

Global connectedness

Beloved person,

Last week, I was a guest at Sandra and Santi's farm in the south of France for a training week. Together with the other participants, I had the privilege of staying at their beautiful place, right in the midst of the animals, plants and the food forest that they have watched grow with so much love over the past few years. From the very moment I arrived, I felt that I had arrived at a special place. Throughout the week, they spoke passionately about the principles of permaculture that guide their lives and everything they are trying to build. In the food forest, nothing exists in isolation. Trees, shrubs, flowers, insects, animals, *and* people are all part of the same living whole in which everything is connected to everything else. What one gives makes the life of another possible. Fallen leaves become nourishment for new growth. Strong trees offer shelter to young plants. And what is sown today sometimes does not bear fruit until years later.

As I walked around there, I also noticed how different that is from the world in which I grew up. A world in which the question '*can I have a little more?*' is often the guiding principle. More possibilities, more experiences, more possessions, more success. As if a good life consists primarily of getting as much out of life as possible. And without us even noticing, we may forget that our desire for more has consequences for others or for the earth, on which we are guests.

Perhaps that is the reason why that place touched me so deeply: nothing is rushed there. Nothing needs to grow faster than it can. There is trust that growth takes time. Life there is not about taking as much as possible, but about the question of how everything that lives can contribute to the greater whole. Not only today, but also tomorrow. Not only for yourself, but also for what and who comes after you. And how what has been continues to influence the life of today. For no tree grows alone. Life thrives because it is not only taken, but also nourished, cared for, and passed on.

Our new quarterly theme, *global connectedness*¹, took on a face, as it were, in the south of France. Everything that lives, breathes, and grows is part of a greater whole of which we ourselves are also a part. That realisation calls for recognition, responsibility, and solidarity: with the people beside us, with future generations, *and* with the entire living whole of which we are a part. Not from the perspective of what something or someone can provide to us, but from the awareness that we are connected to one another and dependent on one another.

From our religious-humanist worldview, this has a profound meaning. We believe that all life is a finite part of an infinite, indivisible whole and that all life originates from a single source. Not as an abstract principle, but as an attitude to life. For whoever recognises something sacred, something of the transcendent or divine, in life cannot help but look with reverence at everything that lives. And then it becomes difficult to believe that one life is worth more than another.

Now that I am back home, I notice at the same time how challenging that is. For *believing* in equality is different from *living* equality. Perhaps solidarity begins precisely there: in the willingness to acknowledge that I am an inextricable part of the whole. And what then causes friction are the questions that arise from this. What does this connectedness demand of me? What choices are involved? What does this mean for the way I live? It is precisely that discomfort that tells me something important. I look forward not to avoiding it, but to exploring what it has to say to me. Would you like to take on this challenge with me?

With a warm-hearted greeting, gladly your brother,

Marten van der Wal



Attention for our connection with new life

¹ www.apostolischgenootschap.nl/jaarthema2026

During the summer period, weekly letters will be written by a few district pastors. I am sincerely grateful that they want to do this and I look forward to being inspired.