addicts often have profound vital questions. We offer them something which provides hope. For God everything is possible, so there is hope for everyone. I do not have to write off anyone. The fact God and others see something in them is a life changing discovery for many people. Often God is the key to healing. For example for the clients who are filled with hatred because of the injustice which has been afflicted on them. You can talk to them, rationally and putting things into perspective. But there will be a point where you have to let go. At Hope-foundation they hear about God who pardons them. But are they able to forgive themselves? It is a very stunning moment when they have to make peace with God and learn to obey him.

Of course clients fall back into their old habits. All men do. Some people here we have taken in eight times. Is it allowed to do this for the ninth time? Yes, I hopefully say. Because God has hope for me too.”



⁵ Stichting De Hoop = Hope-foundation

Mariecke van der Glas

“Don’t leave, but stay on to help”



As region-manager Central America for Kerk in Actie¹ Mariecke van der Glas is closely involved with the rebuilding of Haiti. ‘Haiti will soon disappear from the headlines, but not from our work practice or our hearts.’

“Five weeks after the earthquake I was in Haiti for the first time. Only then I realized how extensive the disaster is. I constantly felt as if I was one step behind of the situation. The realization came bit by bit. Colleague Lyne was in the office when it collapsed. She survived, but will be engaged with her rehabilitation for at least six months.

So much is broken. I was startled with the destruction, but people told me a lot of the rubble had already been cleared away. So many people are still under there. A colleague had a list of one hundred people he had lost. He is still waiting for the mental blow. Someone else went to college, but had to get something out of the car. The building, with her friends in it, collapsed behind her. Such stories hit me so hard that I freeze. I can not even cry. I feel helpless. Such an enormous disaster at such a small area, with so many victims.

Even after five weeks there are still aftershocks and there are houses falling down. Everyone sleeps outside, in provisional campsites, under sheets and canvasses. Suddenly there is this sign: Barber Shop. Someone has gone back to work. This gives hope. Haitians picking up their life again. Professionals who are not leaving, but stay on to help. They are really not only in line for food-supplies. I hope the earth in Haiti will finally come to rest. So confidence may grow and Haiti can be rebuilt, by the Haitians themselves, with the help of international organizations.”

Lans Bovenberg

“I hope we will learn to give again”



The Tilburg economist Lans Bovenberg considers the economical crisis to be an opportunity. “Now we can consider what really matters”

“There are many hopeful signs”

“With the word hope people usually mean an expectation with uncertain outcome. Christian hope is different. This is knowing certainly. Life is not a chaotic state with uncertain outcome, but offers perspective on a new earth and a new heaven. This gives life purpose. You could compare it to the changing of the seasons. During the winter you experience nothing from spring. It only gets greyer and colder. Yet you know spring will come. This is hope: knowing a better future comes, even if you do not see anything of it yet. This does not mean life on earth is pointless. On the contrary, I am allowed to show something of the hope within me here and now. Sometimes I find it hard to stay hopeful and have faith that things will turn for the better. But there are also a lot of hopeful signs.

Now and then people need a wake-up call, like the economical crisis. We live in an ego-economy, where arrogance and greed are rampant. We pursue our own interest, at the cost of others. The crisis is a chance to discover again what it really is about. It is time for ecological and social renewal. From greed to love, in biblical terms. I hope the church will teach not to condemn people, but to love.

Everyone longs for happiness and love. God planted this within us. But how do you fulfil this longing? By taking or by giving? I hope we will all become more like Jesus by receiving His love. And that we will outgrow the ego-economy from there and learn to give again.”

Jan Andries de Boer

“I hope to show something of God”

Minister Jan Andries de Boer organizes worships with music of U2 and Bløf, since he was captured by a concert of the Irish rock band U2 in 2005. “It looked like a secular mega-worship for 50,000 people.”



“Faith has to be shared”

“Passion for music is something that belongs to me, just like my passion for faith. In these rock-worships both come together. This way I hope to show something of God in my own manner. What happens during worship is beautiful. Many visitors are touched by the music, and rediscover God. I find that Gods Spirit guides these worships.



I believe in religious rituals. The church is sacred to me. Therefore I work out a rock-worship based on the religious liturgy and Christian confession as well. This way these worships stand in tradition with the faith of the ages and offer at the same time space to preach and experience religion in a modern way.



Faith offers a hopeful perspective on a heavenly future. Or, like Bono sings: ‘The sweetest melody is the one we haven’t heard.’ But if faith means anything, then for everyone. Faith has to be shared. It is a hopeful power, which initiates and motivates good things. The church is therefore an important means to improve the world and let people live in harmony with their Creator. My hope for the church is therefore equal to my hope for the world. I hope for a new self-awareness for the modern church, glowing with faith!”

www.rockdienst.nl

"Hope is all about the contact between people"

"God has no other hands than those of people"

Bosnian Vesna Krivosic fled to the Netherlands because of the ongoing war violence. Soon she became acquainted with Els Brouwer, who works as a deacon of the Protestant Conreagation Zeist-West with refugees. "Since

"We lived in Ilijaš, near Sarajevo," Vesna starts telling. "During the Bosnian war we, as a family, hid in the cellars for over two years. Finally we fled to the Netherlands. As Croats we no longer had a future in Bosnia." Vesna received a residence permit, but her future remained uncertain. "I wanted to be independent, to save money, to get a small house, a job. And above all I wanted to learn the language, so I could understand people and express my feelings." The awareness others cared for her kept Vesna going. "I am at home in Zeist and the Brouwers are my family."

Els: "You always said: 'I am not happy, but I am satisfied'. You were uncertain and nervous, but gradually you got perspective. You became part of our family. Our grandchildren have three grandmothers. Vesna is called *baka*, Croatian for grandmother. When they drop in they also ask for her."

In 1989 Els as co-founder and president was involved in a taskforce of the Council of Churches in Zeist. Each month the taskforce organised a wake outside of the gates of Kamp Zeist⁶, where foreigners without valid residence permits are locked in. "It is not right to lock up people without police record," Els says. "Therefore we have wakes, to encourage people. At the same time we try to make life in there more humane, with flowers every week and extra telephone cards. Gradually there is some improvement.

I have worked in Israel and Indonesia. I know how powerless you can feel in another culture, if you can not express yourself clearly enough. Hope is all about contact between people. People who go through a lot together, who really see each other. This is also my hope for the future: to know there are always people around you who want to live and share life together. I got to know a lot of world citizens in all those cramped little rooms in the Refugee Centre in Zeist. I got back a lot. If they passed our house on their way to the supermarket I invitingly held up my coffee cup from the bay window: come in! This originated a lot of good talks. This interaction is promising. This is the gift, the salary of the job. God has no other hands than those of people."

⁶ Kamp Zeist = Camp Zeist



Mieneke Brouwer:

“The certainty God will always be there for them”

Mieneke Brouwer and her husband Willem are involved members of the Protestant Congregation in Waddinxveen. They had their newly born daughter Anne and her brother Jouke baptized. What hope do they draw from Baptism?

Mieneke: “It is common practise in our churches to have children baptized. This way it makes sense we too brought our children to be baptized. Yet is was not self-evident. Willem and I gave it considerable thought and realized how special Baptism really is. It moves me that God shows that He wants to be the Father of Jouke and Anne. He personally comes to them. I find this both beautiful and reassuring. Baptism is no guarantee our children will believe, which is our greatest hope. But as parents it gives us the certainty God will always be there for them.

I am glad I was baptized myself. My parents and the people in our congregation taught me about God and I got to trust Him. He gives direction to my life. I am often insecure. For example about my choice to be there for the children and in addition teach Dutch to migrant women. Don't I sell myself short by not having a paid job in spite of my study of pedagogics? So I struggle with the questions: who am I and what do I want to achieve in life? In these moments of uncertainty I draw hope from my own Baptism. God called me by name and said: you are mine.

After my life here comes a new life. This means I do not have to strive for the optimum for myself in the present. God is eternal, His faithfulness holds on. I hope that Jouke and Anne will experience this later in the same way.”



Bas van der Vlies

“My anchor is Gods faithfulness”

In June the oldest and longest serving Member of Parliament left. SGP⁷-member Bas van der Vlies always tries to find Gods intention, even if it seems as if his own hope has been betrayed.

Man lives by hope, is the first thing to cross his mind. “A difficult debate for example, where I expect a lot of opposition can discourage me. Just like decisions which contradict Gods good intentions. But sit down in despair is not what I do. Because there is One who commands everything. With Him nothing gets out of control. With this I pull myself up.

Sometimes His plans are incomprehensible for human beings. In times of crisis. Or in election time, when I hope for a good result, but profit fails to come. Then it seems as if my hope has been betrayed. But I always look for Gods intention. Because I know God has our happiness at heart, not our misfortune.

I hope for renewed attention for Christian faith, for what really matters. What is going on in our country should not be guiding when we cast our votes. It is not good for this country and for the authority of politics. I hope with all my heart that we accept the guidelines Gods Word provides for the way we arrange society.

Of course I have doubts. But those doubts are not determining my course. My anchor is Gods faithfulness. In all storms He is my hold. Earthly matters can betray your hope: *Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help*, as it says in the old verse from Psalm 146. But God never betrays. And my doubts – I bring them before Him in prayer. To know and experience I can always turn to God gives me courage.”



⁷ SGP = Staatskundig Gereformeerde Partij = Political Reformed Party