**Annual Report Dutch l’Abri 2024**

We look back on the last year with thankfulness for God’s provision and leading, not just for maintaining the momentum in our work but also helping us make a number of important decisions.

**Ongoing work**

In our residential work we have seen in the last year a pattern of fewer longterm guests and a rise in short-term guests, weekend attendees and bookings from groups. This rhythm has some advantages (variety of guests, balance of more intense and quieter periods, sharpening of study topics) and some disadvantages (fewer long relationships between a core group of guests, workers). But we accept it as God’s answer to our prayer to bring those He wants. Working with groups requires another level of communication about boundaries and expectations; we have learned it is important that at least one person from the group (preferably the one organizing it) has been to l’Abri before.

Our experiment with the ‘hybrid’ weekend model has ended up being more or less a theme weekend with extra people for Saturday morning’s lecture and lunch. These have been well attended (see topics below) by a steady stream of both familiar and new guests. In Utrecht on the other hand we noticed a declining level of interest in the evenings we were offering. With the increasing demands in Eck en Wiel, it has been difficult to maintain a dynamic contact with the local church scene and local student groups there which we once enjoyed and which are vital to an ongoing city work.

**New developments**

The tempo in Eck en Wiel was sustainable over the past three years since the lockdowns thanks to our team having three healthy and capable worker units. We are very thankful for this chapter and see clearly how God has blessed it. It is difficult to say goodbye to Arthur and Mika in this respect, as they have been talented, willing, sacrificial and open-hearted colleagues and friends. At the same time, a number of signs helped us confirm that God’s time for them with us was limited. We originally planned on having them for three years, and it is not possible to arrange a similar visa for them again or any affordable alternative. It is also difficult for them to leave, as they saw their usefulness here and are not yet sure what the next step will be.

Our hope is to find suitable workers to replace them, but we do not feel too great a sense of urgency about that yet. Part of the reason is that following some years of praying about the work in Utrecht, and seeing what we sense to God’s leading about that location, we have decided to close the work of l’Abri there. In addition to the declining interest, increasing maintenance issues and new unexpected costs to update rental licensing in the city led us to see that while the work in Utrecht has had an amazing and fruitful season, it was born and grew in a time when the work in Eck en Wiel was more quiet (no ongoing residential work, only a summer session).

In answer to prayers and with a sense of God’s timing, we continue to see the house there as a provision for l’Abri and for God’s kingdom, but in a new way. By selling the house, the provision for l’Abri could bring the means necessary for some very overdue large maintenance and renovation projects in Eck en Wiel, and the provision for the kingdom could come in that we will only sell it to someone who will use it for a Christian mission in the city. Once we had informed the trustees of our ideas and gotten their permission to proceed with the sale of the house, we began conversations with a number of interested parties. Once the sale is complete, we will tackle the larger renovations in Eck en Wiel: insulation issues in the main house (double glaze windows and new frames, roof insulation, ventilation, gutter repair, plumbing and electrical updates) and the house where the Ludwick and Metz’s live (roof replacement and insulation, plumbing and electrical update).

These projects will not likely begin until after the summer term, but once they do begin it may mean that we cannot receive guests for regular term residential work. We may be open for shorter periods or closed for a longer block to supervise and complete these projects. The Ludwicks and Reitsema’s are confident that with this reduced daily work load we can get through the next chapter without immediately needing a third worker unit.

**New lecture topics of the past year:**

Epigenetics and the Historical Adam and Eve; The Search for Purpose; Is Fear a Bad Advisor?; The Blessings and Limitation of Living in the Present; Substantial Healing: a Wholistic Gospel; The End of the State?; Reflections of Decision Making and Commitment; What Does it Mean to be a Man?; AI and the Art of Digital Creation; The Biblical Eunuch and Questions of Gender and Sex Identity; Gen Z and the New Drive for Finding Meaning; Eschatology for the Common Life; Hope in Times of Crisis; Why Did Jesus Need to Die?

**Films in the program in the past year:**

*Banshees of Inisherin, It’s a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood, C’mon C’mon, Ad Astra, Everything Everywhere All At Once, Barbie, Nausicaa of the Valley of Wind, Spirited Away, Your Name, Aftersun, The Salt of the Earth, Saint Omer, Leave no Trace, Mother!, Anatomy of a Fall*