

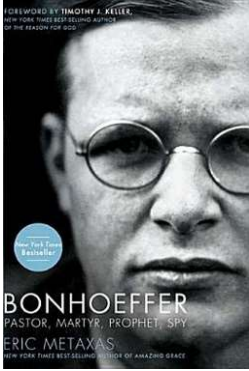
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Date: November 2019

Dear friends and family,

Perhaps you have heard of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German theologian who was killed in 1945 for his part in Hitler's failed assassination attempt. His short and focused life is evidence that speaking up against a cultural ideology can be a lonely, frustrating and dangerous exercise. Hitler came to power on 31 January 1933. Within 3 months the 'Aryan Clause' came into effect – which excluded Jews from public jobs and the 'German Church'. At the time in Germany, many Lutheran pastors were converted Jews. Many German Christians rapidly adapted their theology and praxis to accommodate the Nazi's anti-Jewish rhetoric and the exaltation of the Aryan race and the 'German Church'. It then became illegal to publicly say or publish anything negative about Hitler and his new Nazi National Socialism. This was now the government's worldview, and it had the law to defend and promote it. They intimidated those who thought differently. Christian leaders were sent to jail. Why was Christian resistance to these developments so limited? Salaries and pensions of Lutheran ministers were determined by the State. Informed Christians abroad were concerned and hoped that 'somebody' (not 'me') would boldly speak up against the dangerous developments. As is usual, most church leaders were too busy with their own churches and good Christian programs. American Christians at the time had got used to their own 'apartheid', separating the black instead of the Jews. Their conscience was dulled.



Do you see any parallels with today? Today another 'worldview' is growing aggressively in the West. It seeks to replace Judeo-Christian ethics and morality with a new 'experimental' man-made ideology. It doesn't want God to be mentioned in public. It doesn't want God to have any say on how life is lived. It is evident when you consider life issues such as abortion and euthanasia, and social issues such as the meaning of marriage and of being male/female. This is now the government's worldview, and it has the law to defend and promote it. As is usual, most church leaders are too busy with their own churches and good Christian programs. Seeking inspiration, a friend recommended I read Eric Metaxas' new biography "Bonhoeffer, Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy". His life does inspire! God's prophets are called to speak up. They are to be the conscience to the nation, the voice of God to kings and priests. They are called to a lonely, frustrating and dangerous vocation. "Let the prophet... who has my word speak it faithfully" (Jer 23:28). "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15). Society is changing rapidly. Christianity today needs more men and women like Bonhoeffer.



**Family matters:** A highlight of our summer was our week family reunion on the Dutch coast. **Steven & Vikki** and 3 children were visiting Europe from Peru. **Robert & Elsa** are expecting their first child in December – we are looking forward to having one grandchild nearby! At present we are WhatsApp grandparents! **Edward** is still waiting for his heart valve replacement. The long wait and the uncertainty are at times frustrating. **Julie** continues to enjoy her studies.

**Travels:** Given the uncertainty around Edward's operation, Philip has focused most work closer to home this year. He was present at the International Brethren Mission Conference in Rome this summer and particularly enjoyed the daily inspirational addresses on apologetics by **John Lennox**. A take-home remark was, "If you think you are too small to make a difference, you have never slept with a mosquito in your room!" Anneke worked hard with the preparations for the Missionary Retreat in France in July. It was an encouraging event.

**Local church:** Anneke enjoys visiting and encouraging local believers. Together with others, we have worked on running a Marriage Course and a Parenting Course this year. There are many couples and young families in our assembly, and the needs and challenges are great. The team of elders will reduce from 6 to 3 by the end of 2019. It is not so easy to find suitable qualified men who can make the time and are willing to serve as elders. This has encouraged us to explore the Biblical teaching on 'deacons' in the assembly – with whom some of the elders' tasks can be shared or delegated. This opens interesting possibilities.



**Website – Verniewd.com:** Our new website on homosexuality and genderdysphoria continues to absorb much of Philip's time and energy. His book on Homosexuality, first published in 2011, has been completely revised and extended. It was republished in Dutch in September 2019. It has a new chapter on 'Identity – who am I? Who or what determines who I am?' and a chapter on 'Change – can your sexual feelings change over time?' This last topic is a political hot topic in The Netherlands. Through the website we also offer 'information evenings' for churches and youth groups. We also visit and where possible film Christians who experience SSA (Same Sex Attraction) and who choose to live clean lives for Jesus – their stories can be used by the Lord to inspire others.



**Publishing:** During 2019, Emmaus (Holland) published my book on Brokenness as a Bible course. The message of this book is that our heavenly Father sometimes uses pain and difficulties to work out His

purposes in our life. As the Lord Jesus reminded Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9). Emmaus (Germany) published a course on Baptism that Carlos Villamil and I wrote some 20 years ago. CLC (France) published 'The Transforming Power of Forgiveness'. For Philip, writing is a slow process. Translating is also hard work. But it is encouraging to see that the Lord still uses small books to influence, to encourage and to change people's lives!

**Christian Network School:** Philip retains monthly contact with Andrew and Gregorio in Colombia in connection with this beautiful and effective ministry of teaching God's Word in Government schools in Colombia. In 2019 there have been **17 teachers** active in the program, reaching out to a total of about **60 schools** representing some **250 classes**, and **7800 children** being taught weekly. If you have questions about this project or if your family or church would like to support it financially (it has ongoing needs), please get in touch.



Again, thank you for your interest and the time you have taken to read this letter. Our thanks too to those of you who regularly pray for us and support us in one way or another. Philip & Anneke