

# NEWS Letter

MART-JAN &  
TALITHA

JOY  
MICHA  
AMY



"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8)

## "Am I a Christian...?"

This question came from the mouth of a younger sister - Iris - and was addressed to her Alongsider, let's call her Sanne. Sanne has been walking alongside Iris for quite some time, but this question surprised her a bit. "What do you mean?", she asked back.

"Well," Iris continued, "I had a conversation with my friends the other day who told me that I have really changed recently. Have you become a Christian?" they asked me. And so Iris came to Sanne with this question. Sanne told Iris that if you believe in the Lord Jesus - put your trust in Him - and follow Him, then you are indeed a Christian. "Boy..." - and there was silence for a while - "...then I am a Christian too, how cool!"

Just an impression of a conversation between a Alongsider and her younger sister. These kinds of stories make me

happy. It makes me happy because it clearly shows that the influence of an Alongsider really works. Of course, they are not all 'wow!' testimonies, but still, you notice that when people start investing in each other - passing on the love of the Lord Jesus - something really happens in the life of the other. And of course, this should not really surprise us, because is this not exactly what the Lord Jesus himself did?

The other thing that appeals to me is that others notice the change in Iris' life. This reminds me of the text from Acts 11 where it says that the disciples there "are called Christians for the first time". That was 2000 years ago, and the same principle still applies today.

The question that this raises for you and me is: "How do people see us? Are we followers, disciples of Jesus? Do people see so much of your Master Jesus - the Christ - in you that they say "You are a Christian"? I hear this in the story of

Sanne and Iris and it makes me enormously grateful. It also fuels my prayer: "Lord let it be so that people see You when they look at me".

Sanne and Iris are not primarily religious. They are relational. With each other, but above all with Jesus - their Master - the One they want to follow every day.

Therein lies a mirror for myself and for all of us. Being called 'Christian' is something you receive - not a box you tick on a form. You are a Christian when Christ is visible in your life, but is that so with you and with me? I think this is only possible if we all spend enough time in relationship with the Master.

I do enjoy such a question: "Am I a Christian?", and maybe we should dare to ask each other that question. And let us not forget to name where we see Christ in the other. So that we can encourage and spur each other on.

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# '21-2

This News is sent out about 4 times a year in order to inform you well about the things that are happening in our lives and enables you to pray with us. Feel free to forward this letter to others.

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## FAMILY

We enjoy Almere! Our house really feels like home and we enjoy our growing contacts.

On a 'normal' day, we are in an early morning zoom meeting with New Zealand, organising a training course for Albania and, via the app, we are in contact with Alongsiders at various locations in the Netherlands. Super dynamic and hands-on.

Our house is filled with music. Talitha has picked up her flute again and enjoys playing. Joy plays the violin and is making great strides. She plays in a symphony orchestra - it's great to see her playing. Amy loves to sing and does it to her heart's content in the church. It is great to see how this encourages people. This is not only the case for Amy, Talitha and Joy also like to play. We enjoy this gift of music with which we can serve and magnify God - in 1000-and-1 ways. Micha in turn helps the camera team to bring this into the homes of the people who cannot attend Sunday's service.

A point of prayer: Micha is having a hard time at school at the moment. From homeschooling in Cambodia to a nice Christian school in Almere and now, a year later, at secondary school with over 2000 students. I can hardly imagine a bigger transition. Will you pray with me that together we will find a mode in which he can learn, enjoy and grow with pleasure? We see a lot of beautiful talents in Micha and we pray that he will develop them.

Micha recently started playing football. He has been looking forward to that for a long time. He enjoys it very much and can use all his energy in it. So now we are standing on the sidelines every now and then, and - which I did not really expect - the game makes me enthusiastic.

Another point of prayer: Amy has been having frequent head and stomach problems lately. Together we are trying to find out what is causing it, but so far we do not have a clear picture. Please pray that together we will find out what is causing it.

## WORK

Alongsiders is in full swing. Recently, we had another partner meeting where we looked back together at what has happened, but where we could also look ahead. Setting goals. Praying. Dreaming together and thinking how we can help each other. A session with



a wonderful group of people (you can check out the meeting [here](#)).

This week I visited a group of Alongsiders in Groningen. About 15 young people who work together, play sports in the neighbourhood and share Jesus through this. A sports community. How cool is that? These young people have a heart for Jesus and want to be His hands and feet in the neighbourhood where they live. I was allowed to hang out with them and share a bit, to inspire and motivate them to also walk next to a younger brother or sister. Late that night, I drove back to Almere, tired but enthusiastic.

And so many more things happen. Contacts arise with Youth for Christ, OM, and others. I often have the feeling that the time we are in makes it even more clear that we are seriously lacking in making disciples, even though that is the big task. Alongsiders does not have all the wisdom, but we do want to do everything we can to work concretely with Jesus' command. Can we help you? If so, please contact us - we are happy to do so.

Last newsletter I wrote briefly about the book I (Mart-Jan) wrote (if you haven't seen it yet, check it out - and download it - [here](#)). It is great to see how the book helps people to get started with discipleship in the church. That has been my prayer during the writing of the book, and how cool it is to see that happen.

Also in the church we can be of service. There is so much to do and sometimes it is hard to know what we can do. What has the Lord already 'prepared' for us? In the core group we see many beautiful things happening. It is a privilege to see how the Lord adds people - people who sometimes have nothing to do with the faith in Jesus, but who do want to join in and know more about Him.

Last summer, we had a great VBC celebration for children and youth here in Almere. As a family, we were able to participate fully in it. Curious how that went? Enjoy and watch the video [here](#).

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## DISCIPLESHIP:

At the end of this newsletter, we would just like to share something with you. Discipleship has our heart and being a disciple means, among other things, learning as a disciple, being in the 'classroom' with Jesus, being on the road with Him.

Not long ago, I spoke with a theologian about discipleship. During the conversation, he shared with me how we can sometimes get so caught up in the 'action' that we 'forget' that being a disciple means spending a lot of time with the Master in the first place. You can only pass something on when you have first received it. He then directed us to three texts, and I would like to pass them on to you:

"But go and learn what it means: I want mercy and not sacrifice; for I have not come to call the righteous to repentance, but sinners." (Matthew 9:13)

Mercy, is that something that characterises me? Something that I reach out for? And how is it with you? Jesus speaks these words while eating with tax collectors and sinners. He is merciful. That is what I also want to be and what I want to grow in.

The second text is: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me that I am gentle and humble of heart; and you will find rest for your souls." (Matthew 11:29)

Learn from Me - says Jesus. Come to Me and listen - learn - make your own. What then? Well meekness, and humility. Is that my image of God? A meek God? A humble God? At Christmas we think again about how God, in Jesus, is near, has come, humble and meek. Our saviour, Immanuel.

The third text is this: "Learn from the fig tree this parable: when its branch is already growing soft and its leaves are sprouting, then you will know that summer is near." (Matthew 24:32)

Jesus speaks here about the things that will happen in the end of time. Much is said about this, all kinds of theories and thoughts pass by. But Jesus speaks these words after the promise of His return. He is coming! The whole piece exudes such hope. Are we people of Hope? What is our perspective on the future? Summer is coming. The "Sun of righteousness shall rise". Are you full of hope? In the light of the perspective of Master Jesus, "Everything was much better in the past" is utter nonsense. When He returns - then there will be a feast. That gives hope.

Imagine disciples full of mercy, reaching out to the world around them, meek and humble like Jesus, and with a future expectation and hope that really says it all. What a catchy group of people that is... those are Christians (Acts 11:26).

## GIVE THANKS:

1. For the place here in Almere.
2. For the ever growing contacts and friendships.
3. For the work in Cambodia that keeps on going. It is a blessing to see how Shalom Valley is a blessing for the Alongsiders, churches, schools and other groups.
4. That the book "The Diamond of Discipleship" is a blessing.
5. For the Alongsiders who faithfully walk to their younger brother or sister.
6. For the beautiful things we see happening in the core group.
7. For the wonderful VBC week we were able to have in the summer.

## PRAY WITH US:

1. That we are close to the Lord as a family. Learn from Him and pass it on from there.
2. For Micah and his education. We pray that he may enjoy more.
3. For Amy and her physical complaints. We pray that she will feel free and will enjoy.
4. For the new countries where we work (Albania and Russia).
5. For the trainings we may give - that they may be a blessing.
6. For faithfulness in the tasks the Lord has given us.

Until the next time!

Warm greetings from us in Almere, Mart-Jan & Talitha, Joy, Micha and Amy



## Practical information

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### Financial support:

Alongsiders does not pay us a salary.

We're very grateful for those who want to support us financially.

If you want to do so, please use the Dutch bank details as stated below:

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