

*"He must increase, but I must decrease."  
(John 3:30)*

## “Less of me”

Lights out, sound on and ‘of we go’. It was only a few days ago that we watched the documentary about Johan Toet's life with a whole group of people in Almere. Impressive - that was the word I often heard after the film.

### And it wasn't just about the film...

The roller coaster that the film takes you on is difficult to put into words. How do you describe the life of a young man who wants to prove himself because his father has always rejected him, a young man who looks for it in drugs, has money like water, but is empty inside? A man who has made it all up, but is eventually caught in Portugal and ends up in prison?

But then - and in the film you see the emotions on Johan's face - Jesus appears in his cell. A moment that changes everything...

On the 14th of March - exactly 2 months earlier - Micha and I were watching the premiere of this movie in the cinema in Utrecht.

It was Micha's birthday and we had a great moment together. The film touched us both and I thought: more people should see this - how can we show this in Almere? And after a lot of work and organisation, that was it. Less of me' - that is the message of the film. Less Johan Toet, less Mart-Jan and Talitha van der Maas and less you.

But more of the Lord Jesus, more of sharing and living the gospel. It is, as it were, the echo we have heard from the mouth of John for centuries. Impressive.

That same afternoon, we sat down with a group of young people to think about Alongsiders. Each of these young people has a younger brother or sister and we met to share a piece of life. To receive training and inspiration, to encourage

each other. Because that is what we need so much. The process of 'less of me' is going on in all of us and we need that arm of the other around our shoulder. It doesn't work on its own. Precious moments.

We finished with a meal, a moment of prayer in pairs and a beautiful song about how we may be the hands and feet of Jesus together, how we may bring His name. That is the deep desire of Alongsiders.

At the end of such a full and busy day, Talitha and I say to each other: "This is what we are made for, to go out and follow Jesus together.

Thank you for walking with us, praying with us, supporting us. Our prayer: less us - more of Jesus.

Will you pray with us?

*Continue on page 2 >>>*

News | May 2022

# 37



'22-2

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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## THE POWER OF MUSIC

During the film "Less of me" (which we just wrote about), the evening started with music. A song especially written for this evening. Delbert - the composer and musician - told me how he had prayerfully watched the documentary and how the Lord had given him this very melody. I stood at the side of the hall listening to how the music came from his toes. Powerful, fragile: breakthrough. Weak, I, He: less I - more He. What a powerful gift of God music is.

Our house is full of music too. Joy plays her violin every day, Talitha her flute and Amy also uses a lot of music to dance. It is an outlet for emotions, for worship, singing together, playing together. It is beautiful to see how they use this gift. Sometimes for people, more often just in their room, practising, and I think God enjoys both equally.

## FAMILY

We are doing well as a family, but we are in a season of challenges and it is intensive. We have found our niche in Almere and notice how it feels more and more like home. We are grateful for that.

At the same time we notice that especially Micha is having a hard time. The school system in which he finds himself seems to fit him only with difficulty and Micha is not flourishing. Together with some people we are looking for a school situation that is appropriate and where Micah, with all his qualities, can flourish, grow and

enjoy. Would you like to pray for him with us?

Amy has had a difficult time as well - and still is, although she is doing better. There have been many changes at school and Amy's class has quite some challenges. Sometimes Amy runs into herself - a growth opportunity, but that is sometimes not easy.

Of course we cannot write everything about Micah and Amy in a newsletter, but your prayers are very welcome.

Joy is doing well. We just wrote about her musical talents, school is going very well and it is nice to see how she - and Amy and Micha too - are busy with the Lord and how that has an impact on who she is. With trial and error, just like us, but it is so cool to have a regular conversation after dinner about the Bible and what it means today.

Talitha and I are also doing well. We enjoy each other. You commit yourself with and for the other and through that you receive so much (including a mountain of grace) and you see something of the Lord. We enjoy the fact that we may be buddies, but also colleagues. Working together, shoulder to shoulder.

Even, or perhaps especially, in the things that are difficult and in which we sometimes struggle, it is nice to be able to hold on to each other as a family and to help each other keep the right perspective: Jesus (Heb. 12:2).

## THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD

I (Mart-Jan) am very grateful that I am regularly allowed to serve in various congregations around the country. Sharing God's Word. First, sitting at the feet of the Lord and listening to what He has to say, but then also passing it on, inspiring, explaining and applying it. I enjoy it and when I travel back I am thankful that it has been a blessing.

By the way, this has little to do with me, but much more with the power that comes from God - His Word is alive and powerful, sharp, and makes a difference (Hebrews 4).

## ALONGSIDERS

A lot is happening within the Alongsiders as well. This year we prayed for the team to expand, and Isaac and Daniel started working in the team on 1 March and 1 May. How cool it is to once again experience how the Lord specifically answers prayers. Will you give thanks?

Isaac and Daniël will mainly focus on the work in the Netherlands, and that means that Talitha and I (besides continuing to work in and for the Netherlands) can focus more on new countries. Enough to do.

We have some great ideas this year that can also be a blessing for you.

We will let you know more later, but make sure that the YouVersion app is on your phone 😊 .

*Continue on page 3 >>>*





### SREY KA

We recently received a wonderful testimony from Cambodia. The work of Alongsiders continues there, of course, and we regularly hear encouraging messages:

*"Hello everyone, my name is Srey Ka. I used to be a younger sister, but I soon became an Alongsider because I saw the good deeds and love that my*

*Alongsider gave to me.*

*As a child, I lived with my old grandmother because my mother had to go to another province for her work. I had to work hard to help my grandmother earn money. My mother never came to visit us because she has a new husband. I was always crying and upset about my life. I did not want to go to school because I did not know why I had to study. But when I was 11 years old, my neighbour Ratha came to visit me and she asked if I wanted to be*

*her younger sister. I agreed and she also asked my grandmother for permission, and my grandmother said "yes".*

*My neighbour girl Ratha came to my house every week. She spent time with me and she taught me stories from Alongsiders comic books. At that time, I was very happy and felt loved. She encouraged me and invited me to go to church with her. I decided to go and I felt like a different person: I felt that I was not alone, I had my Alongsider and God.*

*Then I started going to church every week, made new friends and went back to school. I thank God for my Alongsider and Alongsiders for their help. Now I am studying in 3rd grade and I will strive to be a good Alongsider, just like my big sister in Alongsiders.*

*Blessing!!!"*

We experience it as a blessing to hear stories like this. It is God's work, and He does not need us. But what a grace that He wants to use us.

### DO YOU HELP TO BUILD?

In Cambodia, Srey Ka lives, in the Netherlands Edwin lives, in Albania Serbiana and her team are working to start Alongsiders in June.

Together with so many other Alongsiders, they are making a difference in the lives of their younger brothers and sisters. God's work continues.

We are committed to it, building, working, praying, living. But you can help too! If you want to know more, please feel free to contact us.

Are you prayerfully considering whether you want to support the Alongsiders Foundation once or periodically?

To support the Alongsiders Foundation, simply use the QR code on the right.

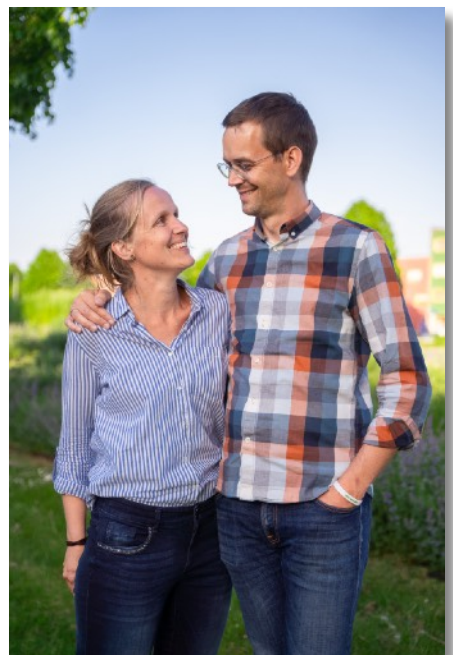


(This is different from our personal support - for that you use the information in the green box).

And so we come to the end of another newsletter. 'Through our lives, show Your glory to the world around us' - that is our prayer for you and for ourselves.

We are grateful for your involvement and support and wish you God's blessing!

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:

Foundation: Nehemia (ANBI)  
Please note: Project church-work  
Cambodia

IBAN: NL66 SNSB 0931 7011 39  
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