

## Between cocoon and imagination

Beloved person,

You may have heard of Maria Sibylla Merian. She was born in 1647 in Frankfurt and died in 1717 in Amsterdam. Merian was an artist, scientist, and entrepreneur. She raised insects in pots and boxes, followed their development, and illustrated each phase. In her first major work on caterpillars, she was one of the first to depict the complete metamorphosis: caterpillar, pupa, and butterfly together on a leaf, in the middle of their natural environment. In doing so, she refuted the then-common idea that insects simply arose from mud. And she showed that change is a process.

Her strength lay in her attentive way of looking. She saw how the veins of a leaf ran, how a tadpole slowly grew legs, and how a butterfly unfolded its wings. What she observed, she carefully worked out in her drawings. Her curiosity even took her to Suriname<sup>1</sup> in 1699 together with her daughter. Just imagine living in that time and undertaking such a long journey as a woman.

Like Merian, we too can learn to look at change. With attention to the process, to the details. With wonder at what is possible and what we ourselves would never have thought of. With the power of imagination to express what we see happening through colours, shapes, words. That can be from the outside, but also from within, as Bette Westera wrote in her poetry.

### **Cocoon**

*How I looked forward  
to the moment  
of being a butterfly,  
of being free and of flying  
of seeing everything in the world  
with purple peacock eyes.*

*Once an outlaw butterfly  
the world flies at me so  
that I would prefer to crawl back  
into my dark cocoon.  
That safe covering  
that spun around my caterpillar body.*

In this poem, how change can be experienced becomes tangible. Where there was at first a longing for freedom, that same freedom can also turn out to be overwhelming. The world comes at us with full force. What seems so beautiful and light from a distance can feel tense and uncertain from within. Do you recognise this? What images and experiences arise for you?

Maybe you recognise something of that desire to grow, while at the same time feeling the need for safety. That both exist side by side. That change takes time, space, and enough warmth to be able to (and dare to) spread your wings. From our own experiences, we can also try to imagine what this process might be like for someone else. For someone who is different. What does it ask of me to be open to that? What space do I make for thoughts and feelings other than those I already know?

On Saturday 18 April <sup>2</sup>, we will work on the power of imagination with all pastoral carers who can be present.<sup>3</sup> To discover space in the life given to us and the circumstances we find ourselves in (which can be light, hopeful, heavy, or hopeless), and to look for whether other perspectives are possible.

For when we dare to be present with time and attention in our own lives, to move with trust along with what wants to unfold within us, and to also wish and give that same space to the other, creation can express itself in its most beautiful form.<sup>4</sup>

With a warm-hearted greeting, gladly your sister,

Nanda Ziere



**We remember those who have gone before us**

<sup>1</sup> Metamorphosis of Surinamese insects

<sup>2</sup> This Saturday, all brothers and sisters who work in key positions are also invited

<sup>3</sup> The brochures are at: <https://vindplaats.apgen.nl/communities/geestelijke-verzorging/geestelijke-zorg/> .

<sup>4</sup> Reproduced, with thanks, from Weekly Letter number 12, 2026