

What would
love do?



Christmas Dedication 2022

Being close



*There is a deep longing at the heart of the story,
it whispers deeply from within the book, locked in language.
Even lighter than the wind, there floats an endless desire
that sighs and searches for a home in the human being.*

1.2

At the end of the year, people gather with the desire to celebrate the festival of light and peace. So many things have happened this year, around us and within us. The last restrictions of the corona pandemic were lifted, and we regained our freedom of movement. But in all its ferocity, we had to deal with a nitrogen emissions crisis, a faltering reception of refugees, a climate and energy crisis and a stalled housing market. And unprecedented inflation put many people in financial difficulty. Groups also became fiercely opposed to each other because they did not feel heard.



1.3

Peace in the world seems further away than ever, especially when you think of the war in Yemen, the Middle East and in Ukraine. Just think of all the sadness and the degrading situations. But it is precisely then that it is important to continue to see new perspectives and to contribute to them. Ideals, wishes and dreams feed our imagination! They are representations of yourself and the world around you that may never be fully realised. They form a constantly beckoning perspective and are difficult to put into words. And yet ... Goethe once said: 'Our wishes are premonitions of what we are capable of realising.'



1.4

The contrast between all those events and your own ideal is huge in these times. To stay in balance, one needs a foundation on which impressions can land and be appreciated. It requires learning to see life in all its facets. To move along with what life brings, even if it is different than expected. It means living in connection with everything and everyone. And with faith in the power of creation, that mystery from which all that exists stems, including the talent to love. That talent feeds my trust that peace will return.



*We know that it can tilt
towards that happy message of peace and safety.
To the miracle of disarming and dismantling
In that better world of 'one day there will be'.
That love will win
as long as we start tomorrow.
And that we have faith that
we can also build a future.*





1.6

The story of Christmas also tells us about that faith. The confidence in a future where things will go better for humanity.

Although Mary is heavily pregnant and she may go into labour at any moment, there is no place for the couple to spend the night. Jesus is born in a stable, where fortunately an ox and a donkey provide some warmth. Shepherds in the field watch over their flock that night. They are startled by an angel who tells them they have to go to Bethlehem to search for the newborn, because special gifts are attributed to him.

A few days later, three wise men also travel to Bethlehem, guided on their way by a brightly shining star. They have heard that a royal child has been born, who will bring peace to all people. They have brought precious gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh.



1.7

At Christmas, millions of people tell each other this story, each from out of their own background. What does it say to me? It shows me what closeness can mean. And that it sometimes comes from an unexpected source, like those shepherds from the field or people from another country like the three wise men from the east. The story is still relevant today because it speaks of a strong desire to live together in peace and love. It calls on me to take care of this myself. Who else is responsible? Love requires a gesture from me.

1.8

People can be close to each other. To celebrate life together or to view each other with compassion. I am because of the other. You become who you are in connection with others, by entering into relationships, by imitating each other and putting yourself in the other's position. I owe so much to others ... and they to me.

1.9



Interconnectedness creates enormous protection. That is why our society gets so confused, where compassion is under attack. We all know those moments when a feeling of powerlessness or insignificance overwhelms us. That the world is too big and the issues too complex. Our arms do not reach far enough to wrap them around the world. But nearby there is a world to be won, by moving towards our fellow man, the one next to us or opposite us. By being close to them, from nearby.

1.10



In the book 'The boy, the mole, the fox and the horse', the author gives the reader a little nudge by linking simple but beautiful drawings to life's wisdom. Because who does not know the doubt, perhaps even lies awake sometimes with the question: what should I do now? 'What do we do when our heart hurts?', asks the boy. 'Then we wrap it in friendship, shared tears and time, until it wakes up happy and full of hope again.' 'Do you have any other advice?', the boy asked. 'You should not measure your own worth by the way you are

treated,' said the horse. 'Always remember that you matter, you are important, and you are loved, and you enrich this world like no one else can.'

1.11

Being close starts with attention, with seeking contact and looking carefully, with sincere curiosity about who the other person is. *And listening, listening to the very foundation of things.** That paves the way for understanding and acceptance of the other. If you manage to be close to each other in equality, then mutuality can arise. And you can encourage each other to grow and develop. Alternately giving and receiving, through which you and the other get to know the world in its many colours a little better.

1.12

Of course, this does not always work. Let me then ask myself what love would do. Beyond my limitations, I then come to an area where faith and trust are nurtured again. Therefore, let me not waste my time with side issues, but work in all reality for peace. Closeness contributes to this.



Delving



2.1

How to live is a question that has occupied mankind throughout all times and cultures. Even today, they continue to immerse themselves in it. It is a question that requires space and imagination because there is no single answer. It is a recurring question that requires an answer in every time and in every life situation. Imagination can help us to let go of an opinion and see what could be better, more beautiful and more sustainable. Thinking of our earth, of human rights, of an inclusive society with room for every human being, gives direction to our choices.

2.2

During the Easter meeting in de Doelen in Rotterdam, a new beginning for our Society was heralded. Nanda Ziere and Marten van der Wal were appointed as the Principal Pastors responsible for spiritual care. Moreover, a statutory separation was announced between the spiritual leadership and the chairmanship of the board. It is a step in a development that has been going on for some time. In the communities, a movement towards other ways of organising themselves and towards other forms of offering inspiration, delving and closeness had already begun. The corona period in 2020 and 2021 has accelerated this development. Both Principal Pastors want to support this movement of ownership. Together with us and other interested people, they want to strengthen the essence of the religious-humanistic foundation, with the aim of contributing to a dignified world where people live consciously and lovingly.

2.3

In their first letter, they wrote how they want to be human: simple, honest, natural and sparkling, and that they want to continue to choose love whatever happens in life. Choosing love has a long history. Long before our era, someone wrote: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' And even earlier, in the Bible, the story of creation begins with: 'Let there be light.' I see these elements as a precious inheritance and a deeply felt task to myself. We continue to innovate in our Society, but the core remains the same: to provide light and love.







Faith

Sometimes you just want to lay your head on the earth,
raise your fist to the sky,
let the tears come and say:

*It must be because I am black, white, woman,
fat, thin, too big, too small,
too sweet, unkind,
because I am ugly, honest,
direct, poetic, eloquent,
too visible, invisible,
vulnerable,
poor, proud and confrontational?
That must be why!*

*And that the earth, with her soft hands,
then gently pushes you up,
kisses you on the cheek and whispers:
it is because you are so incredibly human.
Not too much, not too little, just human enough.
Just as human as other people.
Exactly right.*

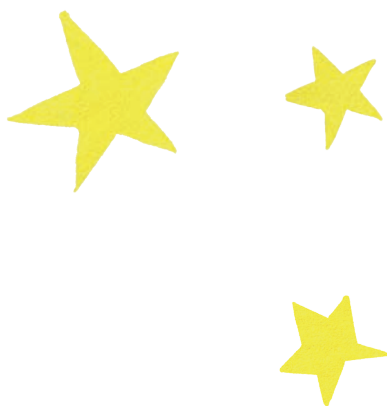
2.5

The children's version of the Apostolic foundation of our faith says, among other things: 'Life is a great miracle, which surprises us again and again. But sometimes it also makes us sad. For example, when we see that people are hungry or wage war or when a volcano erupts. Before you, there were also people. And after you, there will be new people. In this way all people are connected to each other like a long chain.'



2.6

In understandable words, we try to create the feeling that each one of us is part of something special: of creation, of life, of the past, of today and tomorrow. In which everything is. Beautiful things and experiences, but also incomprehensible and sad ones. In this reality, we want to nurture in each other the confidence that you are just as human as other people. Exactly right. Yet people sometimes try to give you the feeling that you are not allowed to be. Because you are different or think differently. Or look different. Come from Ukraine. Presumably this is because we often find it easy to think in terms of pigeon holes or in terms of us-and-them. But we are not Dutch, soldier, resistance fighter or refugee. We are human beings, in all simplicity and yet with unprecedented possibilities.



*Living an
Inspired life*



Standing still for a moment

The quiet days are coming
 Time to pause for a moment
 Think and reflect
 Conclude or begin again
 What to do with wishes or dreams
 Things that happened to you
 Leave them be and leave them behind
 The worst ones become lighter
 The most beautiful get a place in your heart
 Make a new start every year
 Start with your old or new dreams
 Let life come to you
 Love, admire and enjoy
 More than this life, you do not have

3.2

To the question of what a meaningful life is, former president of the Dutch Social-Economic Council, Alexander Rinnooy Kan, replies: 'What gives life meaning is the awareness of being part of an incomprehensible miracle, the idea of persistent ignorance. But we do not face this without opportunities. The miracle of existence leads to the human urge to nibble at the edges of the riddle, to keep asking questions. Choosing to be curious is a wonderful human trait, a source of energy and inspiration. What I find special about the journey through life is the possibility of making it in the company of others, so that we can learn something from our fellow travellers and also give something to them.'

3.3

Can you see those travelling companions before you? The person who told you it would be alright, because you followed your heart. The person who put on your favourite song especially for you, just because. The one who saw a tear in your eye and asked if they could do anything for you. The one who said: "You can do that." The one who told you that you don't always have to be the strongest. That one person who specially called you to wish you a beautiful day. That peppermint sweet just at the right moment. That loving nickname just for you.

Marieke Lucas Rijneveld calls these moments, places or people of small kindnesses a 'warmth fortress'. Where you are really acknowledged, where you feel loved and where your faith in the possible is nurtured. Who or what was such a warmth fortress for you?

3.4

When I manage to look attentively at the other person and listen to the deeper layer behind the stories, I get to a special place within me. Where it is softer, more tender, where gratitude is born, emotions are evoked, to that "something" that moves me to want to be a warmth fortress myself. Could this be the area of my soul? My religious feeling?

3.5

There are people who find their peace and inspiration in nature.



3.6

There are also people for whom the encounter with the other is essential to experience something like inspiration. Inspiration that is needed to build a loving and humane society, in which everyone can achieve their full potential.

In the aforementioned children's story about faith, it says: 'We cannot live without other people. We belong together. Yet, it is sometimes quite difficult to live together because we are all different. But those differences also make it fun and exciting. And because we are so different, we can learn a lot from each other. So, let's just say to each other: how good it is that you and I are here.'







3.7

Do we, as Apostolic people, not all have in common the desire to form an inspired association of people where we recognise ourselves in each other? This need may be stronger in times of crisis. In our communities we can always look for inspiration and evoke it in each other. Perhaps on a Sunday for that one person who needs it so much. Or perhaps now. And we are all that *one person* from time to time.

3.8

With each new child, desire and hope for new horizons are born. But if your life starts with a war ... then there must be something in opposition to this that offers perspective and inspires peaceful coexistence. An attack on humanity requires a loving gesture from person to person. The fullness of life presents itself in all its beauty and hostility at the same time. Sooner or later, one or the other will cross your path. Do we still dare to believe that peace is possible?



3.9

I think that deep down inside, every human being longs for wholeness. It is very important to pause in time, now and then and realise what you are part of and what you have a part in. It is good to regularly remember that you, as a part of creation, are endowed with the highest talent: love.

3.10

To show love is first and foremost giving space to allow the other person to be different from you. When someone is appreciated in their uniqueness through a loving gesture, an encouraging word or a listening ear, it can be the start of personal development. Such appreciation can be extremely precious to the other person. We desperately need each other. Not as proclaimers of absolute truths, but as courageous people who freely support and acknowledge each other in their uniqueness.



3.11

Inclusivity requires a strong voice against brutalisation. In Matthew, Jesus says to his disciples: 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am'. He is saying that with you and me, it is possible to create and maintain an attitude of inclusivity. Hopefully we can still imagine that it is possible to live in equality, with people, all people. Marieke Lucas Rijneveld ends in a poem with the appeal to continue to believe in this:





*(...) it is fraternisation you want, you want one fist, and maybe your hand is
not yet powerful enough, or you may first have to grasp
that of the other to reconcile, you must actually feel the hope
that you are doing something that will improve the world, although you must
not forget this: after kneeling, stand up and together straighten your back.*









About the illustrator

Marjolein Verbrugge made the illustrations for this Christmas Dedication. She made sketches based on the texts and then gouged them into linocuts. Marjolein: “It was a fascinating assignment with wonderful, philosophical topics. That makes me happy. In the illustrations, I am depicting night versus light, warmth versus cold and loneliness versus nearness. What I think is beautiful about the texts is the search for connection, for living together, for listening to each other. That is what my illustrations are about, about connection with each other and the world.

In the illustration ‘Being near’, one is being surrounded by the other’s words, they completely flow over them. He takes them in, truly listens. For ‘Delving’ I was mostly inspired by the poem *Vertrouwen* (‘Trust’). The idea of being allowed to be human. The way you are. Of being good the way you are on this planet. With ‘Inspired living’ I was touched by Rinnooy Kan’s words about travelling companions. Every now and then on your journey through life, you grab each other. You learn from each other and give each other something. The cover is a variation of the illustration of travelling companions. People take each other along on their journeys through life. The girl decides, determined: I am taking part!”

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Being close

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- 1.2 Text Henk Canten, Mieke Onderstal
- 1.3 Text Jan Zwart, magazine *Vieren PAX*, 2022
- 1.4 Weekly Letter 1, 2022 *A new year, a new day*
- 1.5 Extract from the poem *Overleven (Surviving)*, Paul van Vliet
- 1.6 Text Henk Canten, Mieke Onderstal
- 1.7 Text Henk Canten, Mieke Onderstal
- 1.8 Freely from Weekly Letter 9, 2022 *Me and the other*
- 1.9 Freely from Weekly Letter 9, 2022 *Me and the other* and Weekly Letter 29, 2021 *My answer to bewilderment and indignation. In other words: What in the name of peace am I doing?*
- 1.10 Weekly Letter 3, 2022 *Wisdom and trust*, quotations from *The boy, the mole, the fox and the horse*, Charlie Mackesy, Kokboekencentrum Jeugd, 2020
- 1.11 Weekly Letter 29, 2021 *My answer to bewilderment and indignation. In other words: What in the name of peace am I doing?*
*Quote from *Het verstoorde leven (The disturbed life)*, Ety Hillesum, 8 March 1942
- 1.12 Weekly Letter 29, 2021 *My answer to bewilderment and indignation. In other words: What in the name of peace am I doing?*

Delving

- 2.1 Freely from Weekly Letter 5, 2022 *Forever courageously forward* and Weekly Letter 18, 2021 *The future requires space*
- 2.2 Freely from press release Apostolic Society, 18 April, 2022
- 2.3 Freely from Weekly Letter 12, 2022 *Choosing for simplicity, direction and variation* and Leviticus 19:18 and Genesis 1:3
- 2.4 Poem *Precies Goed (Exactly Right)*, from the poetry collection *Doe het toch maar (Do it anyway)*, Babs Gons.
- 2.5 Weekly Letter 13, 2022 *Standing for Love* and the Foundation of our faith for children: apgen.nl/geloofsverhaalvoorkinderen
- 2.6 Freely from Weekly Letter 13, 2022 *Standing for love*

Living an inspired life

- 3.1 Weekly Letter 40, 2021 *Standing still to move consciously* and poem *Even stil staan (stan still for a moment)*, poet unknown
- 3.2 Weekly Letter 28, 2020 *Peace unites differences* and quote from interview series *Zinvol leven (Living meaningfully)*, Fokke Obbema, Volkskrant, 21 June 2020
- 3.3 Freely from Weekly Letter 16, 2022 *Wanting to be a warmth fortress*
- 3.4 Freely from Weekly Letter 16, 2022 *Wanting to be a warmth fortress*
- 3.5 Video from the series *Wat bezielt ons: 'Je bent opgenomen in iets dat groter is dan jij'*, Apostolic Society, 2022: apgen.nl/dickdevos
- 3.6 Weekly letter 7, 2022 *Recognising oneself in each other* and the Foundation of our faith for children: apgen.nl/geloofsverhaalvoorkinderen
- 3.7 Freely from Weekly Letter 16, 2022 *Wanting to be a warmth fortress*
- 3.8 Weekly Letter 7, 2022 *Living sustainably together in a world*
- 3.9 Weekly Letter 37, 2019 *Brief and endless ... now!*
- 3.10 Weekly Letter 37, 2019 *Brief and endless ... now!*
- 3.11 Weekly Letter 27, 2021 *Creating and preserving inclusivity* and part of the poem *Alles bewoonbaar (Everything habitable)*, Marieke Lucas Rijneveld, Volkskrant, 3 March 2021

Colofon

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APOSTOLIC SOCIETY

a place for religious humanistic philosophy