

## You can do this and I will travel with you

Beloved person,

'You and I, always on the way together.' These simple words contain a deep and significant meaning. Being on the way together means more than just being on a journey with others. It means truly seeing each other, meeting each other in stories and experiences, despite *and* because of our differences. After all, we are fellow travellers on our life's journey. It takes courage to open yourself up to the other and to be touched without immediately judging. Herein lies a collective challenge and the opportunity to connect truly and meaningfully.

This Sunday, during the generation meeting in the Dutch Open-Air Museum in Arnhem, that connection is central. Different generations come together, not only to share memories, but especially because of the meeting, and to learn from each other. It is precisely in sharing our stories that understanding, empathy and deeply felt connection arise. Only in connection with the other does our story gain meaning. In that interaction, something new can arise, sometimes unexpectedly.

Our connectedness originates from the realisation that all life is part of one incomprehensible totality; a source of energy, of life and love that is present in ourselves, in others and in all that lives. However, reality is turbulent, and often feels like us-them thinking. Psychiatrist Dirk de Wachter recently spoke about the tendency towards individualism, towards one's personal ' "me-me" existence, especially in periods of uncertainty and tension. Especially *then*, it is essential to actively seek the connection, to invest in attention, caring and loving involvement with each other. Investing in connection yields the greatest return in good times *and* bad.<sup>1</sup>

How do we ensure that people and/or generations do not live alongside each other, resulting in insufficient attention to the other? What is needed for genuine interest and listening to each other? Connecting with the other starts with me. If you and I share our ideals, our thinking, feeling and acting can evoke mutual inspiration. Let us give each other space to explore, to make mistakes, to push boundaries and to choose direction again. Trust and encouragement are the foundation on which we can build together.<sup>2</sup>

Poet Tom van Deel gives us a reassuring thought when he says that the road does not always show itself. That there are roads that get lost in more or less transparent side paths, in ups and downs without a clear goal. But there is always a road, 'because no matter what, it is on its way, otherwise it would not be there'.<sup>3</sup> The road that you travel together always has bumps and bends. Sometimes you stumble or you get lost. But you can always trust in hands that help you get up again and because of that you do not have to be paralysed or held back. After all, you are on the way *together*, so what can happen to you?

The world we want to live in and reach our destination in, does not just happen by itself; it requires us to talk to each other again and again. In the coming period, let us consciously look for moments of connection, for opportunities to meet and encourage each other. Let us say to each other and let each other feel, again and again: 'You can do this and I will travel with you'. Because ultimately, we are not only our own story, but above all the story that we shape together, in connection and with loving attention for each other and for the world around us.

With a warm-hearted greeting,  
sister Mieke Onderstal and brother Martien Hoendermis

We thank Theo Kiffers for his input towards this letter.



1. Dirk de Wachter in the television program Buitenhof of April 13, 2025
2. Merlijn Twaalfhoven, from: It is up to us, 2020, publisher Atlas contact
3. Tom van Deel, from: While it is still light, 1998, publisher Querido