

**Protestantse Kerk
in Nederland**Protestants
Landelijk DienstencentrumJoseph Haydnlaan 2a
P.O. Box 8504
3503 RM Utrecht
The Netherlands
Telephone +31 30 880 18 80
Telefax +31 30 880 14 44
www.pkn.nl

Translated by Marianne van Dijk

Opening up

Rev. Hans van Ark
team missionary work Protestant church

Opening up

From 2004 till 2007 the Protestant Church published four booklets with brief texts for inspiration with beautiful matching pictures. The booklets were *Vol van Geest (Full of Spirit)*, *Beziel! (Inspired!)*, *Verwondering (Wonder)* and *Ontmoeting (Encounter)*. The texts and images in the booklets were suitable for meditation and inspiration or for use for opening a meeting or another gathering for example. The booklets were often used as a gift to a friend, family member of neighbour or for the farewell of ministers in church.

Because there turned out to be great request for booklets like this in the past two years, and because it turned out that they were not known by everyone yet, we decided to publish another booklet. This booklet contains a compilation of the most beautiful pages from the first three 'Pentecost-booklets' – there is still a limited number of the booklet *Ontmoeting* available – plus a number of new pages with inspiring texts and images. The title became *Opengaan (Opening up)*, and you are holding it in your hand now.

We hope that this booklet too will inspire many people.

Poem: Rev. Hans van Ark

Pentecost is...

Pentecost is
a cloud in the sky
a bird that flies
the sun that shines again,
but it sometimes shines not.

Pentecost is
a flower in the grass
an egg in the shed
a pigeon in the garden
a child in high spirits.

Pentecost is
no concrete evidence
a promise, that's all
It's sometimes so vague
no answer
merely a question.

Pentecost is also
breath and air
man comes out again
Pentecost is:
the church singing of love
with Christ as bride.

Pentecost is
the Spirit comes in again
is re-finding peace
in joy and friendship
starting over again.

Past is your dullness
past is the grey
Pentecost is:
God's Spirit
begins
a new Paradise.

Hymn:

Neem de plaats, de ruimte en de tijd

Take the place, the space and the time

Take the place, the space and the
time,
everyone here included.
Make the place where we are now
into your own base.

Take the time, call me by name.
Take the time and heal
who I am and what I was,
that which divides my soul.

Take the burden off my heart,
take my deep remorse,
and touch with your unity
that which splits my attention.

Take the little child in me
that does not dare to grow.
Let your Son be my beacon,
help me to stand straight.

Take my gifts, my talent,
take what unfolds.
Take my life, make it grow
so I become and am.

Prayer*Inge Gnau, 21, Germany*

Lord,
 Jesus Christ,
 You are the red thread in my life
 on which I focus
 when I am lost.
 As a rope
 that prevents me from falling into the
 abyss.
 Sometimes strong and inflexible,
 then again tender and vulnerable
 like a thread in a spider's web.
 Threads that enclose me,
 lift me up,
 chain me,
 but do not confine me.
 They give me support,
 yet are loose enough
 to let me go my own way
 which I never go by myself.
 Lord, help me,
 make that this thread between You and
 me
 will never break!

*Hymn:****Beth, een huis voor onderweg****lyrics Margreet Spoelstra**music Teresa Takken***Beth, a house for on the way**

refrain:

on the way to tomorrow and the day after
 tomorrow
 and on the way sometimes just a minute at
 home

ground under my feet
 support in my back
 roof over my head

supported by stories
 surrounded by travelling companions
 breathed upon by who is love

grounded
 supported
 blessed

refrain:

on the way to tomorrow and the day after
 tomorrow
 and on the way sometimes just a minute at
 home.

Thuis

Marinus van den Berg

At home

Who walks, never walks alone.
 there always will be birds,
 always the wind
 or the streams of water
 the little wells sometimes
 or passers-by.
 There always are trees
 and the clouds that greet you
 or the clear, blue sky.
 And the sideways and the
 crossroads
 they ask for a choice.
 There always are your thoughts
 which travel along like angels
 or as devils, teasing you.
 There is no such thing as walking
 alone.

Walking always brings you back
 on your inner road
 and brings you home.

Prayer

Voor elkaar

Sytze de Vries

For each other

We recommend each other
 in your care,
 and no less
 in each other's attention
 and love:

an open ear
 for what each of us has to
 say,
 sympathetic
 with those who mourn their
 loss,
 considerate
 for those for which going
 alone
 is too hard,
 the end drawing near
 too frightful,
 listening
 to those who live with many
 questions
 cautious
 because of the wounds we
 easily
 inflict on each other.

Poem

Landschap

Lenze L. Bouwers

Landscape

'Those two cows are all by themselves',
he said and a heron-soloist kept looking.
We calmly drove over the dike and
looked down upon the river on which
no one was to be seen. Fortunately.
The sun was shining, but it was no oven.
No fish corpses in a pond without
oxygen.
Not even one dead duck with crow
to have to move out of the way for.

'This is how the new earth should be'
I thought out loud
and my grandson did not bat an eyelid
under his white skipper's cap.

Through the lift-lock – to him a heavenly
area –
he did not ask for nougat, a piece for
each.
He knew: you keep quiet upon a prayer.

Hymn

Die mij droeg

Huub Oosterhuis

The one that carried me

The one that carried me
On the wings of an eagle

that threw me
into space
and if I fell screamingly
caught me
with your wings
and threw me up again

until I could fly
on my own strength

Meditation

Martha is verder dan Maria

Jan Offringa

Martha is further than Mary

Luke 10: 38-42

Among believers Martha gets less well off than Mary. She is too occupied to keep busy with the essential things. Mary is favoured, as a devoted pupil of Jesus, sitting at his feet. Often is added, somewhat played down, that it is nice if a person has something of both. In this image-forming Martha however, with all her good intentions, remains the somewhat simpler do-person.

As a rule however she can count on our sympathy. We are often in the same boat: we would like to bring more peace into our lives, in order to have more time for reflection and in order to gain inspiration for our work. But unfortunately, it turns out there is so much to do, the telephone rings, the mails keep poring in, you have to go out. Consequently you can suffer from a cut up existence.

A mystic thinker from the Middle Ages takes a different approach. This man, Master Eckhart, warns against a spiritual life which gets detached from the normal existence. Precisely in their everyday actions people can reach God, according to him. This Master Eckhart once held a sermon with this message: Martha has gotten further than Mary, because Mary is still isolated in the apprenticeship of her contemplating life. But Martha has already integrated the spiritual into her everyday doings. Martha, as the good example for Mary.

This touches my ideal of inspiration. Not getting stuck in the complaining that it is all so busy, because you need to postpone or shove off something if necessary. And further you try to accomplish the abundance of tasks with attention and devotion. So, not a little of both, but rather like Martha, who has absorbed Mary. Without a doubt that will succeed one time better than the other. And every now and then the routine will sneak in. But that does not immediately detract from inspired living and working.

Poem
Zondagmorgen
 Ida Gerhardt

Sunday morning

The light starts to travel through the house
 and touches things. We eat
 our early bread immersed in sunshine.
 You've spread the white cloth
 and put grasses in a glass.
 This is the day when labour rests.
 The palm is open towards the light.

Meditation

Leven uit de Bron

Wout van Laar

Living from the Source

Sometimes you move as through a desert:
 nothing but hot sand - and all supplies
 finished;
 thirsty desire for oases of new strength.

There is a remarkable enunciation of
 Jesus:
 'If you are thirsty, come to me and drink!
 Have faith in me, and you will have life-
 giving water
 flowing from deep inside you'
 (John 7: 37, 38)

It is time that we returned to this Source.
 Water, that is: power, life, spirit.
 Jesus let himself be filled by God's Spirit.
 Now he makes this Spirit spring from us.
 Not two streams, but one ongoing
 movement:
 in and out again.

The own thirst is alleviated
 and you become a source for your
 environment:
 something proceeds from you!

Like a tree on the water
 which absorbs its saps and bears rich fruit,
 thus is the man who feeds on God's words
 and brings forth the fruit of the Spirit.

Inspiration is:
 Re-finding the Source and thus becoming
 a source of life.

Meditation

Hilde Graafland

*Give ear and come to me;
hear me, that your soul may live.
(Isaiah 55: 3a)*

Inspired living. That my life has a soul,
a source. Something I can live from and
for.

My soul is my utmost self, my deepest
me.

Yet I do not have my soul from myself.
But from God. God gave me my soul.
He also gives the contents. That I do not
just live like that,

For me, for what pleases me. But that I,
in my ultimate own way, live for Him
and for His purpose with me.

Therefore it is necessary that I stay
close to Him.

That I keep going to Him over and over.

Listen to His voice. Hear His word.

That I focus my life on that.

Then it begins. Then my soul shall live.

Then God lives through me.

Then I will receive – however my life

goes –

an inspired life.

Suggestions

Wil Derkse

In his convent rule Benedict starts from the principle that a convent will never be
without guests.

“All guests should be taken in as Christ himself, for he will say:

‘I was a stranger and you took me in’.”

The manner how guests are taken in should be marked by humanity, kindness and
humility – and disregarding sympathy, feeling or status.

In everyday life we get enough opportunities to practise this. Answering a telephone
call is a chance to receive a guest. But in practise we experience the caller as a
disturbing intruder. When the phone rings, wait a moment to pick it up in order to
change your inner attitude a little: from irritation to hospitality. To help me with that I
often pronounce a mental ‘blessing’ over the still unknown guest: *Benedicamus
Domino* – because it could be the Lord. My change of attitude, however modest it may
have succeeded, will also be felt at the other end of the line. It will give the conversation
a slightly different tone and content.

Hymn

Psalm 131 Wees Gerust

Turned into rhyme by Liesbeth Goedbloed

Psalm 131 Be quiet

A song of pilgrimage.
Of David.

You know, LORD,
I am not arrogant, am not conceited.
I am not doing anything superhuman,
but am always aware who and what I am,
and I do not shout that down.

On the contrary.
I shut up when I was worried and scared.
'Quiet,' I said, 'There, there, be quiet.'
I was a mother to myself.
I am a child that rests.

You, Israel,
trust in the LORD and be quiet. Today
and once again tomorrow.

Story

Vroeg in de ochtend

Toon Tellegen

Early in the morning

Early in the morning when the squirrel was still in bed, there was a knock on his door.
'Who's there?' he asked.

'It's me,' a voice said. 'The elephant.'

'Are you coming to visit?' the squirrel asked.

It was quiet for a moment. Then the elephant asked: 'Would you like to dance?'

'Dancing?' the squirrel asked, 'Now?'

'Is that weird?' the elephant asked.

'Well... weird...' the squirrel said. 'It is still very early.'

'So you don't want to?' the elephant asked.

The squirrel thought for a while and asked: 'Where do you want to dance?'

'For example here, in front of your door,' said the elephant.

'But there is no space at all!'

'Then we do not dance too far apart,' said the elephant.

'Then we will certainly fall down.'

'O,' said the elephant. 'So you don't want to dance.'

The squirrel got out of bed.

A little later he put one arm on the shoulder of the elephant and put his other arm around his waist. The elephant said that he would count to three, cleared his throat and counted to three. Then they made one dance step, tripped and fell down.

Drowsy they lay next to each other in the wet grass under the beech tree.

'Did you think it a bad idea, squirrel?' the elephant asked.

'O no,' the squirrel said. He rubbed the bruise on his head and thought of that one step which really had been a quite beautiful dance step.

Story

Alma

Ferdinand Borger

Alma

Amongst the shopping public of the Saturday afternoon Alma suddenly discovered the face of E., the author she had admired for years. Without hesitating for a second she walked up to him and confessed, a little nervous, her passion for his books. 'Every time I read your books,' she said, 'I am burning to ask one question: how does a story come into the world?' 'From wonder', E. answered, 'endless wonder. Why are there so many people here? Why are things the way they are? How is it that you stand before me, while I did not know you a minute ago? Why does a tramp ask me for money? What draws people to this town? The man and woman who are walking there, are they happy at all? Is this a nice country to live in? Do people believe in God or in themselves? What would it have looked here in the past? By wondering you start to ask questions; then out of nothing a story comes into the world. There is a great chance that you will become an author.' Even before Alma could ask another question E. disappeared between the people.

Prayer

Roel Bosch

In the beginning, God, you spoke,
and she was there, the earth,
a house to live in.
Give me faith, so I can wonder about the roof over my
head.
Give me confidence that my body will experience your
shelter in my back.
Give me love, to rest on the ground under my feet.
Teach me to live in the warmth of your sun,
your wind to back me up,
on words that support me.

Triune God, let me appear
as a human being who knows of the wonder of life,
a human being able to share of that wonder.

Give me, that I may astonish you,
by the house that I build,
where your words can reside
where your people are staying.

Amen.

Story

Onderweg

Joke Verweerd

On the way

Go now, he says and I put on my walking shoes.

It seems to be a hopeless task, this time.

My heart is too heavy. I am too angry, too cold, too lonely.

How many disappointments count along in that?

I should leave the door wide open behind me, maybe the misery will blow out while I am on the way.

The door is locked. Nowadays you can not leave the door open.

That brings trouble. That is exactly what I want to keep out. But I can't.

Don't start listing it all, he says, **just walk now**, put one foot before the other and look around you.

The path along the pastures is familiar.

It is only narrow, beside it the flowers I am fond of.

Buttercup, dandelion, cuckoo-flower. Just like that, for whoever wants to see them.

Now I feel the sun on my back, which becomes less stiff.

The water of the ditch wrinkles in the bend. I could sit down here for a while.

At the water I can forget the time, but certainly not everything that time carries with it.

The water flows, he says, look how it adjusts itself to the bank,

is not put to a stop by obstacles,

finds its way through the cane,

how it polishes the stone....

For everything comes from him and exists
by his power
and is intended for his glory.
All glory to him forever! Amen.

Romans 11: 36

Story

'Wat is een kerk?'

Alice Gideonse

'What is a church?'

You know them, those 5-year-old girls. Two crispy pigtails that point stubborn into the world, tough bootees under an utterly pink coat with a little mouth that is never quiet and mostly asks questions....

On the way to the pet-shop she pulls my sleeve and points to the high tower and windows of the gothic cathedral, the pride of the town. 'What kind of shop is that', she asks. 'That is not a shop, it is a church.'

'What is a church?'

I hesitate. What shall I answer? If I say: the church is the house of God, or there God lives, she will certainly ask: 'Who is that, God?' But if I say: the church is a building where people come to pray, she will ask: 'what is praying?' If I subsequently say: praying is talking to God, she will also ask: 'Who is God?'

Therefore I consider saying something else. Something along the lines of: there people come to sing and to listen to a sermon. But then she will ask what a sermon is and I need to address the word of God and then she will still ask: 'Who is God?'

How do you explain that to a 5-year-old girl, whose parents have turned their back on faith and church a long time ago. I take her hand and push against the heavy door that is ajar. In silence we walk in, slide into one of the benches. Wide-eyed she looks about. Silently we sit there. After a while I take her hand and together we walk outside. At the door she quietly asks: 'Who lives there?' 'God lives there', is my answer. 'That's what I thought,' she said....

Prayer

Gebed op Pinksteren

Wim van der Zee (†)

Prayer on Pentecost

O, God, on this day
 You lit the light of your Spirit
 In the heart of men,
 So that they could boldly and ardently
 preach your great deeds;
 fulfil our hearts as well,
 with the warmth of that Spirit,
 so that we may constantly be aimed
 at what is beneficial and healing
 and in all circumstances
 trust in your will-power
 that inspires and encourages.

Thou, Creator of all life
 and Source of light and strength,
 blow with your breath through our entire existence,
 come with your passion here in our midst,
 cover the bottom of our heart with your words,
 so that in our lives as well your creation occurs.

Meditation

Stilte is de zendtijd van de Heilige Geest

Barend Wallet

Silence is the Holy Spirit's broadcasting time

A good remedy against the rush-culture is to start the day with a moment of peace. Our life is wrapped up in many connections and how do we keep division out if we have to be busy with ten things at the same time?

In the silence of listening to God and speaking with God we find an orientation scope. Believing is a listening life with God's Word. This word of God is full of God's Spirit. If we turn to Him, He is ready to listen.

All of our life with all that occurs is subject of prayer. By laying it open before Him, He can be present in there with His Spirit. And as we are human beings all day long with others, we are also human beings of Him. We have our daily conversation. There are silences in that. They make us ready for listening and bless us with the confidence that the Spirit goes with us.

Poem

De Geest ademt

Dom Helder Camara

The Spirit breathes

All those with eyes to see,
men and women with ears to hear
are on the track of a coming dawn;
a reason to go on.

Small they seem, these tokens of
the dawn,
absurd, maybe.

All those with eyes to see
men and women with ears to hear
discover in the night
a special shimmer
they grasp the reason to go on.

Prayer

Oh God,

Aart Mak

Oh God,

What should I do about that turmoil inside of me,
that longing for peace in my soul
and being able to smile at the world,

And what should I do about that urging
never to acquiesce in, to be content,
because there is always something asking for refinement,

And if I fall and stay down passively for a while
until my will-power puts me back in motion again
and I wavering restart my way again

And if I thirst for what touches my heart,
to be loved, to be completely wrapped up in another
no longer condemned to myself,

will you then be the source of all my questions
and a ocean of answers at the same time?

Better is the poor
that walketh in his integrity,
than he that is perverse in his lips
and is a fool.

Even as a soul without knowledge is not good,
so he that maketh haste with his feet
sinneth.

Proverbs 19: 1-2 (KJ21)