

# Blessings under pressure

THE WORK OF MIGRANT CHURCHES IN THE CITY OF ROTTERDAM

SKIN Rotterdam© 2009

*A report by Barbara Tah Gwanmesia*



The work of migrant  
churches in the city of  
Rotterdam



Blessings  
under  
pressure



You are a  
Gift  
to the City

## you are a Gift to the City



## Colofon

### Blessings Under Pressure

© *This work was commissioned in 2009 by SKIN Rotterdam*

Onderzoeker:

BARBARA TAH GWANMESIA

bmgwanmesia@gmail.com

SKIN ROTTERDAM

Heemraadssingel 112

skinrotterdam@gmail.com

### RESEARCH COMMISSIONING TEAM

Pastor Nana Opoku - *SKIN Rotterdam Chairman*

Dhr. Piet De Vries - *SKIN Rotterdam Board member*

Dhr. Tjakko Bouwman - *SKIN Rotterdam Board member*

## Voorwoord

### Introductie

Met genoegen presenteert SKIN Rotterdam u het onderzoeksrapport "Blessings Under Pressure – the work of migrant churches in the city of Rotterdam". Dit onderzoek, uitgevoerd door Barbara Tah Gwanmesia in opdracht van SKIN Rotterdam, kan beschouwd worden als nadere toelichting op de onderwerpen die in het eerder verschenen rapport "Tel je Zegeningen" aan de orde zijn gesteld<sup>1</sup>. In "Tel je Zegeningen" wordt berekend dat de vele maatschappelijke activiteiten van migrantenkerken in Rotterdam de stad zo'n 55 à 66 miljoen euro per jaar besparen (berekend tegen tarieven van seculiere instanties voor vergelijkbare activiteiten). Het huidige rapport "Blessings Under Pressure" beschrijft hoe migrantenkerken functioneren, welke invloed migrantenkerken hebben op het leven van hun leden en op de Rotterdamse samenleving als geheel. Het onderzoek is gebaseerd op twaalf case studies onder (leden van) migrantenkerken, in het bijzonder kerken van de meest recente golf: kerken door en voor migranten die de laatste twintig jaar in Nederland zijn opgericht. Deze kerken vormen de meerderheid van de migrantenkerken in Rotterdam, zijn meestal Evangelisch of Pinkstergemeentes, en kenmerken zich door dynamische ontwikkelingen en de centrale rol die de voorganger speelt in de oprichting en het dagelijkse leven van de kerk.

Aan het slot van het rapport worden enige aanbevelingen gedaan richting de gemeente Rotterdam, SKIN Rotterdam en andere partners omtrent de wijze waarop het potentieel van de migrantenkerken en de samenwerking met andere partijen verder gestimuleerd en geprofessionaliseerd kan worden.

### Bevindingen

De omstandigheden waarin de leden van migrantenkerken zich bevinden zijn vaak moeilijk, en de uitdagingen waarmee kerkleiders zich geconfronteerd zien zeer complex. Een migrantenkerk is een multifunctionele organisatie die haar leden op verschillende manieren bedient. Intern ondersteunt de gemeenschap haar leden bij het acclimatiseren in de Nederlandse maatschappij en helpt hen wegwijs te worden in de samenleving. De onderlinge steun bevordert het psychologische proces om je thuis te leren voelen in een vreemde omgeving. Daarnaast kloppen leden met allerlei materiële noden bij de kerk aan om hulp, bijvoorbeeld voor kleding, voedsel of onderdak. Dit reflecteert de zwakke sociaal-economische positie waarin veel leden zich bevinden: met name werkloosheid en illegaliteit veroorzaken veel problemen. Aangezien kerken het vertrouwen van de mensen genieten,

krijgt de voorganger zo de functie van maatschappelijk werker. Armoede, huiselijk geweld en huwelijksproblemen, drugs- en alcoholverslaving onder de jeugd, schuldhulp en gezondheidsproblemen – voorgangers worden hiervoor dagelijks om hulp gevraagd. Kerken bieden hulp o.a. door middel van voedselbanken, trainingen, pastorale zorg, support groepen voor mannen, vrouwen of jongeren. De activiteiten van de kerken, georganiseerd door interne commissies, zorgen voor de aanwezigheid van een vitale infrastructuur, die ook mensen weet te bereiken die anders moeilijk te bereiken zouden zijn (denk aan illegalen of mensen die moeite hebben de taal- en cultuurbarrière te doorbreken). Vertrouwen in hun kerk/voorganger is hiervoor de essentiële basis. Op deze wijze zijn de activiteiten van de kerk bij uitstek gericht op het creëren van stabiliteit in de gemeenschap, het bijbrengen van christelijke normen en waarden zoals betrokkenheid bij de samenleving, en het voorkomen van ongewenst sociaal gedrag. De kerken zijn vrijwel altijd volledig afhankelijk van de bijdragen van de leden, en voorgangers zien zich om die reden dan ook vaak gedwongen een reguliere baan te zoeken om financieel het hoofd boven water te houden. Na werktijd houden zij zich bezig met hun kerktaken, een takenpakket dat taken bevat waartoe zij niet zijn opgeleid. Velen zijn met dubbele banen echter zo zwaar belast dat ze geen tijd hebben om zichzelf verder te ontwikkelen door middel van opleidingen en dergelijke. Het gevaar bestaat dat kerkleiders en hun gemeenschappen zodanig worden opgeslokt door dagelijkse zorgen dat zij in een sociaal isolement dreigen te geraken.

## Aanbevelingen

Het VoorgangersOverlegRotterdam en SKIN Rotterdam bieden (leiders van) migrantenkerken de gelegenheid met elkaar in contact te treden, informatie en ervaringen uit te wisselen, en te brainstormen over gemeenschappelijke problemen.

Het rapport "Blessings Under Pressure" doet enkele aanbevelingen in welke richtingen deze initiatieven verder uitgebouwd zouden kunnen worden:

- De overheid kan fondsen beschikbaar stellen voor het ondersteunen van de maatschappelijke activiteiten van de migrantenkerken, eventueel via organisaties als SKIN Rotterdam.
- Het is aan te raden een schuldhulpprogramma en financieel educatiecentrum voor voorgangers te starten, evenals een microkredietprogramma voor kerkleiders (SoZaWe, KvK en SKIN Rotterdam).
- De armoede van individuele leden moet structureel aangepakt worden door onderliggende problemen te verhelpen (i.s.m. Nederlandse christelijke organisaties en kerken). Dit kan bijvoorbeeld door "inloopcentra" door en voor migrantenkerken te creëren, waar getrainde

vrijwilligers kunnen helpen met individuele problemen (bijv. onderwijs, werkgelegenheid, gezondheidszorg).

Daarnaast kan er gedacht worden aan een centrale call center, bemand door kerkleden zelf, waar mensen met hun vragen terecht kunnen. Het idee hier achter is dat men op deze wijze het vertrouwen dat mensen in hun kerk hebben behoudt, omdat de inloopcentra en het call center 'van henzelf' is, bemand door vrijwilligers uit hun eigen gemeenten. Door de diensten te centraliseren kunnen voorgangers ontlast worden en problemen centraal worden gemonitord.

- Men zou een informatiecampaagne of onderwijsprogramma over bepaalde sociale problematieken kunnen overwegen, gebruikmakend van de bestaande structuur binnen kerken op het gebied van onderwijs (trainingen e.d.).
- Op dit moment is huisvesting voor veel migrantenkerken een groot probleem: geschikte huisvesting is moeilijk te vinden en kost bovendien geld, wat veel migrantenkerken niet hebben. Tegelijkertijd komen er kerkgebouwen vrij wanneer traditionele Nederlandse kerken hun gebouwen afstoten. Een optie zou zijn dat de gemeente gebouwen koopt of huurt van de Nederlandse kerken, en ze (door)verhuurt aan migrantenkerken onder voor migrantenkerken haalbare voorwaarden.

## Conclusie

Migrantkerken beschikken over een netwerk waarmee ze de kwetsbare onderlaag van de maatschappij weten te bereiken. Zij genieten het vertrouwen van hun leden en helpen hen zoveel mogelijk via interne werkgroepen. Aangezien zij voor hun inkomsten echter afhankelijk zijn van de bijdragen van hun leden lijden ze onder een tekort aan middelen. De gemeente Rotterdam en verschillende maatschappelijke organisaties in de stad hebben ofwel de financiële ofwel de know how die migrantkerken goed van pas zouden komen om hen te helpen de problemen van hun leden het hoofd te bieden. SKIN Rotterdam zou een brugfunctie moeten innemen tussen hulpaanbod en hulpbehoevenden; cruciaal is hierbij dat bestaande structuren binnen de kerken, die immers het vertrouwen van de leden genieten, worden gerespecteerd en verder geprofessionaliseerd in lijn met de behoeften van de kerken.

<sup>1</sup> Zie [http://www.pkn.nl/site/uploadedDocs/rapport\\_maatschappelijke\\_waarde\\_Rdam\\_juli\\_08.pdf](http://www.pkn.nl/site/uploadedDocs/rapport_maatschappelijke_waarde_Rdam_juli_08.pdf)

# Contents

<b>1.</b>	<b>Much out of little: Blessings Under Pressure</b>	<b>6</b>
1.0	Introduction	6
1.1	Background	6
1.1.1	Much out of Little: Blessing under pressure	6
1.2	Scope of research	7
1.3	Methodology	8
1.3.1	Interviews	
1.3.2	Literature	
1.3.3	Outline	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Migrant Churches: serving migrants, society and municipality in Rotterdam</b>	<b>9</b>
2.0	Introduction	9
2.1	The migrant church: Good for the migrant community in Rotterdam and beyond	9
2.2	The migrant church: Good for society in Rotterdam	10
2.3	The migrant church: Good for the Rotterdam Municipal Government	11
2.4	Conclusion	13
<b>3.</b>	<b>Modus operandi of the migrant church: Strategies of Achieving goals</b>	<b>15</b>
3.0	Introduction	15
3.1	Whose modus operandi is under discussion?	15
3.2	Modus operandi of the migrant church: How does the migrant church work?	15
3.2.1	Spirit	
3.2.1.1	Sunday services	
3.2.1.2	Mid week services	
3.2.1.3	Revival	
3.2.1.4	Conferences	
3.2.2	Soul	
3.2.3	Body	
3.3	Conclusion	17
<b>4.</b>	<b>Working conditions of the migrant church</b>	<b>18</b>
4.0	Introduction	18
4.1	Migrant churches' working conditions	18
4.2	Conclusion	19
<b>5.</b>	<b>Case Studies</b>	<b>20</b>
5.0	Introduction	
5.1	<b>Case study one:</b> Potter's hand new covenant word international ministries	20
5.1.1	About: Potters' hand new covenant word international	
5.1.2	History of the church	
5.1.3	Daily operation	
5.1.4	Organizational structure	
5.1.5	Services and activities of the church - <i>Member challenges &amp; activities of the church</i>	
5.1.6	Resources	
5.2	<b>Case study two:</b> Thugz church	21
5.2.1	About Thugz church	
5.2.2	History of the church	
5.2.3	Organizational structure	
5.2.4	Daily operation	
5.2.5	Services and activities of the church - <i>Member challenges &amp; activities of the church</i>	
5.2.6	Resources	
5.3	<b>Case study three/four:</b> The redeemed christian church of God-Rotterdam and Schiedam parishes	23
5.3.1	About the redeemed christian church of God: <i>Rotterdam and Schiedam</i>	
5.3.1.1	Rotterdam	
5.3.1.2	Schiedam	
5.3.2	History of the church	
5.3.3	RCCG in the Netherlands: Rotterdam and Schiedam	
5.3.4	Organizational structure	
5.3.5	Daily operation: Rotterdam and Schiedam	
5.3.6	Services and activities of the church - <i>Member challenges &amp; activities of the church</i>	
5.3.6.1	Rotterdam	
5.3.6.2	Schiedam	
5.3.7	Resources	
5.5	<b>Case study five:</b> Evangelische broedergemeente Rotterdam	25
5.5.1	About Evangelische broedergemeente Rotterdam	
5.5.2	History of the church	
5.5.3	Organizational structure	
5.5.4	Daily operation	
5.5.5	Services and activities of the church - <i>Member challenges &amp; activities of the church</i>	
5.5.6	Resources	

# Contents

5.6	<b>Case study six:</b> Abundant Grace Ministries	26
5.6.1	About Abundant Grace Ministries	
5.6.2	History of the church	
5.6.3	Organizational structure	
5.6.4	Daily operation	
5.6.5	Services and activities of the church - <i>Member challenges &amp; activities of the church</i>	
5.6.6	Resources	
5.7	<b>Case study seven:</b> Alliance messianique pour l'évangélisation des Nations (a m e n)	27
5.7.1	About a m e n	
5.7.2	History of the church	
5.7.3	Organizational structure	
5.7.4	Daily operation	
5.7.5	Services and activities of the church - <i>Member challenges &amp; activities of the church</i>	
5.7.6	Resources	
5.8	<b>Case study eight:</b> Claypot Community Centre	29
5.8.1	About Claypot Community Centre	
5.8.2	History of the church	
5.8.3	Organizational structure	
5.8.4	Daily operation	
5.8.5	Services and activities of the church - <i>Member challenges &amp; activities of the church</i>	
5.8.6	Resources	
5.9	<b>Case study nine:</b> Mahaber Church (Ethiopian Evangelical Church).	30
5.9.1	About Mahaber Church ( <i>Ethiopian Evangelical Church</i> )	
5.9.2	History of the church	
5.9.3	Organizational structure	
5.9.4	Daily operation	
5.9.5	Services and activities of the church - <i>Member challenges &amp; activities of the church</i>	
5.9.6	Resources	
5.10	<b>Case study ten:</b> Holy Fire Revival Ministries International	31
5.10.1	About Holy Fire Revival Ministries International	
5.10.2	History of the church	
5.10.3	Organizational structure	
5.10.4	Daily operation	
5.10.5	Services and activities of the church - <i>Member challenges &amp; activities of the church</i>	
5.10.6	Resources	
5.11	<b>Conclusion</b>	33
6.	<b>Individual Case Studies</b>	34
6.0	Introduction	34
6.1	Individual Case Study one: The Story of Solange	34
6.1.1	<i>Concluding Reflection</i>	
6.2	Individual Case Study two: Semere Gabriel (Pastor)	35
6.3	<i>Concluding Reflection</i>	35
7.	<b>Working together for a better City : Current developments</b>	36
7.0	Introduction	36
7.1	Appreciation, Cooperation and Recognition	36
7.2	Conclusion	36
8.	<b>Looking for solutions: some suggestions</b>	38
8.0	Introduction	38
8.1	Table of problems and suggested solutions	38
8.2	Conclusion	42
9.	<b>What role can SKIN Rotterdam play in alleviating the problems of migrant churches</b>	43
9.0	Introduction	43
9.1	How can SKIN Rotterdam be of use to the municipality and to migrant churches in Rotterdam?	43
9.1.1	Example I	
9.1.2	Example II	
9.2	Conclusion	44
10.	<b>Conclusion</b>	45
	<b>Appendices:</b>	46
	Abbreviations	
	Church Informants	
	<b>Notes</b>	47
	<b>References</b>	50

## 1

## MUCH OUT OF LITTLE: BLESSINGS UNDER PRESSURE

## 1.0 Introduction

When in 1651, the Katholieke Charitas in Rotterdam set up the Gemene Armenbeurs to assist orphans, sick people, the elderly and the poor of Rotterdam,<sup>1</sup> it began a Christian mandate that in the Rotterdam of 2009 seems unfathomable – unfathomable, that is, until one enters the deep of the city and into the heart of its migrant churches. In this study commissioned by SKIN Rotterdam, I will trace the work of migrant churches in Rotterdam – particularly their impact on the lives of members and society, paying special attention to the problems they face, the conditions under which they work, the resources at their disposal, and the opportunities which the work of these churches offers Rotterdam's municipal government. Bearing in mind the conditions under which these churches labour and the opportunities their work offers both the municipal government and society in Rotterdam, I will proceed to analyse the role that organizations such as SKIN Rotterdam are capable of playing in both allowing the municipality access to the full benefits of the work of the churches as well as enhancing the municipality's ability to support and bolster the effort of these churches.

In this chapter, I will present the justification for this study, its scope, methodology and outline. From the outline, a clear picture of the structure of the study and intended results emerges.

## 1.1 Background

In 2003, a study conducted in Apeldoorn Zuid by Stichting Oikos, entitled *De Hofstad, een cadeautje aan de samenleving*, revealed that De Hofstad church community saves Apeldoorn at least EUR 700,000 per year. (Van der Sar & Schoenmaker, 2003). Following this study, Stichting Oikos released in 2004 another report commissioned by the National Service Center of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (on the occasion of the first Protestantse Kerkdag) on the Social Return On Investment (SROI) of the Protestant Parish of Utrecht. In that report, entitled *Van Harte! Onderzoek naar het maatschappelijk rendement van de Protestantse Gemeente in Utrecht*, Van der Sar (2004) revealed that the average revenue of PKN churches in 15 districts in the city, saved the Utrecht municipality €550,000 in that year and for all 15 districts, €8,25 million (Van der Sar, 2004). These two reports on largely Dutch churches were later to lead to the first research on the contribution of migrant churches in The Netherlands, again carried out by Stichting Oikos. This time commissioned by

SKIN Nederland and Stek, the study, entitled *Gratis en waardevol: Rol, positie en maatschappelijk rendement van migrantenkerken in Den Haag* (Van der Sar & Visser, 2006), disclosed that in 2006, the work of migrant churches in The Hague saved the city municipality a total of €17,5 million. For Rotterdam, these reports all foreshadowed what the Nijmegen Institute for Mission Studies (NIM) (in collaboration with KASKI) would publish in 2008 on the contributions of Christian churches in Rotterdam to society. The NIM/KASKI report, entitled “Tel je Zegeningen” or Count your blessings, concluded that Christian churches in Rotterdam, some 272 of them, save the Rotterdam government between €110 to 133 million a year in voluntary services and that migrant churches contribute about the same as their autochtone brothers which is approximately half that figure – between 55 million and 66 million (Guerra, Glashouwer, Kregting, 2008, pgs 54 - 55).

Undoubtedly, the above figures and facts demonstrate the impact of migrant churches on the city of Rotterdam. At the same time, they also imply that were the municipal government to pump in more money in secular organizations carrying out the same activities that churches voluntarily do, the municipality could make redundant the relevance of migrant churches. In this report, however, I seek to show that the importance of migrant churches for the municipality transcends the obvious. I seek to demonstrate that these churches not only save the city hard-cash but make social and humanitarian contributions that cannot be qualified or quantified, nor replaced. The report illustrates the disparity between the contributions these churches make to society in Rotterdam and the resource challenges they face, it underscores the need for the municipal government to offer more structured and deeper support to the churches, and finally, it looks at the opportunities that organizations such as SKIN Rotterdam can offer the municipal government to do this as well as to benefit even more from the work of migrant churches.

### 1.1.1 Much out of little: *Blessings under pressure*

Migrant churches contribute greatly to the economic and social life of Rotterdam. If anyone had doubted that before the “Tel je Zegeningen” report, they would scarcely do so now (unless they have some other compelling information that points to the contrary). On the strength, then, of that NIM/KASKI report and the various studies by Stichting Oikos and others, we can conclude that migrant churches are a gift to the societies in which they operate. Yet the majority of these churches are struggling under enormous

challenges – challenges ranging from social isolation to deep financial marginalization (see policy statement SKIN Rotterdam).<sup>2</sup> As a starter, many of these churches are completely cut from enabling organizations that could be useful in bringing them legal, material, financial or other assistance. In her study, “Reverse or Revised Mission”, Mechteld Jansen submits that there are 1000 migrant churches in The Netherlands (Jansen, 2006). Other reports variously quote 1200 churches<sup>3</sup> and 1500 churches<sup>4</sup>. In Rotterdam, out of 272 churches, some 140 are migrant churches (Calvert, 2007); yet, only 67 migrant churches are members of enabling organizations such as SKIN Netherlands (Nederlands Dagblad, 12-11-2007), while even fewer are members of organizations such as the VPE (Verenigde Pinkster- en Evangeliegemeenten) with its 170 national members. During research in Rotterdam, I found that the leadership of some migrant churches do occasionally come together for prayers or other activities, but that many are still isolated, and largely cut from opportunities, or rather, from access to such state apparatus as could lighten the burden of their tasks. Lack of information and poor access to sources of information have much to do with this<sup>5</sup>, and probably, even more likely, the invisible and visible divide between church and state. Other factors include cultural differences (most especially in terms of language).<sup>6</sup>

With its underlying goal to wrest migrant churches in Rotterdam from their isolation and lone struggles, to bridge the gap between migrant churches and traditional churches, and to institute a vital link between migrant churches and relevant city governments and organizations, SKIN Rotterdam has made a priority to investigate, not only ways in which migrant churches can be given a sustainable supportive hand, but ways in which their social significance can be utilised by the municipality for the city government’s and the churches’ mutual benefit. The commissioning of this report has been the first step to that end.

The report concentrates on five areas: the circumstances of members of migrant churches, the challenges facing migrant churches themselves, the tools and resources available to the churches in dealing with both member and church challenges, the significance of the work of migrant churches for their members and society, and the implication of all this for the Rotterdam municipal government. This last point also includes a look at the implication of the aforementioned for SKIN Rotterdam’s intention to wrest migrant churches from social isolation, and make their relevance more dynamic and efficient for the city and vice versa. The question the report seeks to answer, therefore, is, “How do migrant churches in Rotterdam impact on the lives of church members and society in Rotterdam, and what can the municipal government do to enhance the work of these churches?”

## 1.2 Scope of Research

Out of 140 migrant churches, ten were chosen. The selection of these churches was based on two things – 1) the churches’ response to a phone and email invitation to become part of

the research, and 2) churches that reflected (not necessarily represented) the majority of migrant churches in the city – in other words those churches such as Pastor Atze van den Broek describes in his inventory of migrant churches “*ieder hoorde in zijn eigen taal*” as the third group of migrant churches into The Netherlands. In this work, Van den Broek (2004) divides migrant churches into three groups: the old refugee and migrant churches, the temporary migrant churches and the new migrant churches. He notes:

*“First there are the churches of the ‘old’ refugees and migrants. This group is divided into several groups. First there is the Eglise Wallonne, the Walloon church. Secondly there are the Moluccan and Indonesian churches, the Moravian Church and the Chinese churches. These churches are by people from the former colonies and territories which were linked with the Netherlands. Although these churches are sometimes more than 50 years in the Netherlands, they still use their own language. The third category consists of Russian, Serbian, Greek, Syrian, Bulgarian, Romanian and Armenian Orthodox churches for people from East and Southeast Europe. These churches are growing, both in numbers and venues...”*

*The second main group consists of churches for temporary migrants residing in the Netherlands. The Anglican Church, the English / Scottish Presbyterian Church (now Scots International Church Rotterdam), the Finnish Church and Seamen’s Mission (Swedish, Norwegian and Danish) are examples. These churches have a diverse audience... Most of these churches are part of a church from elsewhere, the preacher or priest is usually appointed from the homeland.*

*The last main group consists of churches for and by new migrants and refugees. This is the most dynamic sector of the immigrant churches. They include:*

1. *Coptic, Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Churches, for people from Egypt, Ethiopia and Eritrea.*
2. *Migrant Churches with members from Africa, Asia and Latin America. These communities are usually formed around a pastor who felt called to set up a church. These churches are often evangelical or Pentecostal in nature. Usually they start as home fellowships and depending on how stable the group is (for they are heavily dependent on the leader) they grow into a church. As a result of their language and culture, members of these churches often do not find their place within the existing Dutch churches. Many of these churches see it as their duty to preach the Gospel among Europeans, after these European churches - in the last century - first came to their own countries (Van den Broek 2004).”*

By migrant churches, Van den Broek is referring to churches I am wont to define as either led by or populated by migrants. As for migrants, perhaps Inti-cities’ 2006 initial report on the Rotterdam municipality has an easily acceptable definition. According to this report, an individual who lives in The Netherlands but was born abroad, and/or has at least one (grand)parent who was born abroad is a migrant. In other definitions, a non-western migrant is



defined as a person who has at least one parent who was born in Turkey, or any country in Africa, Latin-America and Asia, with the exception of the former Dutch East Indies and Japan.<sup>7</sup> Considering that there is the western migrant to talk of, too, the migrant church then becomes, as Jos Becker and Joep de Hart observe (Becker & De Hart, 2006), characterized by diversity. However, whether run by western or non-western migrants, the questions as to what best describes a migrant church remains. Is it one led by a migrant or frequented mainly by migrants? Is it a church led by a migrant and frequented by mainly Dutch people? Or is it a church led by and frequented by migrants or people of migrant heritage?

My proposition is that a church led and backed by people of migrant heritage or led by Dutch nationals and populated by people of migrant heritage may be considered a migrant church. In this definition therefore, the churches I chose for the study, fall into range. More importantly, however, is the fact that these churches are of the third generation of migrant churches into The Netherlands has been key to my choosing them. This is not only because the third wave of migrant churches have been described as the most dynamic arm of migrant churches in The Netherlands (Becker & De Hart, 2006, pg 11), but because the majority of migrant churches in Rotterdam are of the third wave of churches. In Reverend Robert Calvert's book on migrant churches in Rotterdam, we see that about half of the number of churches listed in the book were established after 1989 – even though the first migrant church in the city was instituted in the 16th century. Another notable fact in the directory is that most of the churches (specifically those that emerged in the last decades) are Evangelical/Pentecostal. This corresponds with information in "Tel je Zegeningen" which shows that out of several different denominations, 37% of the churches in Rotterdam are Evangelical – though, on the other hand, the report does go on to show that the highest number of church-goers in Rotterdam are not of Pentecostal background. But we are still left with the fact that the fastest growing churches are of the Pentecostal family. Finally, from as much Van Den Broek's inventory of churches as Calvert's, as well as Jos Becker and Joep de Hart's *Godsdienstige veranderingen in Nederland* (Becker & De Hart, 2006), we observe that the majority of this new wave of churches in The Netherlands (in this case Rotterdam) is made up of churches with largely African, Asian and Latin American leadership. Hence, a large percentage of the ten churches in the study are Evangelical/Pentecostal. Almost all of them are less than twenty years old, and most of them are led by African ministers.

## 1.3 Methodology

### 1.3.1 Interviews

The main primary data for this report was gathered through formal and informal interviews. However, some participant observation during church services was involved.

Informants were church leaders (mainly pastors). See appendices

for a list of the informants and their churches. Informants were chosen for their authoritative station – and because the required information could only be got from people with reliable knowledge on the way the churches in question work. Some church workers were also interviewed, but this was generally at the invitation of the leaders in order to verify some points or to elaborate on them.

For a general take on the atmosphere of the church as well as to find candidates for the more personalised case studies, I also had informal discussions with parishioners. While people were generally open to talk, there was much reservation about having their stories documented. Eventually, I came to an agreement with one of the candidates to keep her identity secret.

### 1.3.2 Literature

Apart from primary data, extensive secondary data was also used for the report. As the reference list in the bibliography below indicates, I utilized earlier studies on the economic and social contribution of churches in The Netherlands: newspaper articles, online articles and blogs, as well as the written text of presentations. The main newspapers consulted were reputable Christian papers such as *Trouw*, *Reformatische dagblad*, *Nederlandse dagblad* and *IKON-Kerknieuws*. Information culled from blogs and information websites was generally compared with other sources of information. Other sources included literature on municipal governments in The Netherlands (specifically Rotterdam) from research institutes. In conclusion, the literature used for the material was part scholarly and part media.

### 1.3.3 Outline

This report is made up of ten chapters. The first two chapters establish the *raison d'être* of the study: why it was commissioned and the results on expected. Chapter one discusses the aim of the study (its justification), its scope, methodology and outline. Chapter two establishes the significance of migrant churches in Rotterdam and how that translates to the aspirations of SKIN Rotterdam for migrant churches and for the city of Rotterdam. Chapter three concentrates on how migrant churches operate (as gleaned from the selected churches in the study and from general observations). Chapter four gives a general picture of the conditions under which migrant churches work, along with the tools and resources at their disposal. In Chapter five, the study ventures into the lives of ten churches using a simple case-study format. Chapter six continues the case-study format but concentrates on two parishioners, one who eventually becomes a pastor. Chapter seven takes a quick look at the growing cooperation amongst churches, and present day impetus towards acknowledgment of the worth of migrant churches – as seen in the lives of the two parishioners in Chapter six and in previous chapters. Chapter eight veers from a discourse on the problems and challenges facing migrant churches to suggestions on what the municipal government, migrant churches themselves, SKIN Rotterdam and other organizations can do to stem the problems. Chapter nine takes a closer look



## 2

## MIGRANT CHURCHES:

*Serving migrants, society and municipality in Rotterdam*

## 2.0 Introduction

This chapter answers one simple question. What evidence is there that there is a need to study the fortunes of migrant churches and their members or rather the work and activities of migrant churches in Rotterdam, and of what use will such a study be? The answer this chapter provides is that not only is the migrant church of enormous economic value to Rotterdam's municipal government, its worth to church members and society in Rotterdam transcends the obvious, and as such deserves careful study for both informative and practical reasons. Also, members of migrant churches are Rotterdammers and part of a city that is eager to reduce poverty, marginalization and isolation amongst its residents (see Rotterdam's 2006-2010 Social policy).

The chapter further examines ways in which migrant churches offer the municipal government opportunities to reach deeper into society, and reasons why developing a strong working relationship with migrant churches whether through social organizations like SKIN Rotterdam or any other is auspicious for the municipality and for Rotterdam's civil society. Three areas are considered: the worth of the migrant church to migrants or people of migrant heritage in The Netherlands; the worth of the migrant church to society in Rotterdam as a whole; and thirdly the worth of the migrant church to the Rotterdam municipal government. The conclusion of the chapter reiterates these points and revisits the need for better opportunities for migrant churches to strengthen their base of action.

## 2.1 The Migrant Church: Good for the Migrant community in Rotterdam and beyond

In an interview with Kruispunt Radio, sociologist of religion Marten van der Meulen noted that *"de migrantenkerken in Nederland zijn van zeer grote waarde voor minderheden in Nederland. De overheid zou er goed aan doen om meer met die kerken samen te werken waar het de migratie- en integratieproblematiek betreft."* (Kruispunt Radio, May 2006). Van der Meulen's statement is based on a study he carried out with a team of researchers from the Vrije Universiteit on the participation of immigrant churches in Dutch society. The researchers identified three areas where migrant churches are of particular importance for their members and for the city.

1. In the area of acclimatization: here, they pointed that migrant churches represent for their members a place to meet kindred spirits in an unknown country.
2. In the area of fundamental assistance – a point they emphasized on by calling to bear the migrant church's value as a place of help and guidance both spiritually and practically.
3. In the area of auspicious guidance – such as the church acting as a gateway to society. As the researchers would assert, migrant churches "often are the migrant's guiding post to educational and medical help," and for the government, the church thus 'represents a place where a large number of migrants can be met at once and given necessary information in an instant' (Euser et al, 2006). Another scholar who points out the value of migrant churches to the government simply by their worth to the migrant community is Dr. Gerrie ter Haar, Professor in Religion and Development. Ter Haar argues that *"de overheid maar ook de Nederlandse kerken veel te weinig bereid zijn met de migrantenkerken mee te denken. Alle initiatieven die in de Bijlmer groeien en bloeien schreeuwen om een soepele toepassing van de regels. Zo doen de Ghanese kerken veel voor de opvang van hun landgenoten. Ze organiseren taalcursussen en crèches, bemiddelen in werk en huisvesting, doen aan ziekenbezoek en vangen de jeugd op. De activiteiten komen voor subsidie in aanmerking, maar omdat ze onder de verantwoordelijkheid van een kerk vallen, blijft de steun uit."* Ter Haar later adds, *"Nu is de Ghanese jeugd nog jong. Door ze goed te begeleiden - en dat doen de kerken zoveel mogelijk - kun je misschien latere problemen voorkomen."* (Trouw, 06-02-1999)

A cursory look at the Vrije Universiteit report and Ter Haar's quotation shows an unmistakable shift from the financial significance of migrant churches to a concentration on their social and moral relevance. As would become the case in the findings of this present study and as we can glean in Ter Haar's statement, the Vrije Universiteit team found that migrant churches occupy a place in the social landscape of a society that outstrips the more obvious economic relevance of their work - important though this economic upshot of their work is. These churches bring a balance to the lives of people in concrete and unquestionable ways - ways that arguably would have been improbable without them. Kathleen Ferrier, the Dutch CDA politician has, on her part, submitted that the importance of migrant churches for members, amongst other things, lie in their ability to offer members the opportunity to experience, celebrate and express themselves in their own language, in a manner familiar and customary to them... with songs they knew from home. The

church, she notes, becomes a binding agent, a recognizable point of contact for members (Trouw, 30-07-2008). "The outcome of the report on the importance of immigrant churches and churches in the Netherlands does not surprise me," notes the MP in response to the "Tel je Zegeningen" report mentioned earlier in this report. She states further, "From my experience at SKIN [SKIN-Nederland]... I saw how important the activities of the church are for thousands of people. The church helps migrants find their place in the Dutch society." As can be seen from the above, this is not just a politician's sentiment. It is grounded in scientific findings. Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh and Janet Saltzman Chafetz have maintained, for example, that migrant "...congregations often become community centres, places where immigrants can socialize with fellow ethnics, reproduce ethnic values and customs, learn civic skills, and find assistance with meeting the material needs that arise in the face of resettlement" (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000, pg 135). In his contribution to the Remonstrants Vlogschrift of August 2002, Johan Blaauw wrote:

*"Een ander aspect dat hier tot slot niet onvermeld mag blijven is de enorm belangrijke bijdrage die de allochtone christelijke gemeenschappen en kerken geleverd hebben en leveren aan de opvang en integratie van niet-Nederlanders in de Nederlandse samenleving. Meestal ontbreekt de maatschappelijke erkenning van deze inzet. De geloofsgemeenschappen van niet-westerse origine staan er vaak borg voor dat de individuele en ontheemde gelovige wordt opgenomen in een groter verband. Een sociaal-religieus netwerk dat mensen bemoedigt en stimuleert, maar ook als vangnet fungeert voor mensen die niets of niemand hebben om op terug te vallen. G. ter Haar: "In deze omstandigheden fungeert de kerkgemeenschap als de moderne variant van de traditionele grootfamilie (extended family) in Afrika". In de bijdrage van Jan de Jonge (verderop in dit Vlogschrift) over de Ghanezen in de Bijlmer komt ook dit aspect duidelijk naar voren.*

*Kortom: de maatschappelijke betekenis van deze kerken voor het leven van de bij hen aangesloten gelovigen moet dan ook niet worden onderschat. Ook voor de samenleving als geheel gaat dit op. De bijdrage van deze nieuwe kerken aan o.a. het proces van sociale vernieuwing en terugdringing van criminaliteit in de grote steden van ons land is vermoedelijk veel groter dan de meeste autochtone Nederlanders en politieke partijen zich bewust zijn."*(Blaauw, 2002)

It is hard to ignore these observations, harder still to dismiss the scientific basis upon which some are rooted. Yet, the benefits of the migrant church is not limited to the migrant alone. Society as a whole gains. And there is evidence to back this assertion.

## 2.2 The Migrant Church: Good for society in Rotterdam

In the NIM/KASKI report, "Tel je Zegeningen", we find a list of activities that churches (churches in general) voluntarily carry out in the city of Rotterdam. The report submits that:

*Uit de gegevens blijkt dat kerken veel werk verrichten in de begeleiding en hulp van mensen. De meeste kerken hebben bijzondere aandacht voor crisissituaties (ziekenbezoek en rouwverwerking) en bieden relatietherapie aan. Kerkelijke vrijwilligers dragen bij aan het tegengaan van vereenzaming van ouderen en zieken en bieden steun bij het herstellen van relaties. Ook hebben de kerken een bemiddelende functie door mensen te verwijzen naar hulpverleners (GGZ, gemeentelijke instanties en andere vormen van juridische of maatschappelijke steun) of door te helpen bij het invullen van formulieren (belastingdienst, verzekering, certificatie van documenten etc.).*

*De activiteiten in de hoofdcategorie 'maatschappelijke zorg en hulpverlening' gaan om het benaderen van kwetsbare groepen, in het bijzonder van degenen die buiten andere vormen van hulp of voorzieningen vallen. Deze vorm van hulp is laagdrempelig, anoniem en niet bureaucratisch. Mensen in nood worden bereikt mede door de signaleringsfunctie van probleemgevallen en knelpunten door vrijwilligers en overige leden van de kerken. De inzameling van kleren en het oprichten van fondsen voor financiële noodhulpverlening zijn activiteiten die door de meeste kerken worden gerealiseerd. Inloophuizen bieden een vaste gelegenheid voor ontmoeting, om warmte te krijgen, voor een maaltijd of voor gelegenheid tot persoonlijke verzorging of kledingruil. Ook hier kunnen specifieke doelgroepen worden bereikt en door advieswerk op de hoogte worden gehouden van voorzieningen of ontwikkelingen in het sociale beleid. Geestelijke zorg en verslavingszorg horen ook tot deze categorie van hulpverlening. Andere groepen die bereikt worden, zijn de mensen zonder verblijfsvergunning, asielzoekers, gedetineerden, dak- en thuislozen en vrouwen in de prostitutie. Activiteiten rondom jeugd- en jongerenwerk vallen onder de meest voorkomende activiteiten in het kerkelijk maatschappelijk werk. Hiermee creëren kerken voorzieningen voor voorlichting, begeleiding en preventie van jongeren. Belangrijk is ook dat in veel gevallen ouders opvoedingsondersteuning ontvangen en worden betrokken bij oplossingsgerichte interventies (Guerra et al, 2008, pg 47).*

Therefore, churches do a whole array of things for people and society; they assist in directing people, help people deal with crisis situations, assist the homeless, the jobless, the drug enslaved, those caught in prostitution, etc. In discourses, newspaper articles, blogs, and presentations such as the KASKI 2006 presentation at Nijmegen's Radboud University, we come across these types of listings and illustrations.<sup>8</sup> The point, however, is that these examples of the work of churches can easily be quantified. The unquantifiable is that which is hardest to appreciate. And it is this that I increasingly became aware of during the research for this report.

Stability in society is contingent upon a number of things, three of which have consistently come up in much of social science literature. They include economic stability (i.e., the ability to put food on the table), security (sense of peace and safety) and relative contentment (sense of personal achievement and purpose). When we look at economic development, especially in neo-classical literature, we see a seemingly infinite amount of literature on the influence of economic status, poverty, resource scarcity, etc., on insecurity, instability and regression. Insecurity itself not only becomes self-perpetuating but retards relationships between people, groups in society and people's ambitions.<sup>9</sup> When ambition, sense of purpose and self worth is affected or hampered, the results become the stuff of discussion as much amongst psychologists, psychiatrists and economists, as amongst social and political scientists. In an ISS report on Reintegration and Return (of Soldiers in Liberia), Taya Weiss quotes the words of a counsellor who, reflecting on the psychology of reintegrating combatants, explained that, *"We try to build the self-esteem, which is the core. A lack of self-esteem, if a man feels he is nobody, he cannot rise to heights where others are, so he goes for anything. But if his self-esteem is good, in the way that he believes in himself, if he believes he can make a life, there are many, many things that he can turn his back on."*<sup>10</sup> What we observe in this quotation is how all these elements add up to either stabilise or destabilise a society. When in poor regions of the world, this link between economic lack, insecurity and self worth is easy to decipher, while the connection is often blurred in richer parts of the world, as much by the relative blanket wealth of these regions as by other rich man's burdens such as drugs, decadence, and insidious pop culture.<sup>11</sup> Yet in Rotterdam, in spite of the various elements at play within the city, the link between poverty and insecurity is just as unmistakable.

In The Netherlands, of the four biggest cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht), Rotterdam has the highest unemployment rate. In 2005 that was 11%, in 2006 9.7%, in 2007 7.2% and in 2008 6.6%.<sup>12</sup> The city has the greatest number of people who feel unsafe, as well as one of the highest rates of unlawful activities.<sup>13</sup> Thence, though the influence of other factors such as high urbanization rate and delinquency cannot be negated, a clear correlation exists between high unemployment rate (economic lack) and insecurity, and with this, tension in society. For Rotterdam, therefore, this means that in those areas of the city with the highest unemployment figures, the extent of insecurity and (with it individual and group) tension is highest or can be expected to be highest. Societal harmony is therefore most precarious in such areas.

What I realised during research was that it was in these parts of the city with high unemployment rates, and in these areas of problems (unemployment, poverty, and lack) that the work of migrant churches was most intense and seemingly most unobserved. I also came to find that the quiet effort of migrant churches amongst reasonably well-off Dutch people who are harangued by drugs and other psychological problems are easily unseen.

From these, other observations followed. One was that the problem that migrant church members are most besieged by and which the churches often must deal with are less spiritual in nature and more material (i.e. economic lack, unemployment, poverty, homelessness and hunger). The other thing I noticed was that while for migrant members, material problems top the needs list, for Dutch members and the more established church members, the overriding challenges are emotional and psychological in nature. Furthermore, I found that some sick migrant church members (specifically mentally sick persons) who have access to secular institutions, often take to going to their churches at instances when turning to the medical institutions attending to them would make more medical sense.

Then there are those people called undocumented – especially those who were once in the system but then became undocumented. In a society where there is a social security system to catch the economic fallout of those facing joblessness and where there are institutions to deal with various psychological traumas, people have at least one important weapon to fight insecurity and lack: *the social system*; they have a way to manoeuvre uncertainty: *social guidance*; they have a buffer between the internal and external consequences of poverty, lack and despair: *subsidized resources*. But for those who are outside a system that allows for such benefits and safety nets... for those who are exposed to all kinds of psychological traumas as a result of their position outside the resource stock, it is not unusual that the route to lowering their sense of insecurity, worthlessness and shame for not being able to measure up would be such a route that would not be to society's peace (not necessarily because they want to hurt others but because they have no other choice). Since many such people (with either stress-related psychological traumas or organic schizophrenia / bipolarity) are those afraid or ignorant of the opportunity to go for medical help within the system, the migrant church becomes the only barrier between their actions and an oblivious society.

I noticed, too, that the migrant churches under study in Rotterdam not only stand between their economically and psychologically embattled members and acts of desperation, but that the Christian values and tenets they adhere to encourage socially responsible behaviour. I also noticed that the reason these migrant churches seem to succeed in having people turn to them rather than to actions with destabilising consequences is trust. It seems that hope and confidence, even in the face of the most improbable difficulties, blossoms under conditions where 1) people are told that they are not judged for their past but 'blessed' for their present and expected future actions, 2) where people are told that they are worthy of and deserve unconditional love, 3) where people are told that they are not bad and are deserving of forgiveness, 4) and where people are told that they are capable of possibilities defiant of their existing circumstances. I would come to realise, too, that the trust and confidence that the churches engender in members is made easy by the material assistance that they offer these beleaguered members. Material help that churches give range from basic transportation fare to accommodation and feeding. Additionally, the help is not only about providing needs but about counselling recipients on how to remove themselves from their situation of dependence.

Taking from the above, I submit here that the work of migrant churches in Rotterdam is, without doubt, one of the most

important factors contributing to harmony in the city. There is need for further research in this area, for it is the proposition of this report that what migrant churches do to the wellbeing of Rotterdam is much more than generally perceived. Fortunately, municipal and national actors are becoming increasingly conscious and appreciative of the work of migrant churches. This is evident in the different articles and statements by different politicians in the last couple of years, and calls by various city officials for more attention to and support for the work of migrant churches.<sup>14</sup> There is much wisdom in this because the activities of migrant churches have specific value for the municipal government itself – and worth that is not readily observable.

## 2.3 The Migrant Church: Good for the Rotterdam Municipal Government

The “Tel je zegeningen” report leaves no doubt as to the value of migrant churches to the Rotterdam municipal government. An excess of €50 or €60 million a year in indirect financial contributions to the city is no small achievement, so there are no arguments there. However, unlike the obvious evidence in the “Tel je zegeningen” report, other contributions of the migrant churches to the work of the municipal government are not always that obvious. I took notice of a number of factors during the research for this report that drove home the crucial, and possibly, barely acknowledged significance of migrant churches to the municipal government. Let us take, for example, the 2006 – 2010 integration policy of the municipal government. We see that:

1. The municipality's integration policy is not about integration but about participation, that citizens have rights but obligations, too.
2. The policy is built on several implementing programmes, i.e., • Learn Dutch, • Low literacy, • Rotterdam Idea, promoting initiatives for urban citizenship, • Non-formal education, • Emancipation, • Anti-discrimination, • Vital coalitions (social community action plans), • Dialogues in the districts/neighbourhoods.
3. The municipality works in cooperation with a large number of partners (both through subsidy relationships and contractual relationships) to achieve its goals – for instance organizations that “...offer a mix of activities in the field of adult education, empowerment, emancipation, voluntary work, (political) participation, culture and the promotion of intercultural dialogue.” (See also inticities initial report, Jan 2008).

Turning to the migrant churches in the study, I observed the following; most migrant churches emphasise social (and Christian) responsibility rather than integration per se. For them, it is not a question of an individual becoming part of Dutch society but a question of that person becoming useful to his/her Dutch brethren and doing as the law bids. Evidently, thus, the teachings of these churches are already configured to go beyond integration and into participation. At this time, these churches are zeroing in on groups within the city that may need the type of laser concentration that is not possible through the existing policy, thereby positioning themselves to reach population brackets that would possibly not have been reached under the municipal guiding principles.

As for the implementing programmes upon which the city's integration policy is built, a cursory look at the organizational structure of the churches show that many of them (if not all) have teaching ministries. These ministries are not only about Bible lessons, but skills in different areas. We have Claypot Church with its leadership skills classes for instance, Mahaber church with its EDCCC program where basic skills courses in different areas are conducted, the business seminars of churches like RCCG, etc.

The significance of all these is that building blocks within the municipal government's policy such as “non-formal education, low literacy, Dutch lessons, etc.” are already configured in the operating system of migrant churches, and as such an edifice already exists within the structure of these churches that the municipality can develop through bodies such as SKIN Rotterdam. Finally, when we consider the municipality's cooperation strategy - to work in concert with a large number of partners that “...offer a mix of activities in the field of adult education, empowerment, emancipation, voluntary work, (political) participation, culture and the promotion of intercultural dialogue,” we see that most of these activities are already worked into the organizational structure of the migrant churches.

In essence, the municipal government has a partner in migrant churches that is useful on all levels – organizational, psychological and strategic; for while on the one hand the migrant churches have the credentials to reach deep into society and touch population groups that the municipality may not be able to reach (neither by itself nor through its various civil partners), they also, on the other hand, have structures built within their operating systems (see from chapter 5 of this report) that can be utilized by the municipality for controlled results.

The second observation I made about the seemingly veiled worth of migrant churches for the municipal government came up in the city's demographics, population and settlement patterns. Rotterdam has eleven municipal districts, one central council district and one district council area, namely: Centrum, Charlois, Delfshaven, Feijenoord, Hillegersberg-Schiebroek, Hoek van Holland, Hoogvliet, IJsselmonde, Kralingen-Crooswijk, Noord, Overschie, Pernis, Prins Alexander. These districts are home to Rotterdam's 584.046 inhabitants (intcities, 2008; [www.rotterdam.nl](http://www.rotterdam.nl)), 45.7% of which are non-Dutch. In the various literature on these districts, we see that in 2006, Delfshaven had the highest number of foreigners with 71% of its inhabitants coming from the migrant community. Delfshaven, additionally has the 3rd largest total population in Rotterdam. Second in migrant populations is the district of Feyenoord with 64% of its population migrant. Feijenoord, additionally, is the second most populated district in Rotterdam. Then there is Charlois with 54% of its population migrant. Charlois is the fourth most populated district in Rotterdam. The city council district (Centrum) has 51% of its population of migrant origin, while at the same time it is the tenth most populated district in the city. Thus, in reality, it is one of

the least migrant populated. Now we turn to the most populated district in Rotterdam – Alexander Polder. Alexander Polder has 82% of the population in Rotterdam, but only 28% of this population is of migrant origin, making the district tenth on the table of migrant populations in The Netherlands.

Keeping the above in mind, consider the following; according to Robert Calvert's 2007 "Gids voor Christelijke Migranten Gemeenschappen in Rotterdam", the highest concentration of migrant churches in Rotterdam is in the district of Charlois with twenty churches. Charlois has the third highest number of migrants in the city. Centrum has a total of twenty-six churches. Delfshaven has eighteen churches, while Feyenoord has some twelve churches. Consider now the most populated district in Rotterdam with one of the smallest number of migrants - Alexander Polder. Alexander Polder has only one migrant church represented in the book. Then there is Pernis with its 15% migrant population. Pernis has only one migrant church. Hoek van Holland with 10% of its population of migrant origin has no migrant church represented in the book as of 2007 (ibid.).

In considering the significance of all these, we need to return to the first two sections of this chapter, where the impact of the migrant church on foreigners and on society is elaborated upon, and also take a leap forward into Chapter six where two case studies present us with the experiences of two parishioners. One of these parishioners (Solange) makes the case for the proposition that for many foreigners cut from the municipal government and the social system by culture, language, lack of information, amongst other psychological and material barriers, the church is the most accessible place for information. Solange's life story (see chapter six) reveals how accessible the migrant church is to society and how near it is to those who need help, information and guidance.

This means that the high number of migrant churches in areas populated by foreigners is a gem for the municipality. Where the municipality needs most to reach its substantial foreign population, the migrant churches are, in effect, already positioned to give it the best possible entry. Any contention that the impact of the migrant church in Rotterdam is limited because Christianity is not the dominant religion in Rotterdam and as such, not that relevant or possibly influential, is one that can be dealt with here quickly. Out of a population of just over 584.000 inhabitants, 196.000 to 240.000 (34 to 41%) Rotterdammers are professed, church-going Christians (Guerra et al, 2008). As for migrant Christians, *"The total number of migrants who visit [migrant] churches is 14.500. Because much more people are in contact with these churches - bound to their homes or travelling around and for this reason only occasionally present - we can state with certainty that approximately 29.000 people are actively linked to these churches and 50.000 to 100.000 people in one way or the other have a relationship with the churches"* (Calvert, 2007, pg17).

Additional to that, indicators from reputable research institutes, such as COS (Centrum voor Onderzoek en Statistiek, Centre for Research and Statistics), EUMAP (EU monitoring and advocacy program), CBS (Dutch central Bureau of Statistics) amongst others, negate recent propositions (encouraged by reports such as Giulio Meotti's much hyped : Islam in Europe : In the Casbah of Rotterdam) that hold that Rotterdam is the capital of Bat Ye'or's proposed 'Eurabia'.<sup>15</sup> From these works we see the following; while half of the more recent migrants into Rotterdam are Muslim, half are Christian; the Muslim population in Rotterdam as of 2007 was 80.000 which is 13% of the population (EUMAP), as opposed to 196.000 to 240.000 or 34-41% of Christians in Rotterdam, 50.000 to 100.000 of which are affiliated to migrant churches (see earlier references); the largest migrant population in Rotterdam is not of Muslim heritage or from Islamic nations; that group is of Surinamese origin. The fastest growing population in the city is not of Turkish or Moroccan origin, both of which make the second and third biggest groups in the city, but of Antillean heritage. Following the Antilleans, who grew 30% in the last decade, are the Moroccans (26% in the last decade).

Considering the above, the concept of the Islamitization of Rotterdam and diffusion of the impact of Christian bodies such as migrant churches in the city is untenable. Therefore, the number of people migrant churches can reach is potentially substantial.

There is one last reflection that needs be added here. In 2009, Rotterdam became the first Youth Capital (EYC) of Europe. Becoming the youth capital only showcased, even more, one aspect of the Rotterdam demographics. Its youthful population: the largest population group in Rotterdam fall between ages 20 and 39 (www.intcities.eu; www.Rotterdam.nl). Compare this with findings during this research (both primary and secondary) that migrant churches have large populations of young people. I found migrant churches with whole activity groups populated by people in their late teens, 20s and early 30s. In some churches, like the Thugz church, the entire emphasis is on the youth. Bearing in mind that Rotterdam is not only a multicultural city, but a city of young people, churches that have the ability to attract young people and guide their lives have definite utility for a government shepherding a population dominated by young people. Add to this youthful aspect of migrant churches the fact that the churches attract a multicultural populace, and their worth for a government overseeing one of the most multicultural and youthful populace in Europe becomes hard to disprove.

## 2.4 Conclusion

The value of the work of migrant churches to society in The Netherlands has earned them appellations ranging from '*gifts to society*' to '*blessings*'. This chapter set out to look at three areas in which migrant churches in Rotterdam prove of value to Rotterdam, and why they ought to be studied and assisted by the municipality. The chapter concluded that: migrant churches are of great value to migrants as a whole. For instance:

1. Migrant churches help and guide new migrants in society (for instance they act as guiding posts to educational, medical help, jobs, etc. for many).
2. Migrant churches bring a balance to the lives of people in concrete and unquestionable ways.
3. Migrant churches are a safety net for migrants who have no other access to assistance.

Migrant churches are of particular value to society in Rotterdam. For instance:

4. Migrant churches save the Rotterdam municipality between €55 and €66 million a year in services to society.
5. Migrant churches are an important security asset to Rotterdam as they often stand between psychologically traumatised, embattled, poor and helpless people and other acts of survival that may not be to society's best interest.
6. Migrant churches encourage social responsibility.

Migrant churches have great value for the Rotterdam municipal government. For instance:

7. The migrant church represents a place where the government can meet a large number of migrants all at once in order, for instance, to give necessary information to many people instantly.
8. Johan Blauw notes that: "De bijdrage van deze nieuwe kerken aan o.a. het proces van sociale vernieuwing en terugdringing van criminaliteit in de grote steden van ons land is vermoedelijk veel groter dan de meeste autochtone Nederlanders en politieke partijen zich bewust zijn." (Blaauw, 2002)
9. Migrant churches invoke in migrants the type of trust that the municipal government cannot evoke. This is of particular significance for a municipality wishing to reach deep into society and to encourage participation in residents.
10. The activities, organizational structures and operating system of migrant churches already support the manner in which the Rotterdam municipal government implements its programs. That is, the churches are so organized that the municipality or any middle organization can utilize their existing organs (i.e., their ministries, departments, committees, working groups, etc.).
11. Migrant churches are positioned in areas of the city where foreigners are most plentiful and as such, positioned to reach the most number of people, and the type of people the city government may not be able to easily, if at all, reach.
12. Unlike what some argue, Rotterdam is not the Islamic capital of Christian Europe. In 2007, there were an estimated 80.000 Muslims in Rotterdam as against almost 250.000 Christians, with 50.000 to 100.000 of that figure connected to migrant churches in the city. This indicates the potential of the migrant church for the municipality.
13. Rotterdam is a city of young people. Many migrant churches are populated by young people in their teens, 20's, 30's and 40's. This allows the city government to reach, not only an important portion of migrants, but also young people (albeit largely young people of migrant heritage).

In Chapter three, I will now proceed to look at the strategies that migrant churches use to deliver the kinds of results that have been discussed in this chapter. The chapter answers the question, "What are the strategies migrant churches apply to achieve their goals?"



## 3

## MODUS OPERANDI OF THE MIGRANT CHURCH:

*Strategies of Achieving goals*

## 3.0 Introduction

When the work of an entity receives as many accolades as does the effort of migrant churches, questions such as “How?” becomes legitimate. This chapter, therefore, examines ways in which migrant churches work, what strategies they use to achieve their aim, what they do on a monthly, weekly, daily, etcetera, basis. Before this is done, however, one important question must be addressed: the question of whose *modus operandi* is under discussion here. For this report, this question is necessary. It is necessary because not only are migrant churches different, but many do not see themselves as migrant churches.

## 3.1 Whose Modus Operandi is under discussion?

In Chapter one, we encountered Van den Broek’s categorization of groups of migrant churches, whereby three different streams of migrant churches are identified. That categorization revealed subtle differences in types of migrant churches, but the most obvious was the difference between the first two groups of migrant churches and the last group. The last group, as an analysis of Calvert’s Gids shows, is the biggest group of migrant churches in Rotterdam. It is the newest group of migrant churches in the Netherlands, characterised by a Pentecostal/evangelical leaning, by being mostly of non-western leadership, largely independent, often started by inspired men and women, burdened by financial difficulties, hardly static as a result of accommodation difficulties, always struggling to survive rather than to simply exist (and as such, folding in some cases), and the most dynamic of all migrant church groups. This is the group whose *modus operandi* is under discussion here as, again to reiterate, its churches make up the biggest number of migrant churches in Rotterdam and as such, best reflect the reality of migrant churches in the city.

A second reason why this chapter must of necessity start by discussing the migrant church is the term itself, as many migrant churches both in and outside the study show a marked objection to the term. Indeed, to a certain degree, the term may be a misnomer, for migrant churches not only represent and serve people of foreign heritage but also Dutch people. The term may also be a misnomer because the churches so conceptualized are often, not only made up of first generation migrants, but second and third generations who may not see themselves as migrants in the strictest sense of the word. Also, many of these churches consider themselves international churches (rather than migrant churches). So, perhaps the term to have been used here should have been international churches rather than migrant churches.

However, the term, migrant churches, remains in use in this report both as a result of the label-recognition (familiarity) of the term and the ease of use.

With the above in mind, the migrant church whose *modus operandi* is under examination in this report is, therefore, the migrant church of the third wave of churches into The Netherlands.

3.2 Modus Operandi of the Migrant Church: *How does the Migrant Church work?*

A perfunctory look at how migrant churches of the new flow work, shows a relentless effort on the part of the churches to reach out to, assist, and guide members. During research, I identified three trajectories of work, namely BODY, SOUL, and SPIRIT. Though this triumvirate (body, soul and spirit) evokes images of the biblical body, soul and spirit, in this work, they merely refer to the targets that the migrant church’s activities pinpoint for positive results.

## 3.2.1 Spirit

The term “spirit” here refers to that part of the human essence that can neither be seen nor touched. While the body can be seen and touched physically and the soul touched remotely (through the five senses), the spirit can neither be seen nor touched nor felt.<sup>16</sup> The reference here, therefore, to the focus of migrant churches on the “Spirit,” is an indication of the work of migrant churches to impact on that most intimate part of man, that part which informs man’s relationship with God... that part which impinges on his moral code, on his fundamental character.<sup>17</sup> During research, I noticed that migrant churches target the spirit in activities such as: Sunday services, mid-week services, revival events and conferences, workshops or symposiums. As for what they each mean, I will now quickly discuss each of them.

## 3.2.1.1 Sunday services:

The aim of the Sunday service is to preach the ‘scriptures’<sup>18</sup> and thereby bring to life within listeners, the “living word of God” and its implications for the actions and activities of the listener in society. Hence, Sunday services are meant to call into church members behaviour patterns that correspond with the moral and spiritual code of the Bible. The Bible scholar will easily affirm that a moral and spiritual code corresponding with Biblical precepts has the potential to invigorate society. Such guiding principles carry with them tenets that can easily confront issues of asocial and dangerous social behaviours such as drug abuse, criminality,

material and human abuse, etc.: These are all instructions coded in the DNA of the Biblical New Testament.<sup>19</sup>

When it comes to times of services, migrant churches, strapped for space and time, generally accept any time they get in a suitable space. As such, services can be in the mornings or afternoons or evenings. These services generally last four or more hours. Some may last three hours or less depending on the availability of space. In some cases, Sunday services begin with workers' meetings at 9:30 a.m., then progress to other activities such as prayer and bible studies, culminating in the main church service that ends at about 2:30 p.m. Often, the pastor or leading figure of the church invests added minutes – even hours – after the service – praying or consulting with members or persons who have urgent requests or needs. For all of the churches in the study, this makes up the most ceremonial portion of their spiritual activities.

### 3.2.1.2 Midweek services

In some churches, midweek services mean all week services – from Monday to Friday: i.e., leadership prayer meetings on Mondays, house fellowships on Tuesdays, mid week praise and worship services on Wednesday, intercessory prayers on Thursdays, Bible studies on Fridays, choir rehearsals or evangelism on Saturday, and then Sunday services. What does all of this mean? Prayer meetings often include people coming together to pray for peace, good health and the moral and financial wellbeing of members of the church, the entire city of Rotterdam, The Netherlands and the world.

Sometimes these prayer exercises include concentrating on some troublesome issue or development in a city – say rise in crime, xenophobia, drugs, prostitution, etc. House meetings are meetings in people's homes where non-Christian friends and neighbours as well as other church members are invited to share the word of God, ask questions, learn more about the Christian life, about overcoming seemingly insurmountable challenges and about the responsibilities of the human person. As for Bible studies, this refers to meetings where members analyse and discourse Bible passages – deciphering teachings found in the Bible, and understanding commands therein. This is often educational in nature, the intention being to feed, teach and strengthen the spirit. There are varieties to these descriptions given above, and the themes and focus can differ, but herein lies a general representation of what all these meetings entail.

Midweek services often take place in the evenings, typically between 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. There are also night vigils. These night vigils are whole nights of singing, dancing, praising and worshipping God (in a sense, an exercise in thanking God for life and for opportunities present and yet to come). Notably, people are not encouraged to thank God only for the supposedly good things and the promise of tomorrow, but for those things that may seem to have been a disadvantage in life, too. Typically, church leaders preach and encourage members during these night vigils. For almost all the churches in the study, night vigils take place once a month and last an entire night – beginning at, say, 8 or 9 p.m. and ending at 4 or 5 a.m.

Migrant churches also have outreach programs on a weekly or monthly basis. In these programs, members go handing out pamphlets and flyers to people on the streets, and in some cases, directly engaging people in conversation.

### 3.2.1.3 Revival

Apart from the weekly Sunday services, the midweek services, and the monthly night vigils, migrant churches hold revival events where pastors and evangelists from other parts of the country, other churches or outside the country are invited. These are often grand events, and take place only once or twice a year – sometimes three or four times.

### 3.2.1.4 Conferences

As in the case of revivals, many of the churches conduct various conferences. Within a particular year, a church may have a family conference, a women's conference, and a workers' conference. The healing, teaching, encouraging and strengthening of the people's spirits always stand central in these conferences.

In the case of the soul, migrant churches have customized activities that target the non-physical self (the five senses) of members.

## 3.2.2 Soul

By soul, I refer to the non-physical personae of a person... to the emotional, the mental and the rest of the senses. There is an important difference between the soul and the spirit which bears mentioning here for the purpose of this study. Unlike many people tend to assume,<sup>20</sup> the spirit and the soul are not the same, not as is presented in the Bible from which the churches in this report draw their teachings (*reference King James Version or new King James Version*). While the soul can be touched (for instance the feelings can be hurt, a loud shout can affect the ear drums, sight can be blinded by light, etc. – all of this without physical touch), the spirit cannot.<sup>21</sup> The spirit operates on faith, trust, hope, belief – all of these, elements that demand that a person totally abandon and surrender mental and emotional control to an unknown power.

I make this distinction between the soul and the spirit so as to separate the work of migrant churches that targets the soul and that which focuses on the spirit. This, in its part, helps show what migrant churches work for and get immediate, quicker, short-term results (soul-focused activities), and where they work for sustained, long term results (spirit-focused). Also, by identifying these different work patterns, we begin to understand how many of these migrant churches can build trust and loyalty such as would give them access to people in ways that the municipal government or other institutions cannot. We see that the church has the potential to influence those areas of a person's being that is unseen and untouchable and as such, has influence that can neither be physically shifted nor emotionally or mentally affected... in short, influence that cannot be externally

manipulated. For a city or national government that wishes to close the gap between government and people and to keep that gap closed, this capability of the church is a potential gold mine.

With regards to the activities geared towards the soul, I identified the following: counselling, coaching, teachings, advice, mediation, and visitations. Pastors (sometimes along with their elders or senior workers) would spend considerable amounts of time counselling families, couples, singles, and those who are suicidal. In some cases, a pastor or leader would leave his/her secular place of work at the end of the day and head for some crisis situation involving a church member or church family (see Chapter five, Pastor Ahadu Beza for instance). In other instances, the church leadership would institute courses to help members in leadership skills, communication skills, mediation, counselling, etc. This demonstrates the fact that pastors are, in a sense, on call, for parishioners would call for guidance and help at all kinds of hours – often not just on their behalf but also on the behalf of a relation or an acquaintance.

### 3.2.3 Body

I found that it was where targeting the body was concerned that migrant churches tended to face the greatest survival challenges. By body here, I refer to all that has to do with the physical - as much inanimate material things (like food and cash) as the physical body and its needs, such as physical health, well being and physical comfort. The list of issues that the migrant church tends to deal with in this area include: documentation problems, unemployment, poverty, homelessness, transportation problems, problems with handling or responding to official papers, cultural differences and communication bottlenecks, physical health issues and other physical issues.

In some churches, the pastor would double as pastor and mediator, mediating between the parishioner and various city departments and institutions, (for instance tax office, social office, employment bureaus, etc.), and secular school teacher, helping the children of parishioners who cannot help in the children's homework, etc. In other cases, churches would assist parishioners in pursuing jobs or starting a business. In some instances, they would monitor the activities and health of parishioners - especially the mentally sick - taking care of their bodily hygiene, even while these people are still being attended to by institutions outside the church. In the case of one church, the said sick patients kept leaving the institutions in which the state had placed them and returning to the church for assistance.

Most of these migrant churches have what they call welfare funds. Some call it care funds and others give it other names. These are funds meant to assist in big problems, such as death in members' families both in and outside the Netherlands, or other calamities, but then, as I came to find, the material lack and challenges of church members often take up these funds.

## 3.3. Conclusion

When one recalls that the welfare funds mentioned above are set

up by churches whose leaders have no choice but to take secular jobs and to shoulder the costs of church activities, one begins to wonder how migrant churches and their leadership cope with the various demands on them. Yet these are churches that are inspiring growing panels of discussion on the value of their work for migrants, societies and municipalities in The Netherlands. This chapter has been an attempt to take a glimpse at what these churches generally do. It started off by tackling the question of definition. The following is a précis of the chapter's conclusions:

1. In this work, reference is made to migrant churches that belong to the last group of the three waves of migrant churches into The Netherlands... that is, the newest group of migrant churches. *(These churches are characterised by a Pentecostal/evangelical leaning. Their leadership is mostly non-western. And they are generally independent churches, set up by inspired men and women. The churches are also characterised by financial difficulties, are very flexible as a result of accommodation difficulties, and are often struggling to survive rather than to simply exist. Even so, they are amongst the most dynamic churches in The Netherlands).* The third generation of migrant churches make the largest group of migrant churches in Rotterdam.
2. The term, "migrant church," may not be completely appropriate in describing these non-Dutch churches in The Netherlands as most migrant churches do not see themselves as migrant churches, but as international churches. International churches, therefore, may be a better term to describe them, though for ease and for name-recognition the term, "migrant churches," remains.
3. The triad approach of body, soul and spirit best describes the approach migrant churches take to achieve their spiritual and material goals.
4. Those activities directed at the material and physical wellbeing of members (such as financial aid, accommodation, food, rents, etc.) are those directed at the needs of "the body" of members. It is in this aspect of serving their constituents that migrant church leaders are placed under the greatest pressure; and this is simply because the churches themselves suffer material lack.
5. With the soul, the migrant churches under discussion concentrate on that part of the person that cannot be seen, but can be touched – for instance the emotions, the mind and all the senses. Using counselling, advice, leadership classes, Bible classes and other educational tools, the churches attempt to reach "the soul" of members.
6. Spirit – The spirit is the unseen part of man that can only be reached by evoking trust and faith – and this, migrant churches target through Sunday and midweek services, night vigils, revivals, conferences, etc.

In these three ways, the migrant church works to achieve its goals. As indicated in point 4 above, migrant churches are pressured by the material need of their constituents because they, themselves, suffer resource lack. Taking from this, Chapter four now looks at the conditions under which migrant church leaders work to realize the achievements detailed in the foregoing chapters.

## 4

## WORKING CONDITIONS OF THE MIGRANT CHURCH

## 4.0 Introduction

They have inspired appreciation from politicians, journalists, academics, and observant beneficiaries for their contributions to society. They have touched the lives of people in both their immediate and distant surroundings. They have been able to access the most intimate corners of society. Their work targets not only the spirit but the body and the soul, not only the supernatural but the natural, not only the unseen but the seen. They rouse trust and loyalty, and are positioned in society in a way that major actors within society can take advantage of for the good of society. Yet, under what conditions do they work? What are the circumstances within which migrant churches in Rotterdam work?

## 4.1 Migrant Churches' working conditions

The length of this chapter would suggest that it be fitted within one of the other chapters. But this is a chapter that demands its own place within the body of this work... a chapter whose subject matter deserves exclusive attention. The chapter gives a succinct outline of the conditions under which the majority of migrant churches work.

Perhaps the best illustration of this are the words of one of the pastors in the study who observed that *"We need to find a balance between doing the work God called us to do, and preserving our family integrity."*<sup>22</sup> Apparently, while they rush from one house call to the other... while they attend to the needs of parishioners, moving from job to church duties, church leaders, simultaneously, place great pressure on their family life - even where spouses are committed to the work.

Pastors who are single fare better in this regard. What the foregoing means, therefore, is that, one of the conditions under which pastors and some church leaders live is stress - stress brought on not only by the domestic difficulties of their situation, but by the financial pressures that authors the domestic and vocational difficulties in the first place... the financial pressures that force migrant church leaders to take secular jobs to survive. For some of the churches in the study, everything about the church is borne by the pastor (or the pastor and a very small group of workers). That includes rent, utilities, refreshments, financial support and, in short, just about everything.

The reason for this is as follows. 1) There is very little, if any, outside financial help for these churches. 2) Secondly, in some churches, a great number of parishioners are jobless or struggling to legalize their stay. As such, not only can they not tithe or give offerings beyond cents and coins, they themselves need help from the churches. In that case, the pastor and his/her team, or just him/her and his/her spouse must foot the bills. Thence, in addition to the pastor's house rent or house bills and the needs of his/her family (school, clothing, utilities, etc.), the pastor and his/her team must take care of the church space-rent, member needs, and church utilities. Seemingly miraculously, these pastors do accomplish all these. How? For some, the welfare fund helps; for others, the offerings help; for those affiliated to a larger church, help may occasionally come from the mother church or church system. Others share buildings, and carry out activities in different locations so as to save on costs or keep their work going in the face of odds. Some fold.

Another condition under which migrant church leaders work is shortage of worship space: accommodation problems. Most migrant churches are growing exponentially,<sup>23</sup> which often means a need for bigger space. That space is not forthcoming because the price of buildings to rent, never mind buy, is often beyond the reach of these churches. Because of their difficult financial conditions, churches find accommodation where they can and this often means in areas where noise is restricted such as residential areas, and in accommodations not suitable for worship and praise. This then calls up problems with neighbours when these churches take to singing and praising in loud choruses.

The life of pastors and leaders of migrant churches expose another condition under which migrant churches work: time pressure and with it, the lack of access to information for migrant church leaders. Operating under the type of schedules they operate in, pressured by their busy lives, responsibilities and financial restrictions, many migrant church leaders have little time to go out in search of information that could be of help to them or to pursue necessary information on a relentless basis.<sup>24</sup> Sometimes they are so strapped for time that even vital meetings organized by enabling organizations (secular, neutral, civic or religious) are beyond their ability to attend. In this manner, the church leaders miss great opportunities to gather information that could be of use to them and their constituents.

Many migrant church leaders themselves also have cultural barriers to deal with. This - especially in the case of the new independent

migrant churches - has to do with language barriers, cultural differences and again, the combined problems of lack of time, finances and information. The result of all this is that most of the migrant churches work in isolation and under insurmountable odds. At the same time, the needs of their parishioners persist, as do the expectations of these parishioners - most of whom, motivated by trust and a sense of safety (see Chapter six), feel comfortable going nowhere else for information, guidance or help but the church. Hence, at the same time that an increasing number of people are becoming reliant on the spiritual, soul-level and material resources of migrant churches, the churches are caving under financial and organizational strain.<sup>25</sup>

With their contribution to society, as much financially as socially, the need for the municipality to find a link between the churches and city-government apparatus becomes stark. We see now in Chapter five how ten migrant churches and parishes operate and serve their constituents.

## 4.2 Conclusion

Though this chapter has been brief, its aim to single out the conditions under which migrant churches work has still made its existence necessary. It has been necessary to show how in spite of the accolades migrant churches receive from academics, politicians, journalists and laymen and women alike, migrant church leaders work under conditions of seeming insurmountable stress. They are financially strapped, lack permanent (and often suitable) places of worship, suffer as much time pressure as cultural barriers, and are often forced by these pressures and barriers to miss out on opportunities to access or gather game-changing information.

In brief, this chapter reveals that:

1. Migrant church pastors work under financial stress due a dearth of financial aid.
2. Migrant church pastors work under time pressure due to round-the-clock working schedule.
3. The demands on the time and resources of migrant pastors tend to task the family life of some of them.
4. To attend to the financial needs of their churches and members, most migrant church leaders (pastors) take up full time secular jobs along side their ecumenical duties.
5. Time pressure also prevents many pastors from pursuing important and relevant information for their members. They often do not have the time, even when they want to, to attend public meetings or other activities that could expose them to needed information.
6. One other reason most migrant church leaders (pastors) must pay for church requirements out of their own personal coffers. is, because relative to other churches, migrant churches have a large number of unemployed members or members who have difficulties paying tithes, giving offerings, pledges or other financial gifts.
7. Migrant churches suffer from a shortage of worship space because the rent, never mind the purchase price, of accommodation is too high for most of them.
8. The difficulties in securing accommodation force migrant churches to find accommodation in neighbourhoods that are not suitable for worship - such as residential areas. This always results in complaints from neighbours about noise.
9. Many migrant church leaders face cultural and language barriers, which hamper their ability to communicate and easily assimilate.

Having discussed the value of migrant churches to society... having discussed how the migrant churches work and the conditions under which they work, a close look at the activities of existing churches themselves become necessary. The following chapter, Chapter five, studies ten churches, (two of which are different branches of one church), with particular attention to the challenges they and their members face, their operation, organization, and services.



## 5

## CASE STUDIES

## 5.0 Introduction

Theory may be argued to either be the stuff of informed assumption or evidence-related analysis... or anything but the hard, throbbing reality of an observable fact or ongoing practical reality.<sup>26</sup> That is why this report has not been a work of theoretical analysis, but a walk, as it were, into the lives and realities of migrant churches in Rotterdam. This chapter is the archetype of that approach, for if any chapter in this work has been a walk into the lives of migrant churches in Rotterdam, it is this chapter. While the preceding chapters have concentrated on presenting evidence for the relevance of migrant churches for the city of Rotterdam, this chapter reveals the workings of churches, allowing a glimpse into their history, their members, the services they offer and the motivation of their leaders. Ten churches have been selected for this purpose - selected not for their uniqueness or any other features divorced from the fact that they are migrant churches of the third wave of migrant churches into the country. Rather than a representation, they are a reflection of the realities of present day migrant churches in Rotterdam, a suggestion of what may be expected in many other churches. They are a living example of the economic and social worth of migrant churches to the Rotterdam municipality.

The churches will be studied in no particular order. However, the topics that will be investigated will remain standard for all of them. These topics include: general information, history, daily operation, organizational structure, services, and activities of the church. The churches under study are: Potter's Hand New Covenant Word International Ministries (Potter's Hand), Thugz Church, Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) Rotterdam Parish and Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) Schiedam Parish, the Moravian Evangelische Broedergemeente Rotterdam (EBG), Abundant Grace Ministries, Alliance Messianique Pour L'évangélisation Des Nations (AMEN Church), Claypot Church, Mahaber Church and Holy Fire Revival Ministries International.

## 5.1 Case study one: *Potter's hand new covenant Word International Ministries*

### 5.1.1 About Potter's hand new covenant Word International Ministries

The Potter's Hand New Covenant Word International Ministries was set up in Rotterdam in 1991 by the present overseer, Bishop Samuel Ohene Antiri. Today, the church that once had to move from one rented accommodation to the other, not only has its

own premises (at Bonaventurastraat nr. 15, 3081 HA Rotterdam), but has become an international ministry, with branches in four cities in The Netherlands and two others internationally. The Netherlands-based branches are in Breda, Roermond, Oosterhout, and Rotterdam, while the international branches are in Milton Keynes and Cardiff (England). The Rotterdam branch (*referred to as The Potter's Hand Rotterdam*) boasts membership of between 150 to 180 with a mix of people from The Netherlands, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, Kenya, Liberia, Congo, Togo, Sudan, Sierra Leone, South Africa, and England. Services are conducted in English.

### 5.1.2 History of the Church

Bishop Samuel Ohene Antiri, a pastor-scholar, set up the Potter's Hand in Rotterdam in 1991. The church has grown to six branches worldwide.

### 5.1.3 Daily operation

The Potter's Hand Rotterdam holds service thrice a week. Sunday services lasts from 9:00 to 13:00. Bible studies are conducted on Wednesdays from 19:00 to 20:30. Every Friday evening, from 19:00 to 21:00, the church's "Miracle Service" is held.

### 5.1.4 Organizational Structure

Second to the general overseer of the church are pastors, followed by elders, deacons & deaconesses, and worker-leaders.

The church's hierarchy of responsibilities sees the overseer setting up the structure and yearly vision of the church each year, the pastors translating this vision into assignments for the deacons and committee leaders, and the leaders supervising the different departments of the church. There are nine such departments or ministries, namely: the Sunday school ministry, children's ministry, youth ministry, men's ministry, women's ministry, music department and audio-visual department. There is, in addition, an ushering department, a prayer force department and a welfare committee. All of these departments handle very specific activities in the church. Of note is the welfare department of the church, whose resources, due to the 'staggering' challenges facing members, have been consistently stretched.

### 5.1.5 Services and activities of the Church

#### *Member challenges & activities of the church*

To understand the scope of the challenges facing members of the church one needs to appreciate the pressures bearing upon the



church itself.

A place of God that must adhere to the scriptural tenets of charity for the helpless, the Potter's Hand, from its very inception, became known as a centre of assistance of all kinds, including shelter. That resulted in new arrivals in Rotterdam, particularly Africans, heading straight for the church, either as a result of having been directed there by strangers met at the central station or led there by acquaintances familiar with the church's charitable activities. The church thus started feeding and housing both announced and unannounced visitors – some for a few hours, some for days, and others for so long that the church would be forced to simultaneously relocate and begin counselling people on ways to find their way in society. Often, the church would direct visitors to organizations and institutions in the city offering professional help and guidance only to, in almost all the cases, meet with resistance from people wary of civic institutions and preferring instead, to hang on to the safety and certainty of the church. With limited space, overstretched resources, this state of affairs soon meant a church without the capacity to cope.

As Pastor Williams Adu would later explain to me, whether all of these people needing help came for the word of God or for the material comfort that the church could only temporarily give was neither here nor there because it was and remained incumbent upon the church to do the will of God – even though that Christian help soon became subject to large-scale abuse.

The church's defunct food programme was the first activity to fall victim to this abuse. At the onset of its charitable activities, the church invited able parishioners to begin supplying the church with food items. This was so that those without regular income, job, or other means of survival could be provided for. The result was a respectable storage system, and with that, unfortunately, the coming of financially comfortable people who not only came to avail themselves of the provisions but brought along with them non-members whose circumstances the church could not vouch for. Considering that both then as now, only about ten to twenty percent of the church could afford to pay tithes, supply provisions or give other contributions, the food program had to stop. However, all other financial assistance such as accommodating, paying bills, attending to people's transportation needs, etc., remained (and still remains), but this time, subject to *"proper investigation and an assessment process conducted by the welfare committee"* (Pastor Adu).

The terminating of programs such as the food program has been unfortunate for the church because members are still faced with insurmountable material challenges engendered by their overwhelming documentation problems, joblessness, and other material issues. Yet these are, by far, not the only challenges facing members.

Marital problems have been one set of issues with a long history in the church. The character of many of these problems is slightly different from the average family skirmishes, because the majority of the difficulties have had to do with spouses, often Dutch women but also non-Dutch women, left by their foreign partners in what one can only refer to as a disappearing act.

These men would take off, leaving often traumatised wives (and children) to be counselled by the church.

In view of such problems, the church soon developed what Pastor William Adu later referred to as preventive counselling, where men and women betrothed to Dutch partners would be coached on their moral, spiritual and material responsibility to their future spouses, as well as on the mental, moral and spiritual dangers of marrying for any other reason but love, compatibility and affection.

Unfortunately, member problems have meant church problems, too – or rather, an intensification of the problems of the church itself. As Pastor Adu explains:

*"Besides the ever mounting needs of in-comers to the Church, there is also the problem of membership turnover. A large number of people only stay in the Church until they are able to find their way [within society]. Many, at the slightest opportunity, leave the country in search of greener pastures. Most of such "transit members" are usually not financially committed. And there is of course the problem of the global economic recession. These have all adversely affected the finances of the Church and thereby reduced the church's ability to tend to the basic upkeep of its premises."*

The church bought its present premises at the turn of the century, yet eventually had to sell part of its new property, shortly after purchase, in order to deal with its mounting financial difficulties. Pressure on the church did not limit itself to internal matters. The fact, too, that the neighbours of the church's new premises later took to complaining about the noise emanating from within the church's walls did little to lighten its burdens. This particular (noise) problem later resulted in the police and the local council becoming involved in protracted negotiations with the church and its neighbours on ways to minimize the noise. An agreement to have the walls of the worship area insulated was arrived at, but the projected cost was so high that the local council promised to foot some of the bill – a promise that remained pending in 2009, six years after its promise in 2003.

### 5.1.6 Resources

The above example of the cost to insulate the worship area of the church illustrates, not just the resource limitations of the church, but its relative isolation in dealing with its challenges. Like the other cases in this report, the church is the main generator of the resources it must use in its various activities. For this reason, it has been hard pressed to carry out all the activities for which there is need. The church has had to *"...work without help or support from the government or any organization whatsoever"* (Pastor Adu).

## 5.2 Case study two: Thugz Church

### 5.2.1 About Thugz Church

The Thugz Church is perhaps one of the most remarkable stories

of modern day missionary work in Europe. It is a church consisting of street-wise youths (and their families) – youths turned from hardened street life to the call of God by the relentless efforts of a young Dutch urban missionary, Pastor Daniel de Wolf, and his wife. The name, “Thugz Church,” is based on the track “Thugz Mansion” by American rappers 2Pac and Nas, where the rappers question whether there is a heaven for thugs. The implication of the name is that, indeed, there is a heaven for thugs, and that rapper, “The Game’s” concept of a Thugs church is not so farfetched after all. The Thugz Church conducts services at Bonaventurastraat (nr. 15, 3081 HA Rotterdam), that is, in the premises of Bishop Samuel Antiri’s Potter’s Hand New Covenant Word International Ministries (The Potter’s Hand). What is notable about this fact is not the sharing of a church’s premises, for that is the situation most migrant churches find themselves in within Rotterdam, but the fact that after vainly knocking on several doors and church offices for help in finding accommodation for his young church, Pastor Daniel de Wolf found acceptance in the church of a man who, himself, was facing great financial difficulties.

The fact that the Potter’s Hand Church not only opened its doors to Pastor Daniel de Wolf but invited him to use everything – space, seats, musical instruments, lighting... everything for free in spite of the former’s insurmountable financial problems defies secular reasoning – mine in any event. Pastor Daniel transported his infant church of mostly Antillean youths into Pastor Antiri’s building and today, three years after its inception, Thugz Church has an average of 30 members – sometimes 20, sometimes 50 and sometimes, such as during Christmas, 100 members. Services are conducted in Dutch and Papiamentu.

### 5.2.2 History of the Thugz Church

The history of Thugz Church is rich and almost the stuff of fairy tales. Then again, it might have been a fairy tale had not the reality been so harsh and uncompromising... the reality of funding the activities of the church, carrying out all its services, and holding together a body of parishioners not only treading the grounds of life outside the world of juvenile delinquency, identity crisis, etc., but the deep waters of Christianity, faith & trust in an unseen God. It is the history of a church that developed from a foundation of love, acceptance and care for young people who were scarcely accustomed to such care from outsiders.

Thugz Church emerged from Pastor Daniel de Wolf’s work with and for Youth For Christ (YFC) Rotterdam. Though the Youth For Christ project was a Christian concept, the organization’s activity in the Millinxbuurt was strictly limited to social work, for Pastor Daniel and his colleague with whom he began the YFC project in Rotterdam – the now Christen Unie-politician, Dhr. Setkin Sies, had to promise the government, the children’s parents and YFC’s neighbours in the Millinxbuurt, that they would refrain from any proactive evangelism or religious talk. At the same time, however, the pastor and his colleagues not only remained committed to a “Christians-only-policy” for their personnel and volunteers, but reached an agreement with the neighbours and the government that while they were not going to take the initiative to talk about their faith, they would nevertheless “... answer faith-related questions by the youth – and answer out of our own identity,” (Pastor De Wolf).

That moment (of answering to faith-related questions)

was yet to come; and it did come on the heels of a trip to Curaçao which Pastor Daniel de Wolf, against other’s advice, had organized for the youths. His aim, to take the youths to their roots, was to show them the honour and beauty lodged in their ancestral identity. It was an exercise in calling to the fore personal honour and self love. However, an invitation from a Catholic church on the island generated many questions from the youths about God. Interest in the question began growing. Still, Pastor Daniel was careful to keep from breaching his agreement with the government and the neighbours in Millinxbuurt.

The youths’ questions and interest in matters of faith and God, however, eventually led the young pastor to begin theme nights. These were nights dedicated to the discussion of issues based on themes related to the youths’ daily experiences (for instance drugs, peer pressure, cultural differences between the Dutch and the Antilles, budget management, etc.). The topics were treated through games and interactive activities – with the connection between these themes and Christian tenets brought to the youths in ways that could easily be imbibed. At the close of some of the theme nights, they would pray. At others, they’d skip the practice. Nothing was imposed.

Neither were the theme nights daily or weekly. They were held bi-monthly, and were held during nights that YFC activities were not in session. Neither were the nights held in the premises of YFC. Rather, the theme-nights took place in the hallway of a Dutch Pentecostal Church (the Pinkster Gemeente in Rotterdam Zuid). Pastor Daniel and the youths called these gatherings, ‘Thugz Mansion’ after 2pac and Nas’s “Thugz Mansion”. An average of 30 to 40 youths always frequented the themenights.

Two years later, a second opportunity to bring the youths closer to God inadvertently occurred. This was the visit of an ex-drug addict called Gregory Lacruz. Lacruz (or the old-Lacruz) was a notorious addict who had lived under a tree in The Hague and had met with several clashes with the police, many of which were captured on film for the news. Pastor Daniel invited (the new, changed) Lacruz to talk to the youths about God. On the evening of Lacruz’s visit, Pastor Daniel started the evening by showing footage of one of Lacruz’s arrests. Then, as the images faded away to a blank screen, Pastor Daniel called into the room the gaunt, bearded, dishevelled and eye-sore of a man whom the youths had seen on the screen. Enter a clean-shaven, trimmed, well dressed and upright gentleman.... a complete stranger to the man on the screen. That same man was Gregory Lacruz. This dramatic introduction and the story that Gregory Lacruz told the youths so impressed the youths that they decided they wanted to experience what Lacruz had described. Without any prompting from Pastor Daniel, they agreed amongst themselves that the life of knives, drugs and killing was far less fulfilling than one with the God Lacruz had spoken about. They wanted to know more about God... more about what Lacruz had told them, but above all, more about the kind of relentless love that Pastor Daniel and his wife had shown them – a love without strings.

There was a problem, however. Pastor Daniel and the youths could not find a church that could follow up on the work Lacruz’s story had begun in the youths... no church with a sensitivity and understanding for the needs of the youths. Pastor Daniel was now faced with the choice of starting a church for the youths himself – a move that was going to mean leaving the financial safety of YFC, or doing nothing about the demands of

the youth and keeping his position at YFC. Additionally, a full-blown church was going to mean losing the use of the hallway of the Pinkster Gemeente, and government subsidies of any kind. The Dutch government keeps church and state separate. Daniel de Wolf chose to begin the church and to embark on the arduous journey of searching for a place of worship and financial assistance of any kind. The process was (and remains) tough, but eventually, he received help from some Christian institutions and rent-free accommodation at Bonaventurastraat. The church today ministers, not only to the youths, but also to their parents and acquaintances.

### 5.2.3 Organizational Structure

Pastor Daniel and his wife manage the administrative and organizational matters of the church. Together with five other volunteers, they organize and manage activities for the church.

### 5.2.4 Daily operation

The set-up of the Thugz Church was not realised by Pastor Daniel de Wolf alone. It also took the dedication of six other people: his wife, a Dutch couple, an Antillean couple and a Dutch man and his Antillean friend (the same team that had done voluntary work for YFC when Pastor Daniel and his colleague, Dhr. Setkin Sies, came from Driebergen with the mandate and mission to begin YFC in Rotterdam). This group constitutes the team of volunteers who, today, carry out much of the church's weekly volunteer activities. Sunday services begin at 17:00hrs. Thereafter, during the week, Pastor Daniel and his team pay visits to prisons - calling on YFC youths who are behind bars as well as Thugz Church members who may have slid back into violence for one reason or the other. The team also visit hospitals, make house calls, collaborate with church members to organize parties, barbecue events, film evenings, birthday parties, visits to festivals and other cultural and fun events.

### 5.2.5 Services and activities of the Church

#### *Member challenges & activities of the church*

The history of Thugz Church, itself, establishes the challenges that face a majority of the members of the church, for its very existence is a living testimony to the power of deliverance, hope and unconditional love. Thugz Church was born out of the need to get youths off the street, give them a sense of worth and turn them into productive members of society. Today, Pastor Daniel not only pastors and guides the youths and members of his church, he still scouts areas in the city where youths are open to dangerous influences, attracting and inviting them to the work of the church. This is an exercise in faith as the church is burdened by unrelenting financial constraints. The reasons for this financial constraint are not hard to ascertain.

### 5.2.6 Resources

Thugz Church takes neither tithes nor makes altar calls for offerings, although members who wish to do so can give offerings or even go as far as pay tithes. As such, the only sources of financial support for the church are fundraising events, donations from local Dutch and sometimes migrant churches, and the families of

Pastor Daniel and his wife.

## 5.3 Case study three/four: *The Redeemed Christian Church of God - Rotterdam and Schiedam parishes*

Unlike the other case studies in this report, I will deal simultaneously with two church parishes belonging to one mother church. I will be looking at the Schiedam and Rotterdam Parishes of The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG). My intention for studying two branches of the same mother church is to illustrate the fact that two parishes may belong to one mother church, but would generally have to face challenges independently. True indeed, these affiliated churches or parishes have a better start-up chance in most cases as the mother church is often there to give some limited start-up assistance, but thereafter, the ball is in their court and they must independently play or fold.

### 5.3.1 About the Redeemed Christian Church of God - Rotterdam and Schiedam

#### 5.3.1.1 Rotterdam

The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) Rotterdam Parish is one of two Redeemed churches based in the Rotterdam area and its environs. The church is a multinational church with members from different parts of Africa, the Caribbean, and the Antilles. However, the majority of the members are of Nigerian descent and the leadership is Nigerian. Even so, the assistant pastor (in 2009) is Pastor Adolphe Mizele, of Congolese origin.

As part of a larger church organization, the RCCG Rotterdam parish is not totally administratively independent. Though itself the headquarters of Area South1 (for RCCG Holland is divided into administrative blocks representing different areas in the Netherlands), the parish is still answerable to the headquarters which, at present, are in The Hague (probably soon to move to Rotterdam in response to the church's European Mainland office's possible transfer to this city).

RCCG Rotterdam's accountability to the national administrative body means that almost like a franchise, the parish must give a certain percentage of its monthly income to the headquarters and in return, receive help from the headquarters under specific conditions. However, in basic daily affairs, the parish is independent and must raise its own monies to take care of its needs. Except for a few full-time pastors, Redeemed pastors in The Netherlands are not salaried. Many of them have secular jobs with schedules that beg the question, "How do they manage to combine work and church?" RCCG Rotterdam is seeing a steady growth in membership, with the church building jam-packed on some Sundays. Membership, therefore, is anywhere between 60 and 90 people or more. All services are held at Wolphaertsbocht 278b, 3081 KR, Rotterdam.

#### 5.3.1.2 Schiedam

RCCG Schiedam church was planted in 2003, a couple of years after the Rotterdam parish. Today, the church has some 30 to 40 parishioners of mostly Nigerian origin. Other nationalities include

Ghanaians, Cameroonians, Antilleans and occasionally, Dutch nationals. As in the case of all other RCCG parishes, pastors are appointed by the headquarters. The Schiedam parish conducts services at the community centre, Wijkcentrum De Erker, Jan Van Avennesstraat 32, 3117 PR, Schiedam.

### 5.3.2 History of the Church

The Redeemed Christian Church of God in Rotterdam and Schiedam are branches of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in The Netherlands, which in turn, is the headquarters of the European arm of RCCG worldwide. RCCG worldwide is headquartered in Nigeria where the church was born in 1952 and to which all RCCG churches are answerable. Pa Josiah Akindayomi, its first superintendent, remained the church's general superintendent from 1952 until his passing in 1980.

He was succeeded by a young math professor, Dr. E. A. Adeboye (PhD), who took the church from a Nigerian entity to a worldwide phenomenon. The church's main mission remains "... to proclaim the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ to the lost and to admonish that we live a sanctified life, growing constantly in the faith for the advancement of the kingdom of God and the glory of the Lord" (see church websites worldwide).

Today, there are over 2000 parishes of The Redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria and abroad. The church is present on the continent of Africa in Cameroon, Cote D'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Uganda, Congo, Zambia, Senegal (and others). In Mainland Europe, the church has a presence in 27 countries, while in the UK, it is in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. In the United States, the church is present in 24 zones, with each zone having more than 10 parishes. In the Caribbean, the church is present in Haiti, Jamaica, and many others.

### 5.3.3 RCCG in the Netherlands *Rotterdam and Schiedam*

The RCCG Netherlands Mission was initially registered in January 1999 under a rough translation of the name in Dutch. In March 2004, her registration was changed to the English name used all over the world (see [www.rccgnetherlands.nl](http://www.rccgnetherlands.nl)).

The Rotterdam parish began in earnest in 2000. By the end of 2006 it had acquired its own building at the Wolphaertsbocht in Rotterdam South. Some three years after the start up in Rotterdam, the Schiedam parish was born. Unlike the Rotterdam parish, the Schiedam parish (as of 2009) operates from rented accommodations.

### 5.3.4 Organizational structure

The Netherlands mission is led by a National Coordinator who is answerable to the European Coordinator, who in turn is answerable to the RCCG General Superintendent in Nigeria. Under the National coordinator is a board of trustees (made up of the coordinator, secretary, treasurers, assistant coordinator and legal advisor), as well as a council of elders, consisting of members of the Board of Trustees and all Area Pastors. Following these are the zonal or area coordinators, under whom are parish pastors and their assistants. Parish pastors are aided by deacons and deaconesses, ministers and workers. The Rotterdam parish is headed by the zonal pastor

of the South 1 Area, Pastor Chris Oyenekan, assisted by Pastor Adolphe Mizele. Under them are two ministers, and several ministers in training, workers and workers in training. The ministers lead different ministries such as teaching, prayer, intercession, evangelism, Sunday school, and welfare. Workers may also be charged with leading different ministries. The only difference is that they are under the auspices of the ministers.

The smaller Schiedam parish has one pastor (until August 2009 that pastor was Pastor Ojo Sani and his wife, Pastor Tayo Sani, took over in August 2009). Pastor Tayo is assisted by Deacon Luke Ibe and other deacons & deaconesses, workers, and leaders of the various ministries and committees. These ministries or committees include choir, children, teaching, welfare, women, men, finance and events/evangelism.

### 5.3.5 Daily Operation: *Rotterdam and Schiedam*

The Rotterdam parish holds services on Sundays from 10:30 a.m. to about 13:00-14:00 p.m. The Schiedam parish begins services at 9:30 a.m. (though only from 10:00 for the entire congregation) and ends at 13:00 p.m. On Wednesdays, from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m., both parishes have midweek praise and worship services which include studying the Bible. On Fridays, they also have Bible studies. House fellowships in different homes across the city take place mostly on Tuesdays. These house fellowships are not limited to church members or even to Christians, but to anyone who will listen. Other parishioners have house fellowships on Mondays, some on Thursdays.

### 5.3.6 Services and activities of the Church *Rotterdam and Schiedam*

The Rotterdam and Schiedam parishes of the Redeemed Christian Church of God are part of a policy of the church's Holland mission dedicated to youth development. Yearly, the church holds its youth conference which involves workshops, intense prayers, praise and worship services as well as deliverance services. At these occasions, young people confront themselves and face their hopes and future, and some future spouses meet. Both parishes also are part of the national effort to build the family, assist women, and bring healing and hope to other areas of individual and communal life.

#### *Member challenges & activities of the church*

### 5.3.6.1 Rotterdam

Two overriding issues have dominated member problems at the Rotterdam parish: immigration and unemployment. Between them are lodged other problems such as accommodation crisis and issues related to the challenges of basic survival. For the more officially settled members who make up the majority of membership, problems that many face include joblessness, health issues, family problems and marital problems. In the Schiedam parish, the above is true too, except for one addition - members with mental health problems.

The Rotterdam parish, like the Schiedam parish, utilizes extensive counselling and intense prayers to attend to the problems of its members. But as one of the pastors observed, while



prayers and counselling are key to loosening chains of poverty, ill health and fruitlessness in people's lives, they will not, per se, solve immediate hunger, homelessness or other material helplessness. Physical action is a must. That is why the church utilizes its welfare/care ministry to put food on hungry members' table, to help members with their accommodation needs, aid them in starting businesses, and to make other immediate material things possible. In other cases, the Rotterdam parish has groups that pay visits to sick members or to those who are incapacitated for one reason or the other. There are also church workers who call and talk to parishioners bound in difficulties of some sort.

### 5.3.6.2 Schiedam

Again, the Schiedam parish reflects the activities seen in the Rotterdam parish. Since the Schiedam parish has members who are bogged down by occasional mental illness, the parish has a group that goes to the homes of such members to assist in various ways, for instance, administering medication and helping in environmental and personal hygiene where and when necessary. One of the points that needed clarification for me was the fact that there are professional organizations in Rotterdam to attend to people with such needs. The answer to this was that as much as those facilities are helpful, people still head back to the churches because they feel safe, and trust the ability of the church to give them the love and protection that they need.

I would later come across the same situation in other churches... not with regards to mental illness, but other situations where people should normally have gone to other institutions for assistance but chose the church, either as a result of lack of information (the case of Solange – see Chapter 6) or complete trust in no other institution but the church (see Abundant Grace and Potter's Hand).

### 5.3.7 Resources

As already noted above, though the Rotterdam and Schiedam parishes of the Redeemed Christian Church of God are part of a larger body, they are mostly independent in generating their own finances and solving member and managerial challenges. Considering again the fact that these churches are dealing with a majority of members who are in need, the question arises, "How do they come to their resources?" In the case of the Rotterdam church, the finances to attend to all the church's needs come from offerings, tithes, thanks-giving and the welfare box. The same goes for the Schiedam parish, in whose case additionally, the pastors (as of 2009 - husband and wife team) have been cited by church leaders as the church's main source of finance.

For both the Rotterdam and Schiedam parishes, when it comes to some very major financial requirements, the headquarters may get involved. That, however, does not exempt the parishes from independently confronting some major difficulties such as finding appropriate accommodations for worship. The Rotterdam parish has its own premises, but the Schiedam parish is still looking for appropriate accommodations... still searching for a place where there will be more freedom of action and movement.

## 5.5 Case study five: *Evangelische Broedergemeente Rotterdam*

### 5.5.1 About Evangelische Broedergemeente Rotterdam

The Moravian Evangelische Broedergemeente (EBG) Rotterdam is one of seven Moravian churches in The Netherlands, and amongst the largest migrant churches in Rotterdam. Instituted in Rotterdam in 1974, the church is situated in the upscale neighbourhood of Avenue Concordia Kralingen (Avenue Concordia 111, 3062 LE Rotterdam). With a congregation of largely Surinamese, Dutch, Chinese, Japanese, and Indian worshippers, the church boasts membership in the neighbourhood of 300 people. Services are conducted in Dutch and Surinamese.

### 5.5.2 History of the Church

The Moravian Evangelische Broedergemeente Rotterdam has its origin in 15th century Europe when the German Roman Catholic priest, Johannes Hus, commenced translating the Bible into the local language of the Moravian and Bohemian brothers. Like the Redeemed Christian Church of God, the Moravian EBG Rotterdam is part of a chain of churches worldwide. This spread of EBG signifies that though, like many of his contemporaries, Hus was executed and burned for his work, his legacy continued.<sup>27</sup> One century after Hus's demise, the Evangelist aristocrat, Nikolaus Ludwig Graf von Zinzendorf, built a Christian colony (Herrnhut) for a number of Moravian brothers on his property. This colony grew to the Broedergemeente that later spread across the world, culminating into church provinces. The Moravian EBG in Rotterdam belongs to the European province. This province includes churches in Germany, The Netherlands, Switzerland and other European countries. Other provinces are South American, the Antilles, and others.

Even though they are all part of this impressive network of churches, Moravian churches are largely independent. There are seven Moravian churches in The Netherlands. The pastors come together occasionally to share their experiences, exchange ideas, support and encourage each other and to commune. They also have exchange-services where one pastor from one church preaches in another pastor's church. All of these notwithstanding, the churches remain independent and must independently raise capital and take actions to attend to all their needs. One of the most abiding pieces of evidence of the churches' link to a mother organization is the fact that Moravian church pastors are salaried by the mother organization.

### 5.5.3 Organizational Structure

The Moravian EBG in Rotterdam is headed by two pastors - the senior pastor, Pastor Denny Zinhagel, who is also the vice chairman of the council of elders in the church, and his second, Pastor Susanne Reichel. A governing board is made up of the two pastors, a chair person, a treasurer, and the council of elders follows. There is also the diaconate that determines, for instance, how and when welfare funds are disbursed to members in need. Sets of workgroups formed by volunteers within the church also give

both organizational and practical support to the governing board. The duties of these work groups include promoting the spiritual growth of members, and to a lesser extent, generating funds for the church organization. The work groups are set up in committees such as the controlling committee, the bazaar committee, the prayer committee, the facilitating (catering and maintenance of church premises) committee, the Sunday school committee under which is the Amalia group (for babies) and other groups for children of different age groups, the activities committee and the travels committee. There are also the women's group (tryfossa) and the work groups of people of different ethnicities.

### 5.5.4 Daily Operation

The EBG holds services every Sunday from 10:45 a.m. From this time to 11:00 a.m., the church offers praise and worship to God, and thereafter the service proper begins. Every other Saturday, the church organizes Bible lessons between 16:00 p.m. and 18:00 p.m.

### 5.5.5 Services and activities of the Church

#### *Member challenges & activities of the church*

As already noted above, the Moravian EBGR's work is facilitated by its different work groups. As much as the work of these groups and committees seems geared towards the growth of the church as an institution, their services are equally directed towards attending to the special spiritual and material needs of members.

As Pastor Zinhagel points out, these material needs are not always explicitly shown or expressed, for it is not the Surinamese character to expose one's condition of lack, especially when that includes the ability to feed one's self. It often has to take the intervention of other church members to alert the church of a member's living circumstance. The church has, therefore, had to devise creative ways to attend to the material needs of members without violating their sense of honour and dignity.

One such strategy is the giving out of food supplies in the form of occasional gifts – not as handouts but as gifts from the church to members. More direct assistance is offered in cases involving accommodation, rent, gas and electric bills. However, before this is done, the diaconate investigates the problem and decides on the extent of the need and the level of resources required to respond to that need.

While the church offers such financial assistance, it also takes to coaching members - advising and praying with them. Apparently, the 2008/2009 economic crisis has had a mirror effect in the church - that is, affected the church and its members in the same way that it has affected society, with the same tensions that people on the outside face, reproducing themselves in the church. As a result, the resources of the church have had to be geared towards needs bred by the crisis. A crisis of a more deep-seated kind has also been a thorn in the flesh of the church: the identity and culture crisis of some of the young people. Most of these youths, born and bred in The Netherlands by non-native Dutch people, find themselves caught between cultures as well as compelled to have to wrestle to establish who they are. This, in and of itself, is not the issue per se as many young people in their formative years, regardless of origin, have growing pains and identity concerns.

In the case of the youths in the church and in The

Netherlands in general, there is an added danger, Pastor Zinhagel states. This is the danger of people in occult organizations, such as Winti and brua, using drugs and other means to trap these youths into occult activities. It is a situation made possible by the fact that the perpetrators blur the line between culture and occultism... making the youths think that movements such as Winti or brua are part of their culture rather than occult organizations. In order to "*find themselves*," these youths join these organizations, sometimes committing themselves to the movements while under the influence of drugs or other substances often administered to them without their knowledge. The church then finds itself presented with the negative end-results of these involvements... results that, as Pastor Zinhagel points out, can be as destructive to society as it is to the individual. The church thus works to alert youths of the dangers of such involvements.

### 5.5.6 Resources

As noted above, the church is independent with regards to its daily work and must, itself, generate the funds to take care of its various activities. The funds come from the church's collections and tithes. The church does enjoy the support of two sister churches in Germany and England. Apart from these two sources of help, the EBG Rotterdam must generate its own resources.

## 5.6 Case study six: *Abundant Grace Ministries*

### 5.6.1 About Abundant Grace Ministries

Abundant Grace Ministries is the only church in this study initiated by a woman. The church conducts services in a school (Het Kompas) at Nieuwe Tiendweg, nr. 15, 2922 in Krimpen a/d IJssel. The church is led by Pastor Rose Fer (of Ghanaian heritage) and her husband, Pastor Ardy Fer of (Dutch/Surinam heritage). It is a multinational church made up of Dutch, Antillean, Armenian, Polish, Indonesian and to a small degree, African worshippers. Services are conducted in English and Dutch.

### 5.6.2 History of the Church

Pastor Rose Fer arrived in The Netherlands from Ghana in the mid 1990s. A graduate of the Victory International Bible Training College in Ghana, and later, of the Pan African Christian Theological University of Ghana, Pastor Fer came to The Netherlands, not only as a woman called to the work of God by an abiding need to do God's will and to bring peace and hope to others, but as an academic - with degrees in theology and church management & administration. Most importantly, she came to The Netherlands with several prophecies about her destiny as a worker of God, as well as a knowing within her, that hers was to be a life for God. In The Netherlands, she began fulfilling this call in her brother's church which she temporarily pastored. It was during this period that Pastor Fer came in contact with the pressures people face, or as she would put it, "*the burdens people carry*" (Pastor Rose Fer). This made clear to her that the time had arrived "...to take up the call of God to remind Christians and non-Christians about the Power of the



*Cross of Christ to set them free from their past (sins, hurts, rejections, loneliness and low self esteem) to give them a hope and a future"* (ibid above). Following a divine push towards Krimpen a/d IJssel, along with the incidence of shortage of accommodations in the city centre of Rotterdam, Pastor Rose and her husband relocated to Krimpen, where through some *divine* turn of events, they found accommodation for their new church. As a result of a series of propitious arrangements with landlords, the church changed premises twice and finally found its place in its present premises: a school.

Abundant Grace Ministries started at Krimpen in 2003 with just five people. In 2009, that number had grown to over 60 people and the growth is gradually continuing.

### 5.6.3 Organizational Structure

Apart from Pastor Rose Fer and her husband, Pastor Ardy Fer, who leads Abundant Grace Ministries, another pastoral couple has been ordained to open a new branch in Rotterdam proper. As for the headquarters at Krimpen, the Fers are supported by leaders who head the various ministries within the church. The ministries include youth ministry, evangelism & social concern ministry, prayer ministry, music ministry, marriage and counselling ministry, men's and women's ministry and a financial committee.

### 5.6.4 Daily Operation

Sunday services begin at 10:30. Apart from this, there are midweek services. On Wednesday, for instance, the church conducts Bible study, while on Fridays, it carries out special teachings on various topics affecting people's daily and spiritual lives (or rather their wellbeing), as well as teachings on prayer and worship. Other activities include counselling (relationship and personal issues) and visitations (at hospital and people's homes). Men and women groups meet on appointed days for fellowship, and "...for sharing their burdens and for having fun." Pastor Rose Fer notes that, "Our evangelism and social concerns team minister to people with special needs. They give them support and comfort."

Pastor Fer and her husband are now looking for more permanent accommodations, not merely for the convenience of a permanent abode for the church, but because in rented accommodations, some activities are not possible. At their present place of worship, though conditions of worship are excellent, the church can still not hold evening services or carry out its evangelical Alpha courses<sup>28</sup> in the evening since during the appointed time for these activities, the school's "BSO" is underway.<sup>29</sup> Alpha courses are information evenings or events organized for people who know nothing or very little about Jesus Christ or the Christian mandate. The courses are, in fact, less about formality and the educational aura than about relaxed information evenings - usually with food and refreshments. These courses/events are organized by members of the church.

The church also conducts fasting weeks, holds themed barbecues (for instance for singles or people who do not have the opportunity or means to go on holidays), and other such focused activities.

## 5.6.5 Services and activities of the Church

### Member challenges & activities of the church

At the outset, the church was challenged by the asylum status of the majority of its African members. This status spelled relocation for many of them. Another problem that the church consistently confronted was the financial difficulties of some of its members - with the root causes of unemployment and financial mismanagement. In the latter case, the church almost always had to arrange visitations to people's homes in order to educate them on financial and budgetary management. Occasionally, the church would go to creditors and try to negotiate better arrangements for parishioners in trouble.

More recently, the church's problems have been all encompassing, including family (especially marital) problems, drug-related problems, and the inability to provide for basic needs. Fortunately, two of the church's members run a feeding centre. This centre caters to the need of church members who otherwise would go hungry. In other cases, the church organises events to bring relief to the lives of people rehabilitating from drug use or unable to take holidays. While intensive prayers are the spiritual norm in every one of these situations, the pastors do offer shelter to very vulnerable cases. These cases are often the offshoot of emotional problems stemming from situations such as divorce. As for the shelter, it is none other than the personal home of the pastors and Dutch, rather than migrant, members are the main beneficiaries of this shelter program. As Pastor Rose Fer puts it, "For Africans, the problem is material and financial, while for Dutch parishioners and people with financial stability, the problem is generally emotional." One of such cases involved a couple who consecutively took shelter in the pastors' home - the stay of each spanning months. The intensive counselling and prayers that accompanied their stay was also directed against the suicidal promptings of one of them.

### 5.6.6 Resources

Asked how the church has been financing its various activities, Pastor Rose gave me a list: tithes, offerings, gifts, her family's private financial input (from secular jobs) and "reliance on God." Nothing else.

## 5.7 Case study seven: Alliance Messianique pour L'évangélisation des Nations (AMEN)

### 5.7.1 AMEN

First called Mission Evangelique de la Foi en Action (MEFA Holland) - the Alliance Messianique Pour L'évangélisation Des Nations (AMEN) first conducted worship at the Mathenesserland in Rotterdam. Today, the church has a new name (AMEN Church) and a new address: Van Cleeffstraat 8, 3113 AK in Schiedam. The church is led by Pastor Christophe Kalubi and his wife. Membership is mostly of Congolese origin and numbers between 30 and 40 persons. Services are conducted in French and Lingala and simultaneously translated into Dutch.

### 5.7.2 History of the Church

The church's origin dates back to 1992. In this year, the Mission Evangelique de la Foi en Action (MEFA Holland) was set up in Utrecht. However, following the (job-related) transfer of its founding pastor to Rotterdam, the church moved to Rotterdam in 1995, into one of the office/meeting spaces of the Gereformeerde kerk in Mathenesserland. When the original pastor later left the country, Pastor Christophe Kalubi, an elder at the time, took over the pastoring of the church.

Life at Mathenesserland, however, proved difficult. It was a difficulty born of the fact that the church was occupying the office space of another (bigger Dutch) church – the Gereformeerde kerk – which was situated in a residential area. This was not a space meant for services, for it neither had service instruments (keyboard, microphones, drum set, etc.) nor was sound proof. The result was restrictions on how loud church members could go with their praises, and continuous complaints by residents in the area about noise pollution from the church. The church eventually found a place in Schiedam's industrial Van Cleeffstraat.

### 5.7.3 Organizational Structure

The church has two pastors (Pastor Christophe and his wife) and three leaders. It also has committees lead by various individuals - from the pastors and leaders to other members. There are eight such committees: children, choir, women, men, financial, welfare, help and prayer.

### 5.7.4 Daily Operation

The church shares its present premises with another church, a Portuguese-speaking church. Because of a split that occurred within the Portuguese church, AMEN's Sunday services have changed from 15:00 p.m. - 18:00 p.m. to 13:00 p.m. - 15:00 p.m., allowing the morning and evening hours to the two halves of the Portuguese church.

### 5.7.5 Activities of the Church

#### *Member challenges & activities of the church*

In 2008, AMEN church asked the Voedselbank organization in Rotterdam if its premises could be considered as a Voedselbank food-distribution centre. The church's reason for this request was several fold - chief of which was the fact that the church had come to the end of its tethers concerning food distribution.

Before the request was made, the church had engaged in a prior feeding-program for members in need. It was an internal effort created and sponsored by the pastors themselves... one that grew out of the financial difficulties of many members, most of whom had no job, no permanent documentation or way to survive. For many of those without documentation, the problem was not illegality per se but slipping from documented-status to undocumented-status (*uitgeprocedeerd*) and being in the process of re-applying for documentation-status. But re-applying to regain lost status generally meant producing a certain amount of money within a given time frame which, for people without any social welfare benefit (*uitkering*), was often impossible. For instance, take the case of one of the parishioners - a mother of 4 children.

She and her family had been '*uitgeprocedeerd*'. To reapply, she had to produce a minimum of €200 for each of her children including herself – totalling €1000. She had to do so in spite of the fact that having been dispossessed of her legal papers, she had no access to social welfare, job opportunities or any legal financial source (*at least to her knowledge*). Faced with these odds, the woman had nowhere else but the church to turn to, as does other parishioners in similar situations.

AMEN Church thus began its home-made feeding program as a last resort. The problem, however, was that the program depended on the efforts of the pastor and his wife, and a few of the church leaders who could help. The program was therefore doomed from the beginning to come against insurmountable challenges. As demand for the services of the program increased, so did the pastors and their leaders crumble under the pressure.

Eventually unable to go on, the pastors turned to the Voedselbank and asked, not only for assistance to helpless members, but permission to turn their church premises into a Voedselbank food-distribution centre. Their argument for the latter was as follows - most of the people who need assistance from the Voedselbank are those who are often afraid to approach the feeding centres. For some of these people, it has to do with their status out of the legal system. All the paper work required to get people on the Voedselbank's feeding list intimidate and force others to move as far away from the Voedselbank centres as possible. A church that is a food-distribution centre takes away that barrier almost immediately, not necessarily because the people offering the food are any different from those at the secular food distribution centres, but because it is a church – a place of trust and hope. According to church leaders, turning their premises into a centre would, additionally, prevent people in the area from travelling long distances for their Voedselbank supplies, as such journeys often requires transportation. Also, people in the neighbourhood of the church who not only need physical food but spiritual food would be doubly blessed with physical and spiritual food.

AMEN Church's call for help from the Voedselbank is a symptom of a deep-seated problem in the church. Most of its members are jobless, impoverished, cut from the society by the language and the culture and a 'staggering' lack of information (and in some cases access to information).

For a small church, most of whose members are burdened by financial difficulties, it is no surprise that the overriding problem of the church is the pressures of paying its rent, keeping up the church and meeting the needs of the members on a consistent basis. Since the church cannot pay its rent, the pastors and the church's leaders must contribute to the rent out of their own personal coffers. They all have secular jobs to live from and upon which the financial requirements of the church, such as the aforementioned rent, maintenance of the church, carrying out church activities, supplies for the church, transportation for members without the money to travel, transportation needs of the church itself, etc., rests.

### 5.7.6 Resources

Asked how they cope, or who helps, the husband-wife pastoral team replied, "No one helps." They are on their own. Asked how

they could keep up, the pastors (the husband) answered: *"The Bible says if your sister has nothing to eat, you must share."*

The wife's addition, *"Humanly speaking, we cannot do this. We could never do it, nor would we have thought of keeping on doing this, but stopping with the work of the church is not an option for us. Jesus never stopped his work. How can we, who must do what he charged us to do and what he showed us to do, stop?"*

## 5.8 Case study eight: Claypot Community Centre

### 5.8.1 About Claypot Community Centre

Claypot Church is one of four churches conducting services within the premises of the Internationaal Evangelisch Centrum Europoort in Rotterdam West. Like Claypot Church, two of the aforementioned churches are tenants of this spread-out multifaceted building. Situated on Rotterdam's busy Nieuwe Binnenweg (nrs. 308 to 324, 3021 GV Rotterdam), the building belongs to the "Pinkstergemeente" Evangelisch Centrum Europoort, a Dutch-led church that was set up by Dutch Christians in 1954. This fact becomes of note when one considers that the Evangelisch Centrum Europoort figures in Reverend Robert Calvert's book on Migrant Churches (see page 61). What is poignant about this is the issue of definition that the fact again brings up: How is a migrant church to be defined? Would a church led by Dutch nationals but populated by both people of different nationalities and Dutch nationals fall within the category "migrant"? On the other hand, perhaps the fact that Pastor Renger, the present Dutch pastor of the Evangelisch Centrum Europoort, was born in an African country (Cameroon), gives currency to the church's appearance in a directory of migrant churches.

Unlike the Evangelisch Centrum Europoort, Claypot Church and the other churches renting the church's premises are led and populated by non-Dutch nationals. Additionally, they are relatively young churches. Claypot's initiator, Pastor Alexander Emoghene, was not yet born when Evangelisch Centrum Europoort came to being in 1954. The young pastor set up his church in Rotterdam in 2005. Three years later the church, begun by his wife and himself, had grown to some 70 members, mostly of African origin, Ugandans, Angolans, Cape Verdeans, Nigerians, people from Guinea Bissau, Surinamese, Antillean, Caribbean, and recently, a trickling of Dutch worshippers.

### 5.8.2 History of the Church

Born in England of Nigerian parentage, Pastor Alexander Emoghene and his Ugandan-born wife, Minister Judith Emoghene, left their home base of England in 2006 and came to Rotterdam to set up Claypot Church. As is stated in their mission statement, they came to the Netherlands with a vision to *"...spread the gospel from Rotterdam to the rest of Holland; to build a multicultural and multigenerational congregation with a focus on fostering strong relationships, healthy parenting, spiritually minded young people and families ... to raise leaders in the community within every sector, empower believers to realise their deepest desire and the gift of God within, and to create an environment conducive to bringing healing for the body, soul and spirit."*

As Pastor Alexander would later explain, the motivation to travel to The Netherlands and set up a church was driven by his view of Rotterdam as his spiritual birthplace. In 1999, the pastor, then in his 20's, travelled from London to Rotterdam on a holiday. By the time he boarded the plane back to England, he was a born-again Christian. That experience would begin a burning desire in him to take up and continue the work of God in Rotterdam – his spiritual birthplace. Seven years later, he returned to the Rotterdam with his wife and there, they set up their new church.

### 5.8.3 Daily Operation

The church holds services every Sunday from 13:30 p.m. to 16:00 p.m. On Thursdays, the church conducts its prophetic evenings (19:00 p.m. and 21:00 p.m.). Every second Friday of the month, it holds its watch night services which are all night services beginning at 23:00 p.m. and ending at 4:00 a.m. Movie nights take place on the third Saturday of each month, from 7 p.m. to about 9 p.m. On Mondays, the church has its beginner's classes for new believers and older believers who have backslidden. On Wednesdays, the church gives leadership classes to parishioners. As a result of the rental conditions of the church premises, only Sunday services and the mid-week Thursday services are possible within the church premises. The rest of the weekly activities are conducted in the homes of members in areas as far apart as Rotterdam Zuid and Overschie.

### 5.8.4 Organizational Structure

As in most of the churches in this report, the organizational structure of Claypot Church is both vertical and horizontal. Though Pastor Alexander and his wife sit at the helm of church activities, the church is propelled by the different ministries, lead by chosen leaders and workers. These ministries include: prayer, bible study, Sunday school, marital affairs, intercession, and care ministry.

### 5.8.5 Services and activities of the Church

The organizational structure of Claypot Church gives a foretaste of the kind of activities and services that the church offers. We see, for instance, that the church conducts intensive prayer sessions that include intercessions for both the city of Rotterdam, The Netherlands and the church's members. It conducts Sunday school classes for parishioners where the Bible is studied rather than merely read. Two of the ministries or activities reflect some of the challenges facing members. These are the marital and care ministries. In the case of the former, the church offers pre-marital and post-marital counselling. Here, parishioners take counselling classes six months prior to and six months after marriage. The premarital courses last ten classes while the post marital classes span five months.

In the case of the care ministry, the church focuses on parishioners who are faced with material lack - assisting them with issues ranging from transportation needs to paying electricity bills. One area in which Claypot Church is becoming increasingly involved is the area of creating and expanding a strong network of men's ministry. This work transcends the boundaries of the church's membership, the aim being to draw men from all denominations, churches and Christian circles in Rotterdam into a powerful

movement for God. The goal is to make participating men more aware of their responsibilities and privileges in God, and to create a deep sensitivity for Christian values and societal responsibilities.

#### *Member challenges & activities of the church*

Below, by order of seriousness, are the challenges that Pastor Alexander Emoghene's church faces: joblessness amongst members, teenage motherhood, and to a very small degree drug addiction. In the case of joblessness, the root causes include job lay-offs, complaints about low salaries (in bad working conditions) that are comparable to social security payout, and the inability to find work. In the case of the single mothers, Pastor Alexander explains that the church offers these young mothers a non-judgemental environment, an environment to grow and make positive adjustments in their lives. Members under different situations are given a non-judgemental atmosphere to outgrow the chains that bind them to their various conditions. For instance, the jobless are counselled about ways to find jobs and about the right attitude towards employment; the single mothers are given emotional, mental and spiritual tools to veer away from that which, for some, may have resulted in a life on the street and the drug-enraptured are guided out of their drug mentality without an overt focus on the situation.

One of the educational tools Pastor Emoghene uses is what he calls "leading by association," whereby he mentors and teaches leadership skills to parishioners without expressly doing so. There are, however, specific classes for leadership skills. Leading by association is practiced especially during visitations. Here, those accompanying the pastor in his several visitation engagements are allowed to take the lead in making decisions affecting their movements and activities.

### 5.8.6 Resources

As can be seen from the above, the church leadership invests time and resources in the wellbeing of parishioners. Pastor Emoghene and his wife have secular jobs. From their salaries, they cater for the basic supplies of the church. What passes for the church's main transportation is, in fact, the couple's family car. Offerings, tithes and other offers that (occasionally) come to the church help pay the monthly rent of the church.

## 5.9 Case study nine: *Mahaber Church (Ethiopian Evangelical Church)*

### 5.9.1 About Mahaber Church (Ethiopian Evangelical Church)

The Ethiopian (Eritrean) Evangelical Church, Mahaber Church, conducts services in Amharic. It was set up so the word of God could be preached to first generation Ethiopians and their children in their native tongue. Politics from the mother country soon imposed on the development of the church as the church split in two when Ethiopia and Eritrea separated. Before the country's divide, members from both parts of the country worshipped together at Mahaber Church. After the separation, a break occurred where some members of Eritrean origin broke off and set up their

own church. However, other Eritrean brethren remained.

### 5.9.2 History of the Church

In 1991, five Christians of Ethiopian origin congregated in one of their homes and resolved to set up a church in which services would be conducted in their mother tongue – Amharic. The mission of the five was to institute a church that would also serve as a point from which people of Ethiopian heritage across the Netherlands (starting in Rotterdam) would be reached and offered spiritual and practical tools of living peaceful, hopeful, useful and valuable lives in their new home away from Ethiopia. It was to be a church that would bring the moral, spiritual and practical guidelines of the Bible to ordinary Ethiopians.

The five pioneer members were all attendees of Dutch churches and as such, knew the needs that Dutch churches could not fill. They knew that to reach and impact the hearts and soul of their peoples, a church had to be sensitive to the cultural, socio-economic and socio-political challenges and opportunities facing the Amharic speaker in a foreign land.

By 2009, the church that had begun with five people in a house in Rotterdam, had expanded into seven branches in cities across The Netherlands – namely Amsterdam, The Hague, Breda, Wageningen, Eindhoven, and Amersfoort. Two of these parishes (the Amsterdam and Rotterdam parishes) today boast membership of up to 100 worshippers (in the case of Rotterdam, 70 adults and 30 children).

The Mahaber Church is today part of the umbrella organization, EECUN (Ethiopian Evangelical Churches Union in The Netherlands), under whose auspices all seven branches work.

### 5.9.3 Organizational Structure

The Mahaber Church in Rotterdam is organized into a system of elders (who are pastors). Pastor Ahadu Beza leads the team of elders in Rotterdam.

There are three elders in the Rotterdam parish. Under the elders are leaders of different ministries. There is one full-time minister (or pastor) and nine ministries and communities led by leaders. The ministries are: youth, women, prayer, family, evangelism, children, family counselling, visitations, choir, teaching and community ministry, which is run by EDCCC.

### 5.9.4 Daily Operation

The church holds services every Sunday from 13:30 p.m. Services are in Amharic. During the week, the church conducts various activities, ranging from coordinating homework help for the children of parishioners to mobile Bible courses and prayer services.

Due to rental conditions, the church space at Eerste Nieuwstraat is available only on Sundays and, subject to availability and extra payment, a few other days in the week. However, the Delfshaven Gereformeerde kerk PKN, at Mathenesserlaan 301b has allowed the church free access to its premises for the church's weekly prayer services – an opportunity which Pastor Ahadu Beza, head elder of Mahaber church, declares "we are very thankful for."

As a result of the church's accommodation dependence, the church is often forced to move its activities from one home or



hired accommodation to the other. The result of this has been an extreme limit on what the church can do and what it can achieve – in spite of what it wants to do and knows it is capable of doing.

Apart from its religious activities, the church is involved in non-religious activities, largely under its non-religious organization, EDCCC - The Ethio-Dutch Cultural Community Centre. EDCCC is for all Ethiopians, Christian or not. The EDCCC organizes computer and language lessons, helps in letter writing and deals with official forms. It also works to link Ethiopians with government departments relevant to their requirements. The EDCCC also organizes workshops, conferences, dialoguing, and just about anything that assists in the integration of, especially second generation, Ethiopians in the Dutch society. EDCCC is part of SVOR (Stichting Vluchtelingen Organisaties Rijnmond).

### 5.9.5 Services and activities of the Church

As already mentioned above, Mahaber Church has several ministries and committees. The work and activities of these ministries are carried out on an almost daily basis as can be seen in Pastor Ahadu Beza and Pastor Semere's preparedness on a daily basis to cater to the concerns of parishioners. The visitation ministry (committee), for instance, pays visits to people who are lonely, sick, or in need of one or another type of assistance. The teaching ministry (committee) organizes courses for parishioners – particularly Bible courses that take place at different days of the week in different areas of the city. The course curriculum includes the reading of daily passages, the memorising of scriptures and the study of texts. There are seven of these Bible study groups. The groups go to members' homes in different areas of Rotterdam, often in the evenings, and engage the members in Bible studies. However, for mothers with school-aged children, the courses are offered in the afternoons when the children are at school.

#### *Member challenges & activities of the church*

Until 2007, the most urgent problem facing members was documentation issues. After the general pardon in 2007, the problem of documentation lessened as many members received their permanent resident permit. However, though this brought great relief to the church, it did not curb the problem of joblessness, nor did it eliminate difficulties of personal upkeep or family tensions. Amongst the type of family problems the church has had to deal with are spousal tension and problems between first generation parents and their second-generation children, where children caught between the culture of their parents and the Dutch culture act out their frustration.

In other cases, Pastor Ahadu Beza is sometimes compelled to accompany parents to the schools of their children because the parents can't easily communicate with the teachers regarding something or the other that may have occurred at school. Sometimes, the pastor will make phone calls to the children's schools on behalf of the parents. The main reason for such interventions is some parishioners' belief that because of the cultural and language barriers between Ethiopians and the Dutch, they could be misinterpreted or may misinterpret what is being said to them. Their trust and belief in the integrity of the church and its elders and pastors compels them to turn to the church for assistance and guidance. What this comes down to is the church

leadership becoming quasi-social workers, tax advisors, and other officials all at once.

All of these issues challenge the church. Other challenges include difficulties in finding qualified workers, people fluent in Dutch to man the youth department. Since second generation Ethiopian children are Dutch speakers, the broken Dutch of the current Ethiopian youth teachers only serves to put off some of the children and youths from attending church.

### 5.9.6 Resources

As already mentioned above, the church takes care of both the spiritual and material needs of parishioners – from transportation, house rent, food and to regular financial assistance. For a church whose senior pastor still needs to work "40 hours a week" to make ends meet, and where the only full time minister sometimes works without regular pay, its services and the demands on it are plentiful. This calls to question how the church makes ends meet and who may be assisting it. The answer, according to Head Pastor Ahadu Beza: "We get help from nowhere." The church is solely responsible for all its needs.

## 5.10 Case study ten: *Holy Fire Revival Ministries International*

### 5.10.1 About Holy Fire Revival Ministries International

Holy Fire Revival Ministries International is a 30 member church at Wolphaertsbocht 453a, 3081 KM, Rotterdam. Its leading pastor is Pastor (Apostle/Evangelist) Isaac Twumasi Gibson, and its congregation is a mix of Ghanaians, Antilleans, Surinamese and Dutch nationals. Affiliated to the affairs of the church is its 'humanitarian' project independently called the "Holy Fire House of Grace". Holy Fire House of Grace is active in those areas assigned to the various ministries of the church. There is, however, a slight difference to the way Holy Fire House of Grace contributes to the work of the church. Its work is guided by six volunteers from different churches.

### 5.10.2 History of the Church

Pastor Twumasi's Holy Fire Revival Ministries International is part of a worldwide ministry of about 100 churches presided over by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Bishop Reginald Ofori Twumasi (who trained and anointed Pastor Isaac and who has remained the latter's spiritual father). Holy Fire Revival Ministries Rotterdam came to life as a result of a request by Bishop Ofori in 2001 for a branch of the ministries to be opened in The Netherlands.

Before this call came, Pastor Isaac had served as an evangelist and first head deacon at Crooswijk S.D.A Church in Rotterdam. He had also served as a Rotterdam church planter (in 1998) for the Amsterdam-based, Resurrection Power and the Leaven Bread Ministry. By 2000, the planted church in Rotterdam had grown to 60 members, and was now located on the premises of a Roman Catholic church in Beukendaal (house nr. 2). In 2001, the call came from Pastor Ofori for the planting of a new branch of Holy Fire Ministries in The Netherlands. That year, Holy Fire Revival

Ministries International was planted in Rotterdam and in 2002, it was officially registered at the Rotterdam Chamber of Commerce. Fuelled by heavy evangelism that included preaching on the radio, the church grew quickly.

By 2003, the church had grown to 40 members. But in 2003, Pastor Isaac Twumasi travelled to Ghana for his mother's funeral. When he came back, the young church had scattered. He started off again from zero to evangelize and to build the church's membership base. By 2007, membership had reached 25 worshippers.

In 2007, the pastor once again travelled to Ghana, this time for the 30th anniversary of the worldwide church. While in Ghana, he planted another church in the Juaben-Ashanti area which today, has grown to a 60-member church. However, when he came back to The Netherlands after planting the church in 2007, he met his church again in disarray and almost empty - this time due to power struggles between two of the church leaders he had left behind. From the three members he met, he again started rebuilding the church's membership base. By 2009, that number had grown to 30.

In August 2008, the church inaugurated its aforementioned humanitarian Holy Fire House of Grace project in an event that drew together city politicians such as portefeuillehouder Sociale en Economische Zaken Dhr. L.B. Martijn, and representatives of SKIN Rotterdam (for instance, Reverend Robert Calvert and Reverend Nana Opoku). The aim of Holy Fire House of Grace is to offer professional help to people and to utilize the expertise of pastors in other churches to do so.

### 5.10.3 Organizational Structure of the Church

The church is led by Pastor Isaac Twumasi Gibson. Under the pastor is a board made up of five members: the chair person (the pastor himself), a treasurer, a financial secretary, a general secretary and an extra board member. Following the five board members are leaders of the different ministries and committees. These ministries and committees include the men's ministry, women's ministry, youth and children's ministry (two children's leaders, a youth leader and an assistant to the youth leader), and the music and instruments ministry (or the Consuming Fire Choir and Emanuel Music Group). There is a committee overseeing the work of Holy Fire House of Grace. This committee is made up of three outside non-religious advisors, respectively from De Heuvel, SBAW and CVD.

### 5.10.4 Daily Operation

The church conducts its main services on Sundays, and then meets on Wednesday and Friday evenings for praise, worship and Bible studies. On Tuesdays and Saturdays, pastors and ministers involved in the church's House of Grace project gather for prayers and intercessions. In much of the week, Holy Fire Ministry's doors are open for passers-by who may want to enquire more about the church's activities or seek counselling, advice or simply to have a cup of coffee or tea.

In addition to its physical schedule, Holy Fire Ministries now has a weekly Sunday TV program that started on September 2009. Services are aired on Sundays from 16:00 p.m. to 16:30 p.m. It repeats on Monday mornings between 9:00 a.m. and 9:30 a.m.

## 5.10.5 Services and activities of the Church

### *Member challenges & activities of the church*

There are two notable aspects about the work of Holy Fire Ministries. The first is that the demands on the church's services come largely from non-members. As for the second, the work of the church's Holy Fire House of Grace is carried out in concert with leaders from other churches. These six men and women have expertise in counselling, advising, intercession and deliverance work. The activities, thus, of Holy Fire House of Grace include the above areas, along with the visiting of prisons, and carrying out neighbourhood evangelism that includes recreational events in neighbourhood centres such as the Wijkgebouw Tarwewijk. Through the Holy Fire House of Grace program, the church also helps needy children and teenagers in the Juaben-Ashanti area in Ghana.

Since the inception of the House of Grace counselling program, the church premises have seen an increase in visits by non-church members and members from other churches who want counselling. Some people simply walk into the premises on seeing the sign above the open door. Others find the church through the church's street evangelism where the pastor meets and talks with people on the street, handing them flyers and inviting them to visit the church. The church's recreational evangelical events also bring people to the church's premises.

On any given day, anywhere between five to fifteen people visit the church. Most importantly, the church records several successes in relation to these visits. One such success involves a Dutch teacher who came into the premises with about ten children, asking for advice on how to train and bring up children and teenagers. The result of this was counselling and advice for both teacher and students which bore fruit for both parties.

In another example, a Dutch couple in the throes of marital problems (as a result of the effect of the husband's drug use on the family), came in threatening to commit suicide. After two months of intensive counselling, both abandoned the idea of suicide, and the husband resolved to seek professional help for his drug problem.

In yet another example, a lady from the Antilles, embroiled in a troubled romantic relationship, came for help. The effect of her stressful situation had begun impinging on her health and everything else around her. She, too, underwent intensive counselling and prayers. The result was better sleep, freedom from depression, and release from sorrow. Unfortunately, the problem transferred to her relationship with her son, and the counselling shifted gears.

As can be seen from the above, the Holy Fire Ministries uses its House of Grace program to deal with problems that are not only member specific. The most recurrent problems that call for counselling are family conflicts, financial problems, drug addiction, and spiritual issues.

### 5.10.6 Resources

Like the other churches in this study, Holy Fire Revival Ministries, is, so to speak, on its own. For a pastor who, himself, lost his job in the throes of the beginning of the economic crisis in late 2008, the demands of the church have been and remain overwhelming.



Yet, he must keep on keeping on as a matter of calling and as an answer to the needs of the people in the neighbourhood of the church. Even so, both he and the church are burdened by rental problems and the upkeep of the church. In other words, the church and its pastor are over-burdened by financial difficulties. The mother church in Ghana did support in the beginning, supporting in any way it could but then the mother church's building burnt to the ground, a tragedy that was captured on CNN and BBC, and all the parishes of the church were forced to become financially independent. Today, they must fend for themselves.

## 5.11 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to enter into the lives of a select number of migrant churches and see how they work and why they work the way they do. Ten churches, with unmistakable historical differences brought out some stark similarities in the conditions and fortunes of migrant churches in the city. Their case studies also demonstrate the potential inherent (for the Rotterdam municipal government) in working closely with migrant churches, as these studies reveal ways in which the churches work and thereby, how the municipality can map out collaboration with the churches, albeit through a relevant social organization. In sum, the chapter made the following conclusions:

1. Many of the migrant churches of the new wave are the birth children of people who were inspired (called) to begin their ministries.
2. More and more pastors of migrant churches do have formal level pastor training.
3. Many migrant pastors and their leadership do not receive a salary, and as such must work in secular jobs to survive and keep their ministries afloat. They work almost around the clock - from secular jobs, to church activities, to house calls.
4. These migrant church pastors work under such conditions because the majority of them do not receive financial assistance or resources of any kind from anywhere else.
5. As a result of their financial difficulties, most migrant churches have accommodation problems. Because of the problem of accommodation, the activities of many migrant churches are sometimes scattered all over town, with services in one location, prayer nights in another, counselling in yet another and courses in another.
6. Due to their resource and financial difficulties, migrant church leaders and pastors become innovative in the ways they train church leaders.
7. Migrant churches are growing exponentially.
8. Migrant churches have a well-defined organizational structure, with highly specialized ministries and departments.
9. Migrant churches have experience in organizing courses or lessons - from Alfa courses to leadership classes.
10. Migrant churches often have activities through the week - from Sunday services, to midweek services, to end of the week services, including Bible and other lessons.
11. Migrant churches conduct themselves like one big family.
12. Not only church members but non-members also utilize the services of migrant churches and their leaders - mostly with regards to counseling. This does extend to material services such as food handouts, though sometimes under clandestine conditions.
13. Not only migrants benefit from the services of migrant churches. Indigenous Dutch do, too.
14. One of the biggest challenges members of migrant churches, as well as the churches themselves, face is member unemployment.
15. A problem of equal magnitude, if not more pressing, is the legal status of members. Many members are struggling for legal documentation in the country.
16. Debt is a major problem for church members, as well as church leaders, and the churches themselves.
17. Psychological challenge is another that migrant churches face. This means sometimes dealing with suicidal individuals. Some migrant church leaders have had to accommodate suicidal members in their own homes for months at a time in order to offer intensive counseling.
18. Some of the churches are confronted with teenage mothers who often need counseling but benefit more from the church's welcoming atmosphere.
19. Mentally ill patients of some of the churches sometimes head for their churches, rather than for existing institutions when in need of help. The churches are often only spiritually equipped (through prayers) to deal with such situations.
20. While drug abuse is a reality in some of the churches, it is a problem that is small in comparison to the material and psychological needs of parishioners.
21. Most migrants or non-Dutch members of migrant churches have mainly material need while most of the Dutch and other well-established members have mainly emotional problems.
22. Migrant churches also suffer from reversed cultural problems where children of parents who can't speak Dutch have difficulties following Sunday school services because the teachers cannot speak the language properly. As a result, many of these churches are in need of Dutch-speaking Sunday school teachers.
23. Most migrant churches seek opportunities to have their members benefit from established services such as the Voedselbank.
24. Many churches seek opportunities to visit, counsel and minister to people in crisis situations such as prisons, crisis centres, etc.
25. Migrant churches offer development aid to communities and churches in their mother countries (in countries in Africa, South America and other regions of the world).
26. Migrant churches are increasingly combining various skills to assist members and non-members.

Taking from the above ten migrant church case studies, this report now concentrates on two individual case studies. In this way, we not only see the work of the churches in general, but in the lives of recognizable people. Chapter six is, therefore, a chapter on individual case studies.

# 6

## INDIVIDUAL CASE STUDIES

### 6.0 Introduction

Ten churches have given us a glimpse into the lives of migrant churches in Rotterdam. The stories of two parishioners now give us some insights into the experiences of those whom these churches serve. Again, as with the case of the churches, I chose the subjects for this analysis without any prior guidelines as to who to pick. The only requirement was that the candidates be longstanding members of a migrant church. Of the many parishioners I spoke to, two have made it to these pages - for no other reason than the fact that they are an integral part of a migrant church and as such a reflection, if not a representation, of other migrant church members. I begin with Solange.

Solange is not her real name. I promised to keep her name out of print. Like some of the other parishioners I spoke to, she was not completely comfortable about having her identity revealed. But she wanted to tell her story.

### 6.1 Individual Case Study One: *The Story of Solange*

In 1993, when Solange arrived in The Netherlands with her husband, her dream was to build a new life of hope, peace and economic stability - either in The Netherlands or anywhere else away from the military, political and economic ravages of her country (Congo). Fifteen years and four children (from 14 to 2 years old) later, she was sitting in a house without light - no job, no money, no food. In those fifteen years, three had passed in Germany where in 1995, her husband found a job and transported the family there from The Netherlands.

In 1998, they were back in The Netherlands, once more to start all over. This time, the odds stacked against them even more. There was the uncertainty of starting over again at a time when the experience in Germany had left them with a taste of failure, and the insurmountable odds against escaping deportation to a country steaming with strife and danger. For Solange, it meant rehashing the skill to re-master the Dutch language, an ability she lost in her years in Germany. For her husband, it meant the return to looking for ways to make a living in a country whose lingua franca kept eluding his ability to grasp.

Between 1998 and 2001, the Solange family found themselves living in the twilight zone between documentation and non-documentation in The Netherlands. Survival hinged on the various odd jobs that husband and wife could find, but above all, on the moral and material support of their church. They not only found fellow countrymen in the church who understood the challenges facing them, but got advice, information and direction from the church. Additionally, in the community of the church, they lived beyond the strains of the world outside... beyond the discomfort and sometimes shame of not being able to communicate easily. The church gave them all this protection as well as the hope and a future to look forward to. That hope was only possible through the encouragement that they received from the church leadership, the constant counselling and advice they got, and even more immediately, the material assistance and food that was only possible to appear on their table because the church was there. In essence, the church soon became the sum total of their world.

Then in 2001, Solange and her Netherlands-born children received their stay permit in The Netherlands and she began receiving an uitkering (social benefit). In the years following, the entire family survived on her uitkering and the occasional odd jobs of her husband. During these years, the Dutch language and other hurdles stood between Solange and a steady job. The same restrictions straddled the path of her husband. For him, there was the added problem of living, still, in the twilight zone of documentation and non-documentation - a situation that made him and the family even more dependent on Solange's social benefit. Then in 2008, Solange's uitkering dried up.

From October 2008 to June 2009, the family lived without income - could neither pay their rent, electric or gas bills, nor take care of their most basic financial responsibilities. Starvation and homelessness began looming, as did a new wave of desperation as the couple searched in vain for employment. That which they had escaped from in their home country was now looking them in the face: hunger (and perhaps death). Of course, they were living in the heart of one of the richest countries in the world... a country with enough services to buffer people without hope... a country with information galore on what to do under specific circumstances. But neither husband nor wife, even after a total of ten years in the Netherlands, knew where to go for help. The church was their only port of call... the one place that held any answer they required - in any event answers that were helpful and clear to them. Theirs was a closed world. Eventually, in June 2009, Solange found a job. Paying outstanding bills and debts became the first order of business for the family, and with the church still there to help them put food on the table, Solange and her family began slowly rising from the depth to which they had sunk.

As for what would have happened without the support of the church, Solange says she cannot imagine. Neither can she imagine life away from the church... the community she had been part of ever since her return to The Netherlands... the community that had comforted, supported, counselled and been her safety net ever since.

Solange ended her story by saying that today, she is now discovering facilities available for parents, like her in Rotterdam, that she, in all her years in the Netherlands, had not known existed. Apparently, with the boldness and confidence that comes with a job and exposure to Dutch society, she has had the clarity and ability to look beyond her surroundings... the clarity to investigate and source opportunities

that may at one time have seemed threatening to approach.

### 6.1.1 Concluding Reflection

Solange's story is an expose of the migrant church's influence on, and significance for, the lives of those it serves, as well as the legitimacy it has in the eyes of its beneficiaries. Her story also suggests the authority that the migrant church can have in passing information over to those who need it. Had the church leadership, itself, been privileged with the type of information that Solange and her family needed in the years spanning their total dependence on the church, I believe their suffering during those years and months would not have existed – in any event, it would have been less; better options would have been within her reach. Yet the church had its own challenges, and its leadership was just as cut off from the possibilities inherent in Rotterdam as was Solange and her family.

## 6.2 Individual Case Study Two: *Semere Gabriel (Pastor)*

The story of Semere is totally divorced from Solange's. Yet, much like Solange's, it remains illustrative of the influence that the migrant church can have in the lives of members and the impact it has on their circumstances. Unlike the married Solange, Semere came to The Netherlands a single man. Studies, rather than escaping the scourges of war and internal strife – though his country was not without its own strife and deadly politics – brought him to the country. His study discipline was environmental sciences but his involvement with and activities for the church which he had become a part of soon relegated his secular studies to a secondary position. Even so, he finished his studies with distinguished cum laude results.

Semere's involvement with the church he found in The Netherlands deepened with the years. Its influence in his life was not only limited to the comfort, safety and spiritual balance it gave him, but the opportunity it offered him to touch the lives of others... the privilege it gave him to help the sick, the lonely, the helpless, the confused and the uncertain amongst Ethiopians in Rotterdam and The Netherlands. Semere eventually became an important leader in his church... a full-time pastor.

Pastor Semere today works full-time in the church as a pastor (on occasional minimum wage). Though this appears to be a deviation from his academic vocation, it is anything but that as the young pastor, a devout Christian since adolescence, had always placed his Christian calling ahead of his academic fortunes. So it was that, even in his student days at Leeuwarden, Pastor Semere devoted much of his extracurricular hours to God and to his Amharic-speaking church. Besides, it was this Amharic-speaking Christian community that helped him maintain the spiritual and moral tools to study as hard as he believed a Christian ought to, and to preserve the balance he required to stay on the right path. Today Pastor Semere has not only become part of the church's movement to bring joy, meaning, peace and hope to the lives of others, but he is still looking to further his education – while still working for God.

## 6.3 Concluding Reflection

Much as the personal stories of Pastor Semere and Solange differ from each other's, they illustrate just how much the leadership in most migrant churches lay all on the line to wrest church members and others from lives of distress. These two individual case studies are only two in a sea of other life stories – experiences shifting from pain, uncertainty, fear to comfort and hope.

For Solange, whose family at one point became dependent on the church for its livelihood, the experience has been one of survival. For Pastor Semere, who exchanged a smooth passage from one academic station to the other for the call of God, it has been one of dedication and selflessness. This selflessness is a reflection of the bearing of many of the pastors I came to meet in the study... a reflection of the impulse of men and women determined to wrench others from lives of frustration, anger and despair. We see in Solange's story, for instance, how a small church wrested an entire family from potential disaster. In Pastor Semere's case, we see how migrant churches inspire and guide those through whom they bring mercy and hope to people.

In brief:

1. Migrant churches greatly influence the lives of members.
2. Migrant churches are, for many of their members, the first and last stop of hope.
3. Members of migrant churches have a high level of trust in their churches.
4. Lack of access to information affects both church members and church leaders.
5. Members are highly dedicated to their churches.

It is appropriate, at this point, to add that the contributions of migrant churches to society as illustrated in the stories of Solange and Pastor Semere above, and in the previous ten case studies are not going unnoticed. There is growing, albeit limited, appreciation both in the city and nationally for the role of churches. This can be seen in calls by an increasing number of scholars and politicians for more attention to and support for the work of migrant churches (see Chapter 2). It can also be seen in the effort of some civic organizations to pool the spiritual resources of both migrant churches and Dutch churches for the betterment of the city as well as in the efforts of migrant churches themselves to pull together and work together. Chapter seven now takes a quick look at this movement towards acknowledging the worth of migrant churches and the need for growing cooperation amongst churches.

## 7

## WORKING TOGETHER FOR A BETTER CITY

*Current developments***7.0 Introduction**

The work of the migrant church in Rotterdam, as in other parts of the Netherlands, has not gone unnoticed. The NIM/KASKI report whose reference to migrant churches was mentioned earlier in this report is an example of that acknowledgement, as are the activities of SKIN Rotterdam, VOR, Stichting GIDSnetwerk Rotterdam, Platform L&R, PKN and others. This chapter now briefly looks at some efforts in the city, limited though they are, that are reflective of a growing appreciation for the work and potential of migrant churches in Rotterdam.

**7.1 Appreciation, cooperation and recognition**

The cooperation amongst migrant churches themselves begins the discussion here on the acknowledgement of the work of migrant churches in Rotterdam. As Pastor Twumasi and a number of other pastors show in Chapter five, migrant churches are taking the initiative to utilize the expertise inherent in each other for the good of their beneficiaries, either through prayer-meetings or through counselling activities. In this way, they point to a mutual appreciation of each other's gifts. Other church leaders, not mentioned in this report, are also becoming instrumental in setting up prayer organizations. Pastor Dick van Steenis of the multicultural 'Kom en Zie' church, for example, is the force behind VOR or Voorgangers Overleg Rotterdam (Pastors "Consult" Rotterdam), a consultative body of pastors from Pentecostal- and Charismatic churches who meet a number of times a year to "... *mutually encourage, combine forces and cooperate for the Kingdom of God in the district of Rotterdam.*" Many of VOR's members are migrant church leaders.

Stichting GIDSnetwerk is another organization that also taps into the potential of churches, migrant churches included. The organization brings together politicians, media, church leaders and other city leaders in Rotterdam to network and share their expertise. In this way, the know-how of Christian leaders is pulled together.

The above examples illustrate the evolving movement towards recognition of the potential of migrant churches in Rotterdam, as well as the increasing unity of work and purpose amongst Christian bodies in the city. At the same time, the good offices of these activities emphasize the loss that the social isolation of many migrant churches means for society, for not only are the potentialities of these churches unexplored, the churches themselves remain distanced from the benefits that cooperation and networking offer. It is this foregoing point that drives the

attention of an organization such as SKIN Rotterdam towards bridging the contact gap between Dutch churches and migrant churches, as well as removing any migrant church from social isolation. Since its inception, SKIN Rotterdam has been working at different options to promote and facilitate cooperation between migrant and Dutch churches, as well as at options to bring migrant churches more and more together (both for networking purposes and for needed information). The organization's methodology has been the organization of meet-ups between migrant churches, relevant organs and municipal actors, facilitating brainstorming sessions on courses aimed at promoting interaction between Dutch and migrant churches and the arrangement of market-place-type information events, etc. The results of all these can be gauged by the growing recognition within the city of the need and benefits of reaching out to migrant churches and bringing churches together.

**7.2 Conclusion**

It is important to realise that there is, indeed, effort within the city of Rotterdam towards pulling together the wherewithal of migrant and Dutch churches (or all churches, in fact) for a happier city. It is also important to acknowledge the recognition within the city of the worth of migrant churches. As the story of the Dutch urban missionary, Pastor Daniel de Wolf, so clearly demonstrates in Chapter five, the resolve to deliver lives from delinquency, hopelessness, destruction and destitution invariably provides society with a powerful antidote for instability. Migrant churches represent a powerful antidote for instability – at least to the extent that they are able to. The recognition of this fact by social and political bodies is an important step to taking full advantage of that antidote. It has, thus, been necessary that in the course of this report, the reality of such developing acknowledgement be commented on. This chapter has, therefore, been about:

1. Demonstrating the growing recognition of the work of migrant churches amongst social and political actors in Rotterdam.
2. Illustrating the developing cooperation amongst migrant churches and between migrant and Dutch churches.
3. Looking at some of the undertakings within Rotterdam that are combining the expertise and hope of churches.
4. Discussing some of the efforts of SKIN Rotterdam to promote interaction between migrant and Dutch churches, between migrant churches and organizations within the city, and between migrant churches and the municipal government.

Considering the foregoing, the fact that, in spite of the emergent recognition of the worth of migrant churches, these churches still suffer a dearth of resources such as can only be furnished by the municipal government, strengthens the insistence of organizations like SKIN Rotterdam to marry the resources of the city government and the potentiality of migrant churches. In this report, I do not stop at merely discussing the problems facing migrant churches. I go on to look at likely solutions. Ways in which the municipal government and migrant churches can utilise the opportunities inherent in each other for the betterment of society are considered, as are ways in which Dutch churches, Christian organizations and SKIN Rotterdam can all contribute to ease the burden on migrant churches. Chapter eight now begins that process of sourcing possible solutions.

## 8

## LOOKING FOR SOLUTIONS

*Some suggestions*

## 8.0 Introduction

It is often said that change is the only constant. In the spirit of this chapter, I shall add that an inimitable constant is that problems come with their own inbuilt solutions. There may not be only one solution to a problem, but all solutions lead to some form of placating the problem or the challenge facing a person, group or institution. In this chapter, I return to the problems and challenges facing migrant churches and offer some suggestions as to how these challenges can be minimized, if not completely, phased out. Using a format slightly deviating from the style in this work so far, I state the problems on one side of a table and the suggested solutions on the other side. In this way, a visual image emerges that is easily absorbable. For brevity's sake, ten problems have been identified and ten solutions suggested. However, as will be noted, some of the problems have multiple suggested solutions and multiple suggested solvers. These suggested solvers include the Rotterdam municipal government, Dutch churches, and SKIN Rotterdam. This is so the table still shows ten problems and ten suggested solutions.

## 8.1 Table of Problems and suggested solutions

	Challenges facing Migrant Churches	Suggested	Solutions
	<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Suggestions</i>	<i>Who can do it/How can it be done?</i>
1	<b>General Financial Pressure</b>  As the findings in this report show, of the most urgent challenges facing migrant churches, lack of the financial resource to carry out various socially relevant activities is amongst the first. The relative poverty of members (engendered by joblessness and lack of documentation) is one of the explanations for this; for as a result of these financial difficulties, church members are hard pressed to assist church leaders in the physical upkeep of churches. Additionally, because of the financial difficulties members face, the burden of attending to the material (as much as spiritual and emotional) needs of members largely falls on the shoulders of the migrant church leadership. On the other hand, none of this would have had the existing impact had migrant churches been the recipient of outside help. Most migrant churches work without outside financial aid or subsidy of any type – even though much of their most demanding activities are directly beneficial to society as we have seen in this report.	<b>Resource Allocation</b>  Taking from the financial problem facing migrant churches, it can be proposed here that the most efficient way to assist migrant churches overcome their financial difficulties with regards to socially-relevant activities, is for financial resources to be allocated to the promotion and execution of those activities carried out by migrant churches which are of social value. As the box here to the right shows, only the municipal government can allocate such funds on a consistent basis.	<b>Municipal Government</b>  Since the work that demands financial assistance is social rather than religious in nature and benefits society in general, the municipal government will, in the view of this report, be the most appropriate candidate to make such necessary funds available. Secondly, the municipal government is best suited to attend to the financial requirements of migrant churches in their social work because what these churches do in this regard is not limited to a season, a time period or group. This work is ongoing... it is established... institutionalised and as such requires sustainable, structured support. In other words, what migrant churches require is ongoing support rather than sporadic or occasional assistance. And only the municipal government can efficiently offer such support.  The question, naturally is, how can the municipal government do this without breaching the church-state divide in The Netherlands? The answer, in the view of this report, is by working through organizations such as SKIN Rotterdam. How this can be done in practice is what



			is about. This chapter takes a brief but fuller look at what part SKIN Rotterdam can play in the effort to alleviate the financial and other resource problems of migrant churches.
2	<b>Personal Financial Crisis of Migrant Church Leaders</b> <small>(debt)</small>  As we have seen in preceding chapters, Migrant church leaders not only have to attend to their own private family matters (often including demands from outside the Netherlands) but to the financial needs of their churches as well as the material needs of members. The result has been financial crisis of a personal nature in the lives of many of these leaders, culminating in debt for some, especially in the face of financial turmoil such as the 2008/9 crisis. <sup>30</sup>	Two possible routes can be taken to deal with the personal financial (and debt) crisis of migrant church leaders. <b>1. Debt Solutions Package</b> It is an idea worth considering for a debt solutions package to be initiated for pastors, as well as the setting up of a debt or budget education center for church leaders. <b>2. Micro-Credit program for Migrant Church Leaders</b> Setting up a specialised micro-credit program for migrant church ministers through institutions such as the Kamer van Koophandel and SKIN-R is another option that may require consideration.	<b>Municipal Government via Professional Organizations</b>  Again, like the more established subsidy programs or processes suggested above, the municipal government is, in the view of this report, the best authority to initiate such a program. However, such debt solutions programs or micro-credit initiatives can, I believe, best be carried out with expert professional institutions and organizations such as Kamer van Koophandel (Micro-credit) and the offices of SOZawe (Debt solutions). How to go about arranging such programs with the above mentioned organizations can be worked out with middle-man organizations such as SKIN Rotterdam.
3	<b>Personal Financial Difficulties of Migrant Church Members</b>  Part of the explanation for the financial burden on migrant church leaders is the material needs of members. Because of this financial lack, fewer and fewer members are left to assist financially within the church, and church leadership is placed more and more under pressure to attend to the material needs of members. There are, we have seen in preceding chapters, different reasons for the poverty and lack amongst those migrant church members in need. This report has also shown that those most often in this state of material lack are the migrant members of migrant churches, as opposed to Dutch members or the more established non-Dutch members. This is a generalization that does have exceptions, but it is the general picture. Whatever the case, there are financial difficulties and material lack amongst many migrant church members that is adding to the difficulties of migrant churches.	<b>Seed-Sowing Activities</b>  As seen in point number 3 below, joblessness, documentation problems, language difficulties, etc. feature as some of the causes of the difficulties migrant church members face. These issues, as noted below, require institutional solutions. However, the poverty they cause also require activities geared towards alleviating poverty... activities tailored to people vulnerable to such difficulties. I use the term seed-sowing activities here to refer to a variety of activities, projects and programs geared specifically towards alleviating poverty amongst migrant members of society. Seed-sowing refers to the act of sowing seeds of hope and opportunity in the lives of others – especially when recipients most need those seeds.	<b>Dutch Churches and Dutch Christian Organizations</b>  More than any activities the municipal government can set up, I see Dutch churches and Dutch Christian organizations (especially donor organizations) being more effective in this regard.  Dutch churches and Christian organizations are doing a wonderful job of helping in countries beyond their borders, yet there are Christians within their borders who, clearly, will find their assistance useful.  I believe that Dutch churches and Christian organizations can customize the types of projects and activities they carry out in less materially well-off parts of the world to the conditions of migrants within their border. They may be surprised at the outcome.

4	<p><b>Joblessness/Residence-Permit Problems</b></p> <p>In almost all the cases in Chapter five, joblessness and residence permit problems loom as the biggest problems facing migrant church members and with them, their churches. Consequently, there need to be some form of action to attend to minimize these.</p>	<p><b>Information Campaigns</b></p> <p>A very deliberate campaign to inform, not just church leaders, on the job opportunities and options available as well as the documentation reality need to be occasionally carried out.</p>	<p><b>Skin Rotterdam &amp; Relevant Organizations or offices</b></p> <p>Information to church leaders and members on what is available can be carried out by SKIN Rotterdam. This should be done proactively. By this, I mean arranging such information activities on church premises rather than in SKIN Rotterdam premises, as well as inviting the right organizations, who have expert information, to do so, for instance, inviting immigration lawyers where necessary, or job experts where necessary or head-hunting companies, etc. This will place a panorama of opportunities on the table of the person locked in a one-thinking pattern.</p>
5	<p><b>Learning on the job</b></p> <p>One of the churches in Chapter 5 illustrates the pressure on migrant church workers and leaders to carry out activities for which they are not trained - such as dealing with mentally-challenged members. Migrant church workers take on responsibilities, or are made to take on responsibilities for which professionals would be more efficient. The failure of the feeding-programs of some of the churches also attests to this.</p>	<p><b>Non-religious professional courses for migrant pastors and training for volunteer workers within migrant churches</b></p> <p>Professional courses for pastors and other migrant leaders, as well as short certificate courses for volunteers would go a long way to placate this problem, I believe.</p>	<p><b>Municipal Government/Skin Rotterdam &amp; other professional organizations</b></p> <p>An organization such as SKIN Rotterdam can initiate such educational programs with professional organizations and institutions such as HKI, GGD, etc. The municipality would add a valuable touch to this equation by subsidising the programs.</p>
6	<p><b>Trust that can be utilized</b></p> <p>A problem that is really not a problem until it is not utilized, is the trust that we have seen many migrants place on their churches as opposed to civic organizations. Church leaders are strapped for time, yet the demand for their attention is high. Where members rely on pastors or church leaders strapped for time to counsel them rather than go to civic organizations, there is a problem – as much for those in need of help as for the overburdened leaders and society.</p>	<p><b>Central Counselling call centre</b></p> <p>It seems to me that an activity that could be most helpful in this regard would be a central call centre for all kinds of emergency assistance to church members and others. This will be manned by church volunteers who are given some form of compensatory fee on an hourly or monthly basis. Where such a system already exists for the general public, a more tailor-made arm can be created for migrant churches. Such a system will need brainstorming by the municipal government and relevant organizations.</p>	<p><b>Organizations such as Skin Rotterdam &amp; migrant churches</b></p> <p>An organization such as SKIN Rotterdam can be instrumental in working with other organs, migrant churches and the municipal government to brainstorm the setting up of such a counselling centre.</p> <p>There will be a high level of cooperation required amongst migrant churches themselves to participate in such activities and to make it a success.</p>

7	<p><b>Accommodation problems</b></p> <p>Lack of worship space, rental problems, etc., plague migrant churches in Rotterdam as we have continually seen in the report. It is one of the most insistent and dogged problems that migrant churches face.</p>	<p><b>Make empty church spaces available</b></p> <p>The accommodation problems of migrant churches in Rotterdam, ironically, remain major in a city where there are many empty churches, and churches are being demolished to make way for other real estate ventures. The demolition of these churches needs be halted and some form of agreement arrived at that will put these buildings to the use that they were originally meant for. While this seems a sentimental conclusion, accommodation freedom will allow migrant churches better opportunities to serve the city even more.</p>	<p><b>Dutch churches &amp; the municipality</b></p> <p>The problem of accommodation may be minimized by the municipality reaching an agreement with authorities of empty Dutch churches to either sell or rent their buildings to the municipality. Working with partner organizations, the municipality can then rent these spaces to migrant churches under mutually acceptable conditions.</p> <p>Dutch church authorities on their part can endeavour to work (with the assistance of the municipality) to make empty churches available to migrant churches under favourable conditions.</p>
8	<p><b>Physical centres of help</b></p> <p>This is a problem closely related to the above two: accommodation, counselling and other information for leaders who are inundated and must sometimes cross distances across the cities to carry out activities or attend to members.</p>	<p><b>Physical centres of help</b></p> <p>I see of great help the setting up, under the auspices of civic organizations in the city, physical centres manned and run by migrant churches. In these physical centres, people who depend on and trust migrant churches can come for professional medical assistance, educational information and other help. The various professional help may be got from volunteers trained by professional institutions in Rotterdam. While the call centre above will require remote assistance, the centres will offer personal assistance. One might compare this to a combination of multipurpose health, educational, migrant Christian neighbourhood centre.</p>	<p><b>Municipal Government organizations such as Skin Rotterdam &amp; migrant churches</b></p> <p>Slightly different from the call centre above which is remote, physical centres can be set up around the city run by migrant church volunteers. That can only be done by the municipal government through organizations like SKIN Rotterdam and the cooperation of migrant churches.</p> <p>Again, a high level of cooperation amongst migrant churches will be required for this to succeed.</p>
9	<p><b>Isolation &amp; distance between churches</b></p> <p>One of the very first problems discussed in this report haranguing migrant churches is the isolation suffered by many of these churches. This suggests a lack of communication between migrant churches themselves, and between these churches and enabling organizations and Dutch churches. Perhaps the incidence of accommodation shortage amongst migrant churches against large empty Dutch churches attests to this separation between the two sides of the body of Christ in The Netherlands.</p>	<p><b>Better contact/closer relationship/exchanges dialogue</b></p> <p>It seems the problem here begins to solve itself when it is identified. There are, however, a number of things that still can be done, for instance, cultural exchange programs between churches, meetings between the two, leading to more open dialogue, visits to different services, etc. The trend is slowly developing.</p>	<p><b>Dutch churches and migrant churches</b></p> <p>Dutch churches and migrant churches are best suited to initiate this type of meetings and contact. An organization such as SKIN Rotterdam can be instrumental in stimulating such a movement. Other organizations such as KSA, Mara, L &amp; R are key to such a process.</p>

10	Cooperation amongst Christian organizations	More effort at cooperation	Christian organizations and organizations working for Christian organizations
	<p>The suggested remedy above for the isolation suffered by some migrant churches and the distance between Dutch churches and migrant churches brings to the fore, the need for Christian organizations and organizations working for churches and Christian to work more closely together. There is developing cooperation, but there clearly is need for more brainstorming together, more contact and more interaction to help the migrant and Dutch churches draw together and to change the present fortunes of many migrant churches.</p>	<p>The growing cooperation amongst Christian organizations and organizations working for or with churches discussed in Chapter seven suggests the need for concerted efforts to make the cooperation more wide spread and deeper. This is so because the list set in that chapter is small, reflective of the general picture. There are many such organizations nationwide and citywide that are still not yet working together. Some of these organizations need to take the initiative and begin drawing all these organizations together for concerted cooperative work.</p>	<p>Only Christian organizations or those working for churches or for Christian interests can take the initiative to intensify cooperation amongst them. Some more assertive ones or some close to Christian churches, such as SKIN Rotterdam, can take the initiative.</p>

## 8.2 Conclusion

By no means are the suggestions offered above exhaustive, nor have the challenges been fully expanded upon. But they do give a picture of what can be done. Having drawn a general picture of what needs be done and who can do it, this report closes now in Chapter nine with a look at what SKIN Rotterdam can do. The most logical way to do this is return to the question in point one of this chapter: *How Can SKIN Rotterdam assist the municipal government to offer institutionalized financial assistance to migrant churches and how can it help the municipal government profit from the work of migrant churches?*

## 9

## WHAT ROLE CAN SKIN ROTTERDAM PLAY IN ALLEVIATING THE PROBLEMS OF MIGRANT CHURCHES

### 9.0 Introduction

As suggested in Chapter eight above, the best way to look at what SKIN Rotterdam can do to check the problems haranguing migrant churches is to take a brief look at how the organization can merge the opportunities migrant churches have for the municipal government with the support the municipal government can offer these churches.

Already, a number of answers have emerged as to what SKIN Rotterdam can do. For instance, the organization can assist the municipal government in organizing debt solutions packages (or programs) and/ or micro-credit facilities for migrant churches with specialized agencies such as the Kamer Van Koophandel or SOZAWA. It can help initiate professional and other certificate courses or training programs for migrant church leaders, workers and volunteers – working closely with relevant institutions such as HKI. SKIN Rotterdam can invest effort in working with other organizations to set up a central counselling call center, manned and run by migrant churches; it can assist in the setting up of physical activities centers across Rotterdam where migrant churches can carry out various activities from those medically-inclined to those directed towards education. SKIN Rotterdam can take proactive steps in encouraging closer contact and communication between Dutch and migrant churches in Rotterdam, as well as cooperation amongst Christian organizations and organizations working for Christian churches and institutions in Rotterdam.

All of the above are some of the ways SKIN Rotterdam can contribute to alleviate the pressures on migrant churches. These are wide-ranging suggestions. I now go further to give some illustrations of how SKIN Rotterdam can in practice help merge the work of migrant churches and the resources of the Rotterdam municipal government. Two examples – one of a general nature, and the other of a more specific nature – will help make the illustration.

### 9.1 How can Skin Rotterdam be of use to the municipality and to Migrant Churches in Rotterdam?

As already mentioned above, there are two examples of how this can be done.

#### 9.1.1 Example I

A cursory look at the organizational structure, daily operation, services, etc. of the migrant churches in Chapter 5 reveal that migrant churches generally have an inbuilt system that can be

speedily exploited by the municipal government. Many of the churches, for instance, have teaching ministries that not only teach Bible lessons, but other skills such as leadership skills (Claypot Church) and language skills (Mahaber Church); and as we have seen in Solange's and Semere's case, there is a high level of participant trust in the information that is being given by the church. That means, the infrastructure that migrant churches offer the municipal government to reach people is not only well in place but unusually strong.

These churches have the capability to engage, not only people's intellect, but their hearts and sense of wellbeing. To capture this social power, the municipality can offer professional training to church leaders, as well as physical and capital facilities. Because this cannot be done directly, the municipal government can subsidize an expansive project proposal by SKIN Rotterdam, based on a combination of proposals prepared by a collection of migrant churches. The subsidy will be directed exclusively at the important work of churches, though given through SKIN Rotterdam.

#### 9.1.1 Example II

One of the reasons why many migrant churches in Rotterdam have tended to set up, or want to set up<sup>31</sup> their own feeding programs, which often only fail later, has been their ability to reach those who most need the assistance, as opposed to the ability of more established professional distribution organizations to reach some of the most desperate in the city.

Unlike these established distribution organizations whose secular professionalism limit their attention to the material needs of members and often to formalities that sometimes scare people who do not understand the workings of food supplies centers, migrant churches generally tend to be sensitive to the culture and idiosyncrasies of those who use their services. As a result, most of those migrant churches able to set up feeding centers, design implementation programs that take into considerations much more than the material needs of recipients. Yet, as the cases of the Potter's Hand and AMEN Church show, in spite of this knowledge base, most feeding programs set up by migrant churches, fail - failure being the outcome of resource shortage and organizational problems. That is where SKIN Rotterdam could come in.

Migrant churches, it can be argued, have, to a very great degree, what civil institutions do not have: people's fundamental trust – a trust that comes from a heart level. This we see in such accounts as Solange's and Semere's. Resultantly, the work of the church is often done at heart level - with the mental and organizational part only fleetingly stressed, while

civil organizations and government institutions are driven by yardsticks of mental-level professionalism and efficiency.

SKIN Rotterdam can bring these two strengths together. Working closely with such as Rotterdam's Voedselbank and with distribution organizations such as GCW, SKIN Rotterdam can develop and become responsible for a system that offers migrant churches the opportunity to become feeding centers based on certain criteria. For those churches that may not become feeding centers, another set of conditions could be developed to make easy access to the food gifts of the Voedselbank possible for the vulnerable within those churches. SKIN Rotterdam could then be the municipality's focus for the disbursement of food gifts to members of societies through institutions such as migrant churches. Any subsidy necessary to assist these churches in this effort will be made available via the offices of SKIN Rotterdam. The migrant churches, on the other hand, will not have to work on their own. They will have both the material support, in terms of resources, and professional, organizational support and guidance from the municipality through the offices of SKIN Rotterdam.

## 9.2 Conclusion

Perhaps the most significant advantage that the Rotterdam municipal government has in tackling problems that migrant churches in the city face is the fact that these churches have similar problems. As such, the municipality can simply develop a generic strategy to concurrently address these challenges and to do so in a way that will be sustainable. Also, it means that the municipality will not need to create different solutions-packages for problems unique to different churches. A 'one-fit-all' package of solutions that, if necessary, can be duplicated in other areas will do just fine.

Another advantage is that the existing organizational structure of most migrant churches offers the municipal government ready tools in reaching those corners of society that only migrant churches seem to have the ability to reach.<sup>32</sup> The sameness, thus, of the *modus operandi* of migrant churches gives the municipality a clear picture of the exact tools that lend themselves for use within migrant churches, for instance, the various ministries of churches. The position of SKIN Rotterdam, as an organization working for the benefit of migrant churches on the one hand and a social organization promoting social responsibility within society on the other, allows the municipal government the route to appropriate those opportunities that migrant churches offer to promote wellbeing in society. This chapter has been all about this efficacious position of SKIN Rotterdam. Through the two more specific examples looked at in this chapter, along with a number of others, it has established how:

1. SKIN Rotterdam can assist the municipality utilize the operational tools within migrant churches without endangering the separation of state and religion.
2. SKIN Rotterdam can offer the municipality the opportunity to tap into the potential of the migrant churches as well

as give migrant churches access to the resources that the municipality has.

3. SKIN Rotterdam's bridge position allows the municipality the opportunity to professionalise the work of migrant churches, while giving migrant churches access to the facilities and know-how of professional organizations.
4. By allowing the municipality to work through it, SKIN Rotterdam is promoting the municipality's policy to work in cooperation with partners within society to achieve its policy goals.<sup>33</sup>
5. The municipal government can subsidize an expansive project proposal by SKIN Rotterdam, based on proposals prepared by migrant churches themselves.

All of the above points and more, this chapter has in one way or the other, quickly looked at or alluded to. As in the case of Chapter eight above, the chapter's aim has been to move from a rallying call to political, social and religious leaders - *to pay attention to the contributions that migrant churches are making to society in Rotterdam and to the challenges they face* - to suggestions as to what can be done. The chapter has fulfilled the adage that where a problem is reported, a solution must be suggested.



# 10

## CONCLUSION

Where there is a dearth of financial resources in tackling socially relevant activities within and beyond the church, it should be possible for migrant churches in Rotterdam to hope for support from the Rotterdam municipal government, through the offices of organizations such as SKIN Rotterdam.

Where accommodation is a constant cause for concern, migrant churches should be able to look to large property-owning Dutch churches to come to some form of agreement with the municipality, migrant churches themselves and those such as SKIN Rotterdam to allow migrant churches use of empty churches or other church space.

Where migrant churches have little professional manpower to carry out certain pressing matters within the church, organizations such as SKIN Rotterdam should be able to work with relevant professional organizations to bring expertise to migrant church leadership and workers.

Where the offices of expert organizations and the welcoming warmth of migrant churches need to be wedded together for the benefit of members of society, the municipal government should be able to expect SKIN Rotterdam to work to make that combination possible. These and other propositions espoused in preceding chapters have been the core submission of this report, a submission that whatever ails migrant churches can be dealt with by the municipal government, Dutch churches, relevant organizations such as SKIN Rotterdam and migrant churches themselves, and that much of this work can only be achieved through cooperation amongst these various bodies.

We have come to the end of this report, but not the end of the discourse on the impact of migrant churches on society in Rotterdam or how the municipality and others can assist them. If anything, it is the hope here that this report will serve as part of the debate on how the work of migrant churches can be bolstered. The report, as we see from earlier chapters, began by stating the challenges facing migrant churches and the need for acknowledgement of the value of, and support for the work of, these churches.

It ended with its own suggestions on how the work of migrant churches can be supported and enhanced. These suggestions were offered in the knowledge that they would showcase what the municipal government can do to support migrant churches and what an organization such as SKIN Rotterdam can do to make that possible. All along, however, has remained the knowledge that these suggestions are no more than part of a contribution to an important and developing debate. Thence, to the extent that the discussion on migrant churches is ongoing, the report has not reached its close, to the extent that the enormous input of migrant churches to society in Rotterdam has been briefly examined and the opportunities which organizations such as SKIN Rotterdam offer the Rotterdam municipality to further benefit from the work of these churches explored, the report has indeed come to a close.

Of course, different interpretations, points of view and ideas may in the future necessitate a revisit of the topic in its present form. But for now, the report has come to an initial close, and added its own character to the discourse on the contributions of migrant churches to society and their opportunities for city governments.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Abbreviations

AMEN	Alliance Messianique Pour L'évangélisation Des Nations (AMEN church)
EBG	Evangelische Broedergemeente Rotterdam
EDCCC	The Ethio-Dutch Cultural Community Centre. EDCCC is for all Ethiopians (Christian or not)
EECUN	Ethiopian Evangelical Churches Union in The Netherlands
KASKI	Expertisecentrum Over Religie En Samenleving
NIM	Nijmegen Institute for Mission Studies
RCCG	Redeemed Christian Church of God
SOZawe	Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid
SVOR	Stichting Vluchtelingen Organisaties Rijnmond
VPE	Verenigde Pinkster- en Evangeliegemeenten

### Appendix B: Church informants

#### Church/Parish

Abundant Grace Ministries  
 Alliance Messianique Pour L'évangélisation Des Nations (AMEN church)  
 Claypot Church  
 EBG – The Moravian Evangelische Broedergemeente Rotterdam (EBG)  
 Holy Fire Revival Ministries International  
 Mahaber Church  
 Potter's Hand New Covenant Word International  
 Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG)

- Rotterdam parish
- Schiedam parish

Thugz church

#### Pastor/Church Leader

Pastor Rose Fer  
 Elder Emerence, Pastor Christophe Kalubi & wife  
 Pastor Alexander Emoghene  
 Pastor Denny Zinhagel  
 Pastor Isaac Twumasi  
 Pastor Ahadu Beza  
 Pastor William Adu

Pastor Adolphe Mizele  
 Pastor Luke Ibe  
 Pastor Daniel de Wolf

## Notes

1. See Dr Prof. Dr. Mart J. Van Lieburg's work on the history of the Catholic Charitas in Rotterdam: Het Sint Laurensinstituut 1651-1857-2007: De geschiedenis van de katholieke charitas te Rotterdam.
2. Concept Beleid SKIN Rotterdam.  
*Veel migrantenkerken en niet-inheemse christelijke geloofsgemeenschappen in Rotterdam zijn onbekend en in het meest gunstige geval relatief bekend zowel in de samenleving als bij de andere christelijke kerken en geloofsgemeenschappen in Rotterdam. Het zijn vaak kleine geloofsgemeenschappen wier leden veel moeilijkheden ondervinden bij de integratie in de Rotterdamse samenleving en die nog steeds een sterke binding hebben met het moederland. De in het moederland achtergebleven familie heeft de financiële bijdrage uit Nederland nodig om beter in de verzorging van de familieleden te kunnen voorzien. De aansluiting bij de Nederlandse geloofsgenoten en instituties is slechts ten dele gelukt vanwege veelal taalproblemen, cultuurverschillen, theologische en liturgische verschillen. Een groot aantal leden heeft een beperkt inkomen zodat er vaak sprake is van schuldenproblematiek. Een belangrijke voorwaarde om in de Rotterdamse samenleving te functioneren is een verbetering van de sociale positie van de leden van de migrantenkerken en de relatie met de traditionele kerken. Deze kerken zijn ingevoerd in de stedelijke netwerken en beschikken over instellingen die sociaal-maatschappelijke hulp kunnen bieden en professionele begeleiding en training van voorgangers en vrijwilligers. Het opbouwen van een relatie met de traditionele kerken kan een belangrijke voorwaarde zijn om de doelstelling te bereiken.*  
*Dit voornemen sluit goed aan bij het denken over de relatie met migrantenkerken in de PKN. De PKN-kerken zijn toe aan een nieuw perspectief, spiritualiteit en verbindingen met andere geloofsgemeenschappen in Rotterdam en beschikken op termijn over financiële mogelijkheden om hulp en ondersteuning te bieden aan andere niet-inheemse christelijke geloofsgemeenschappen die dat nog steeds ontberen. Het is de mening van velen dat de niet-inheemse christelijke geloofsgemeenschappen beschikken over een spiritualiteit die wel eens van groot belang zou kunnen zijn voor de traditionele kerken.*
3. See Albert Luiks' - Toelichting op de adresseninventarisatie van migrantenkerken, [www.pkn.nl](http://www.pkn.nl)
4. June Becks reacting to some questions on migrant churches. See for instance "Nederlands Dagblad, 25 April 2008".
5. In the present research, I found that many migrant pastors in Rotterdam (specifically those from developing countries) are strapped for time as well as the financial resources to go out investigating or pursuing information of great relevance to them. As a result, while preoccupied with church work and often secular jobs) they remain separated from developments or information that could be important both to them and to their members.
6. Many migrant pastors overseeing services in non-Dutch-speaking churches are themselves not proficient in the Dutch language and as such are limited in what they can access in terms of information. This, in addition to their time constraints, further places a great distance between them and helpful information.
7. The Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (Netherlands) defines a non-western migrant as a person who has at least one parent who was born in Turkey, or any country in Africa, Latin-America and Asia, with the exception of the former Dutch East Indies and Japan.
8. Lezing symposium KASKI 17-11-2006 - De maatschappelijke rol van religieuze instellingen. Stand van onderzoek, 2006, Moniek Steggerda, Nijmegen's Radboud University.
9. Literature on the effects of insecurity on society touches a wide variety of subjects, from armed conflict to family disruption. See papers such as Oxfam Position Paper February 11, 2009; Armed violence and the links to human security in Papua New Guinea, etc.
10. Reintegration and Return: Local catalysts, global reactions, cycles of conflict in the Mano River Basin. Institute for Security Studies. Monograph 118; chapter 2 by Taya Weis.

11. The dangers of 20th /21st century modernity.
12. **Web Magazine, 20 March 2007:** Unemployment down across all provinces  
 "In Rotterdam, unemployment remained stable. In 2006 as well as in 2005, almost 11 percent of the Rotterdam labour force was unemployed. The rate in Rotterdam is by far the highest of the four largest cities in the Netherlands. In Amsterdam, The Hague and Utrecht, the rate declined in 2006. With 5.5 percent, the rate in Utrecht was even below the nationwide average.  
  
**Web Magazine 17 July 2008:** Unemployment down across all provinces  
 The unemployment rate in Rotterdam dropped faster than in the other major cities. Last year, 7.4 percent of the Rotterdam labour force was unemployed, as opposed to 9.7 percent in 2006. Yet, the unemployment rate in Rotterdam remained the highest of the four major cities in the Netherlands.  
  
**Web Magazine 03 March 2009:** Unemployment down across nearly all provinces in 2008  
 "Unemployment in Amsterdam dropped sharply, particularly among women. With 6.6 percent of the labour force unemployed, the rate in Rotterdam was the highest of the four major cities. The Hague had the lowest rate (4.2 percent), just above the nationwide average."
13. [www.cbs.nl](http://www.cbs.nl)  
**Statistics Nederland 27 April 2007: PB07-033, 27 April 2007**  
 15:00 hrs, pg 2  
**Web magazine September 27 2005**  
 Big city crime rates  
**8 Web magazine 15 July 2008:** Nearly one in ten travellers occasionally shun public transport for safety reasons
14. Amongst such Dutch politicians are Kathleen Ferrier (CDA) Ella Vogelaar (PVDA), and André Rouvoet (Christenunie)
15. **Eurabia:** Egyptian born British Scholar Bat Ye'or (meaning daughter of the Nile) (whose real name is Gisèle Littman, *née* Orebi) publicized the term Eurabia in her 2005 book *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab axis*. The concept of Eurabia is based on the proposition that as a result of continued migration and high birth rates, the Muslim population in Europe will become a majority within a few generations.  
 Also see:  
[www.catholic.org](http://www.catholic.org), [www. http://revisionistreview.blogspot.com/2009/05/islam-in-rotterdam-microcosm-of-europe.html](http://revisionistreview.blogspot.com/2009/05/islam-in-rotterdam-microcosm-of-europe.html)
16. See Andrew Wommack Teachings, [www.awmi.net](http://www.awmi.net) : SPIRIT SOUL AND BODY ; Holy Bible (1 Thessalonians, 2 Corinthians, Genesis...)
17. Ibid.
18. Scriptures as in Word of God... The teachings of the Holy Bible. See especially the Epistles in the New Testament.
19. Wommack on Spirit, Soul and Body, *ibid.* above.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Pastor Ahadu Beza, Rotterdam August 2009.
23. See for instance <http://igresia.demosworld.nl/>; [http://www.uu.nl/SiteCollectionDocuments/GW/GW\\_LAS/GW\\_Studieprogramma/GW\\_Halloffame/EmmaKlaassen.pdf](http://www.uu.nl/SiteCollectionDocuments/GW/GW_LAS/GW_Studieprogramma/GW_Halloffame/EmmaKlaassen.pdf) . Also see Dr. Hijme Stufels and Dr. Marten van der Meulen's presentation at the 2007 SSSR Annual Meeting in Tampa Florida. Consider, additionally, the growth of migrant churches in Rotterdam in the last twenty years as compared to other churches.
24. In the present research, I discovered that migrant church pastors, often working under financial strain and time constraints, have very little time to pursue necessary information or, sometimes, to even attend events and occasions set up for them. The most

ideal way of servicing pastors is looking for ways to get information to them or develop programs that make it easier for them to access information under all circumstances.

25. Increasing because of the growth of the membership of these churches.
26. Without attempting to adopt or hold fast to any of the fervently debated definitions of theory across and within the sciences, I have analysed theory here from my own understanding and deductions. These deductions are based on the basic definition of theory found in dictionaries. For this paper the dictionary of choice has been Oxford Dictionary [www.askoxford.com](http://www.askoxford.com), definition 1 & 2:  
*1 a supposition or a system of ideas intended to explain something, especially one based on general principles independent of the thing to be explained; 2 an idea accounting for or justifying something.*
27. The history of the Holy Bible, especially the various attempts to translate it, is littered with violent attempts by Kings and Rulers to wipe scriptures off the face of the earth.
28. An Alpha course is a course on the basics of Christianity, meant for those who know nothing or little about Christ, or the Christian faith.
29. BSO – *BuitenSchoolse Opvang* (After school care)
30. June Beckx and Paul The in their article “Immigranten Kerken Stellen hoop op God”, Stichting Samen Kerk In Nederland (SKIN Nederland).
31. As a consequence of the foremost position occupied by material needs amongst the challenges facing members of migrant churches, the issue of providing for members – specifically in terms of their daily supplies – has remained high amongst migrant pastors. At least 90% of the pastors I spoke to, as much those within the study and those outside it, either desired beginning a food distribution program or had once attempted it, or the program was running already.
32. Migrant churches reach people at the edge of societies. They also reach those whom the municipal government cannot reach as a result of language, cultural, and other barriers as we see in the study. All of these we see in the report. These people whom the municipality cannot reach are people who matter to both society and the city government by virtue of their very presence in the city and the consequences of their staying at the dark margins of hope.
33. See inticities of the Rotterdam website on the city’s 2006 – 2010 social policy statement at [www.inticities.eu](http://www.inticities.eu) and [www.rotterdam.nl](http://www.rotterdam.nl)



## References

- Amelink, A (6 februari 1999) Migrantenkerken: Trouw  
Kuijken, M (Friday, 29 September 2006) Ghanese kerk bloeit in Zuidoost, Nieuw Amsterdam Peil: <http://www.mediastudies.nl/nap2/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=54&Itemid=37>
- 'Aantal leden van Protestantse Kerk in 2030 gehalveerd' *Bron: Friesch Dagblad*
- Becker, J., Hart, J. De (2006) *Godsdienstige veranderingen in Nederland: Verschuivingen in de binding met de kerken en de christelijke traditie*, Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau.
- Belder, R.M. (4-5-2009) Plaatselijke geldwerving verdient hoge prioriteit: [http://www.kerkrentmeester.nl/site/index.php/artikelen/geld/geld\\_geldwerving/Kerkbalans/plaatselijke\\_geldwerving\\_verdient\\_hoge\\_prioriteit](http://www.kerkrentmeester.nl/site/index.php/artikelen/geld/geld_geldwerving/Kerkbalans/plaatselijke_geldwerving_verdient_hoge_prioriteit)
- Blaauw, J (Augustus 2002) Remonstrants Vlugschift.
- Bruins, G. (25 April 2008): Migranten vinden lege kerken te duur: Nederlands Dagblad. [http://www.toekomstkerkgebouwen.nl/Nieuws/TFindemedia/nieuwsTF\\_media\\_25-04-2008.html](http://www.toekomstkerkgebouwen.nl/Nieuws/TFindemedia/nieuwsTF_media_25-04-2008.html)  
Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (Netherlands) [www.cbs.nl](http://www.cbs.nl)  
Centrum voor Onderzoek en Statistiek (Centre for Research and Statistics - 2004): Key figures Rotterdam 2004: [www.cos.nl](http://www.cos.nl) and [www.cos.rotterdam.nl](http://www.cos.rotterdam.nl) Edition: COS 2004.
- De Kandelaar, Amsterdam (2008) De Bijdrage van Migrantenkerken en Moskeeën bij Ontwikkeling in het Zuiden en Armoedebestrijding in Nederland. Stichting Mondiale Samenleving en Stichting Oikos.
- Ebaugh, H. R., Chafetz, J. S. (2000) Structural adaptations in immigrant congregations.  
University of Houston; JSTOR Sociology of Religion Vol 61: No 2 135-153.
- Eijl, C. van (2006) Migranten in Nederland: Verslag vooronderzoek website migrantiegeschiedenis; Amsterdam, 2006. [http://www.iisg.nl/cgm/documents/eindverslag\\_website\\_migratiegeschiedenis.pdf](http://www.iisg.nl/cgm/documents/eindverslag_website_migratiegeschiedenis.pdf)
- EUMAP: EU monitoring and advocacy program [www.eumap.org](http://www.eumap.org) (site to be closed after december 2009).
- Euser, H., et al.(2006) Migranten in Mokum. De betekenis van migrantenkerken voor de stad Amsterdam.  
Amsterdam: VU Drukkerij.
- Guerra, J.C; Glashouwer, M; Kregting, J (2008) Tel je zegeningen: Het maatschappelijk rendement van christelijke kerken in Rotterdam en hun bijdrage aan sociale cohesie, Nijmegen [www.ru.nl/nim](http://www.ru.nl/nim)
- Hans Visser, J.J. (2006) Migrantenkerken in de stad Utrecht, een mozaïek: Een rapportage over de migrantenkerken in de stad Utrecht. SKIN-Nederland.
- Henk De Boer CDA Raadslid Amsterdam zuidoost: Vrijwilligers Kerk Onbetaalbaar, 20 juli 2008, [www.henkdeboer.punt.nl](http://www.henkdeboer.punt.nl)
- Huub, L (17 January 2008) Migrant churches inspire Dutch evangelism: <http://www.cwmission.org/features/migrant-churches-inspire-dutch-evangelism.html>
- <http://revisionistreview.blogspot.com/2009/05/islam-in-rotterdam-microcosm-of-europe.html>
- <http://islamineurope.blogspot.com/2009/05/rotterdam-dutch-to-be-minority.html>
- Islam in Rotterdam: a microcosm of Europe in crisis 05-19-2009 Jaarrapport integratie 2008) The Annual Report on Integration 2008
- Jaarrekening (2006) Vredesweek: Kerkinformatie Stadsmaaltijd Leerdam  
[http://www.pkn.nl/site/uploadedDocs/KerkInfo151\\_def\\_compleet.pdf](http://www.pkn.nl/site/uploadedDocs/KerkInfo151_def_compleet.pdf)
- Jansen M.M. (2006) Reverse or Revised Mission: Indonesian and Moluccan Immigrant Churches in the Netherlands, Paper for the ISSRC conference in Princeton, July 9-12, 2006, Amsterdam, *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*
- Kruis, J.M van 't (2003) Migrant churches history: Born in Zion, REC FOCUS; Vol. 3, No. 1. [http://www.recweb.org/files/resourcesmodule/@random45b7896d57c4b1169656823\\_Born\\_in\\_Zion.pdf](http://www.recweb.org/files/resourcesmodule/@random45b7896d57c4b1169656823_Born_in_Zion.pdf)
- Lannerheim, P.H. (Policy officer 2007) Benchmarking Integration Governance. Sweden. [www.inticities.eu](http://www.inticities.eu)
- Lieburg, M.J.van. (2007) Het Sint Laurensinstituut 1651-1857-2007: De geschiedenis van de katholieke charitas te Rotterdam. Rotterdam. Erasmus Publishing.
- Maatschappelijke betekenis migrantenkerken groot (Trouw), 30-07-2008

Meotti, G (5/20/2009) Islam in Europe: In the Casbah of Rotterdam  
[http://www.catholic.org/international/international\\_story.php?id=33599chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it](http://www.catholic.org/international/international_story.php?id=33599chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it)

Meulen, M.van der; Stoffels, H.C. (Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the SSSR, Tampa, FL. November 2-4, 2007) Participation of Immigrant Churches in Dutch Civil Society.  
<http://www.immigrantchurches.nl/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2007/11/paper-van-der-meulen-and-stoffels-sssr-2007.pdf>

Municipality of Rotterdam, Department of Youth Education and Society – JOS (May 2006) INTEGRATION INVENTORY City of Rotterdam and Rotterdam sub municipalities

Nederland en zijn migranten.  
<http://sargasso.nl/archief/2009/06/18/nederland-en-zijn-migranten/>

Nederlands Dagblad (12-11-2007) Vogelaar: migrantenkerken zichtbaarder

Nederlands Dagblad van 7 november: 'Kerk moet kansen grijpen om ervaring te delen'

rkkerk.nl (*Van onze redactie - 20 mei 2006*) Migrantkerken waardevol voor minderheden én Nederlandse samenleving, *Hilversum*: [http://www.rkkerk.nl/actualiteit/2006/detail\\_objectID581129\\_FJaar2006.html](http://www.rkkerk.nl/actualiteit/2006/detail_objectID581129_FJaar2006.html)

Sar, J.van der (2004) Van Harte: Onderzoek naar het maatschappelijk rendement van de protestantse Gemeente in Utrecht, Utrecht: Stichting Oikos. [www.stichtingoikos.nl](http://www.stichtingoikos.nl)

Sar, J. Van der, Visser, R (2006) *Gratis en waardevol; Rol, positie en maatschappelijk rendement van migrantenkerken in Den Haag*, Stichting Oikos.

Sar, J. van der, Schoemaker T. (2003) *De Hofstad, een cadeautje aan de samenleving*, Utrecht, Stichting Oikos

Steggerda, M. (2006) Lezing symposium KASKI 17-11-2006: De maatschappelijke rol van religieuze instellingen, Stand van onderzoek, 2006, Nijmegen's Radboud University  
*De lokale overheid en religieuze instellingen vinden elkaar in hun gemeenschappelijke belangstelling voor de maatschappelijke rol van religieuze instellingen.*

Stichting Oikos jaarverslag 2003

Stichting Vrienden Migrantkerken - Nieuwsbrief (2008). Jaargang 3/nr. 2; St. Vrienden Migrantkerken [www.vriendenmigrantkerken.nl](http://www.vriendenmigrantkerken.nl)

The Holy Bible

Todor Dimitrov, T (1999) The fundamentals of economic stability and security in Central and Eastern Europe. The Link between Economic Stability and Security. Centre for Strategic Development, Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienn

Toelichting op de adresseninventarisatie van migrantenkerken [www.pkn.nl](http://www.pkn.nl)

Toespraak André Rouvoet, minister voor Jeugd en Gezin (7 november 2009) Landelijke Diaconale Dag: [http://www.christenunie.nl/l/nl/library/download/374741?format=save\\_to\\_disk&return\\_uri=%2Fk%2Fn%2Fn91%2Fnews%2Fview%2F374743%2F48130%2FRouvoet-kerken-en-gemeenten-samen-optrekken.html%3Freturn\\_uri%3D%252Fn%252F](http://www.christenunie.nl/l/nl/library/download/374741?format=save_to_disk&return_uri=%2Fk%2Fn%2Fn91%2Fnews%2Fview%2F374743%2F48130%2FRouvoet-kerken-en-gemeenten-samen-optrekken.html%3Freturn_uri%3D%252Fn%252F)

Veenboer, R. Geloof & Kerk: Friesch Dagblad (17 januari 2005) De migrantenkerken houden ons een spiegel voor: *Een "wereldkerk" in Rotterdam*. <http://www.zendingsraad.nl/mgrantenkerken%20Rein.htm>

Weiss, T. (2009) Reintegration and Return: Local catalysts, global reactions, cycles of conflict in the Mano River Basin. Institute for Security Studies. Monograph 118; chapter 2  
[http://www.iss.co.za/index.php?link\\_id=22&slink\\_id=344&link\\_type=12&slink\\_type=12&tmpl\\_id=3](http://www.iss.co.za/index.php?link_id=22&slink_id=344&link_type=12&slink_type=12&tmpl_id=3)

Wommack, A: [www.awmi.net](http://www.awmi.net) (audio teachings) spirit/soul/body

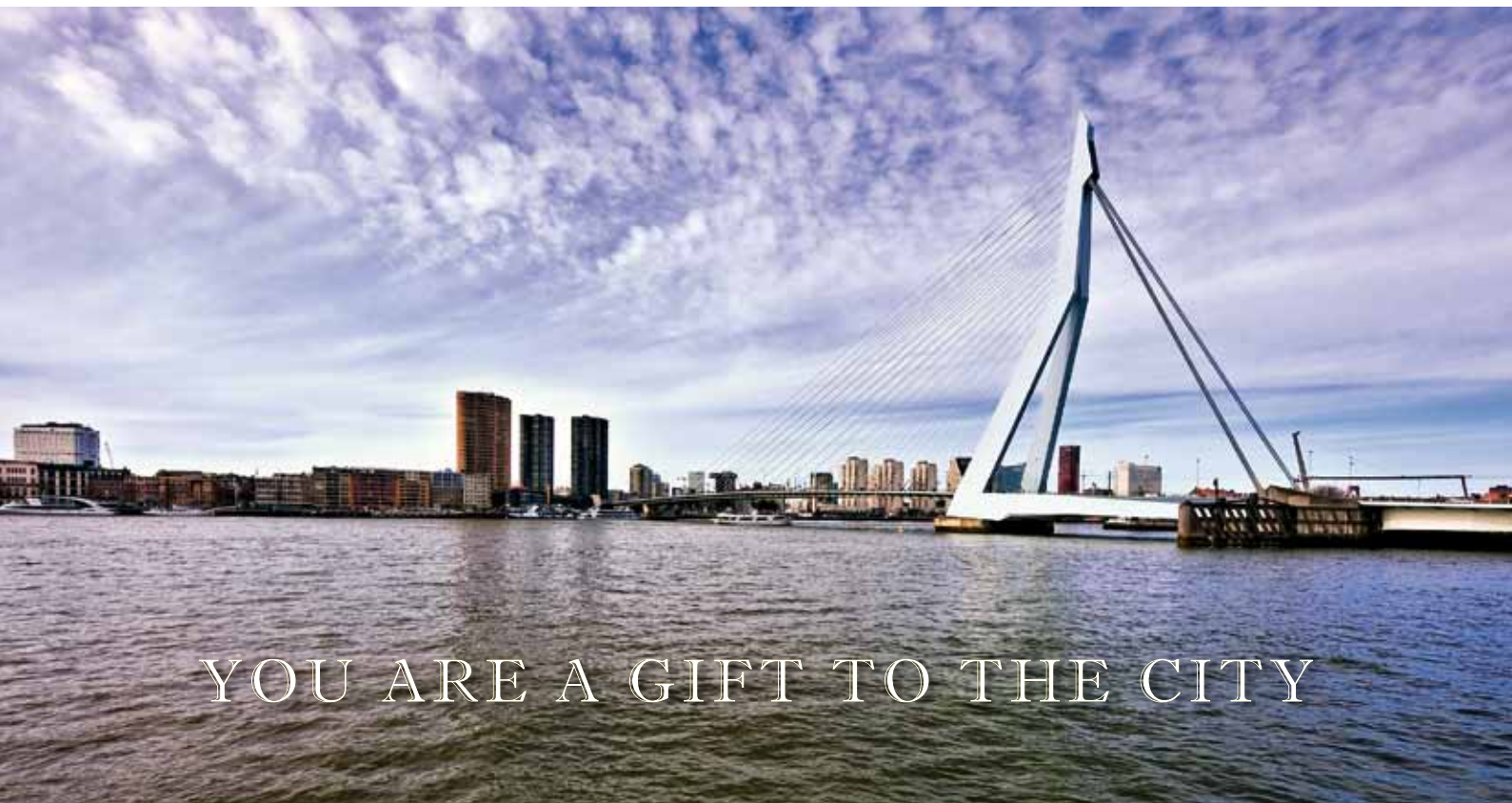
[www.cbs.nl](http://www.cbs.nl): Web Magazine: 2007/2008/2009  
*Sustainability Monitor for the Netherlands 2009*

# SKIN-ROTTERDAM

## U BENT EEN GESCHENK VOOR DE STAD



Skin Rotterdam, Heemraadssingel 112, 3021 DH Rotterdam, [info@skinrotterdam.nl](mailto:info@skinrotterdam.nl) , [www.skinrotterdam.nl](http://www.skinrotterdam.nl)



YOU ARE A GIFT TO THE CITY