

Column on time: Church and Money

At first sight they have nothing to do with one and other, church and money. And I would want to hold on to that for a time. Because some things are of another value than Euros. Faith, hope and love can not be expressed in money. The same as trust, attention and God by the way. No, church and money should stay away from each other.

400 millions

Yet it is good to be contradicted every once in a while. Recently the research organization KASKI fulfilled this task. They investigated what the contribution of the church is to society. And for once they simply expressed this in Euros. The research did not include everything by far, but only counted the hours put in by religious volunteers to society. These hours were multiplied with an hourly rate and the result will be familiar: over 400 millions euros, an enormous amount.

More self-confident

What to do with such a result? Many will shrug their shoulders and again: and not without reason. The church should not step into the trap of wanting to define herself in terms of money. And yet it can be helpful to have such a figure available. For example it helps to explain that churches are definitely not just self-centred. That can come in useful in discussions with the government. Because congregations often have responsibility for age-old buildings, and maintenance costs a fortune. If churches contribute that much to society, could society not lend a helping hand to the church sometimes?

Maybe the KASKI-research can help us to be more self-confident. The church is a good place to be and has a function in society. There is no need to be modest about this.

Kerkbalans* (Church balance)

Finally: in the month January you can not speak about church and money without mentioning *Kerkbalans*. Because in the church it is not about money. But it doesn't work without money. The motto of *Kerkbalans* is: the church is of constant value. In "constant" is something of not chasing the spirit of the times panting for breath. Seems good to me. And the value? Sometimes I say 400 millions. And on other occasions: faith, hope and love. And trust, attention and God. Seems even better to me.

January 19th 2010, Peter Verhoef, moderator general synod Protestant Church in the Netherlands

* Kerkbalans – Church balance: annual combined action of five Dutch churches for fundraising on behalf of local parishes, congregations and churches.