



# Annual General Meeting Report 2024



*A vibrant international English-speaking Anglican church  
serving the Leiden area, offering a spiritual home  
to people of all ages and from all over the world.*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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<b>Leadership &amp; Governance</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<i>Chaplain's Report (Matt Thijs)</i> .....	3
<i>Churchwarden's Report (Peter Stretton)</i> .....	4
<i>Archdeaconry Synod Report (Sue Kirby)</i> .....	4
<i>Archdeaconry Synod Poem (Fulco Jongsma)</i> .....	4
<i>Church Council Report (Matt Thijs)</i> .....	6
<i>Electoral Roll (Bronwyn Lucas)</i> .....	6
<i>Safeguarding (Sue Kirby)</i> .....	7
<b>Finance</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<i>Treasurer's Report (Boaz Kuiper)</i> .....	8
<i>Financial Statements</i> .....	9
Income and Expenditure Year to Date Jan-Dec 2023.....	9
Budget 2024.....	10
<i>Independent Examiner's Report (Brian Routledge)</i> .....	11
<b>Other Reports</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<i>Ministry to children and youth</i> .....	12
Lizelle Thijs (First Steps; ages 0-3).....	12
Rebekka Gelders (St J's Club; ages 4-10).....	12
Javellah Dusengemungu (Youth; ages 11+).....	13
<i>Iris Boerhout (Reader-in-training)</i> .....	13
<i>Paul Leach (Church Weekend 2023)</i> .....	14
<i>Matthew Payne (Leading Congregational Worship, Morning Prayer, Small Groups)</i> .....	15
<i>Walter &amp; Liz Wassenaar (The Alpha Course)</i> .....	16

### Chaplain's Report (Matt Thijs)

Reflecting on 2023, it is evident that we began the year still entrenched in a Covid mindset, with most meetings still conducted online. However, as the year progressed, the memory of the pandemic gradually receded into the background. For this reason alone we should be grateful to God! Notable highlights of 2023 include the Church Weekend held from April 21st to 23rd, the appointment of Javellah as our Youth Worker, and well-attended Easter and Christmas services. Ministry efforts expanded throughout the year, with the revival of the Prayer Ministry Team and the formation of a Mission Support Team, both supported by Poornima Whomsley. Additionally, a Youth Band was established, later renamed the 'All-Age Band,' (when you see them you'll understand why!). The Evergreens Lunches resumed with enthusiastic attendance, and we celebrated the joy of witnessing four baptisms.

At St James, our ministry thrives thanks to the dedication of numerous volunteers. Iris Boerhout, our reader-in-training, contributed significantly by leading and preaching during services, alongside several Congregational Worship Leaders. Liesbeth Kanis and Ada Uche joined the team this year. Sue Kirby continued her outstanding work as our Safeguarding Officer, while Louise Hunter supported me as Council Secretary and coordinator of the prayer email. Diana Hanford provided invaluable assistance in communication and service preparation. Unfortunately, Esther Scherpenisse had to step down as our Environmental Officer due to health reasons. Special appreciation is extended to our churchwardens, Fredrik Knoeff and Peter Stretton, for their dedicated service.

Our Church Council meetings fostered constructive dialogue, resulting in identified priorities in worship & prayer, fellowship & discipleship, and mission & evangelism. We increased opportunities for communal prayer through monthly gatherings and made adjustments to our all-age services. To bolster fellowship & discipleship, we organized a church weekend and introduced a St. James church app, while also promoting volunteerism and small group involvement. In terms of mission & evangelism, we conducted an Alpha course and revitalized the Mission Support Team, facilitating connections with our Mission Partners and fostering a more outward-looking perspective.

On a personal note, 2023 marked my licensing as Chaplain at St. James, following my previous roles as Ordinand and Assistant Curate. I am deeply grateful to God and the St James community for entrusting me with this new and challenging responsibility. St James is a wonderful church community, and it is my absolute honour and privilege to serve here.

## Churchwarden's Report (Peter Stretton)

2023 was a year of stability which after the 2020 to 2022 years came as some welcome relief.

We have settled back into the usual venue of the British School hall and the church community has started growing which is a real pleasure to see.

The great news at the start of the year was that the bishop agreed to Matt becoming our new chaplain. Again I want to thank our recruitment team for all the work they put into this process. The traditional licencing service was held in the Dorpskerk, attended by the area dean as well as the great and good from across the Dutch Anglican deanery.

Matt, Lizelle and Ezra were able to move into the official chaplain's residence in Chopinlaan vacating the Ambachtspad house. Ambachtspad is now rented bringing in essential revenue for the church. A number of people assisted in preparing the house for this change of use, I would like to thank all those involved in this work. One joy of being a warden is making sure the church functions as sustainable organisation.

Finally the church would not function without volunteers giving their time to making sure the Sunday services run. In addition there are the council and committee members who meet outside of the Sunday services. The purpose of this is to give the church direction so that it continues to serve the members and community. I would like to thank everyone who is giving their time to this.

## Archdeaconry Synod Report (Sue Kirby)

The archdeaconry synod meets every year to enjoy fellowship with other chaplaincies in the Diocese, engage in discussions about issues and topics facing the Church of England and the wider Anglican communion, to spend time in worship and to be encouraged, inspired and equipped to further the mission of the church. Finally, we spend some time on business matters associated with the diocese. In 2023, your synod reps were Fulco Jongsma and Sue Kirby, and for the first time, a number of young people were invited to give their opinions on proceedings. Boaz van der Velden attended as Diocesan Youth Representative.

The meeting has evolved to be a mixture of online attendance and in-person, meeting in The Oude Abdij Drongen. This year, luckily Bishop Robert was able to attend to give us an upbeat view of what has, and is, happening around the diocese. Less luckily, he had covid and so couldn't stay for the whole event. We also had expert, visiting speakers on conflict and resolution, racial justice, Care for Creation and youth networks. We learnt a lot, enjoyed time together and although Boaz didn't get the opportunity to nip out and buy Belgian frites, we came back motivated and with a better understanding of all the work that goes on around our diverse and active diocese.

## Archdeaconry Synod Poem (Fulco Jongsma)

Once a year, as a gathering grand,  
an Archdeaconry Synod is being planned.  
Chaplaincies meet in fellowship's hold,  
stories exchange, both new and old.  
There we examined God's will and plan,  
seeking His guidance for the faithful clan.

Discussions flow as thoughtful streams,  
of church's concerns, of challenging themes.  
With Anglican doctrine, in open debate,  
faith's challenges met by hearts consecrate.  
So much to discuss, listen and learn,  
to gain deeper insight and to discern.

The Church of England, its purpose defined,  
in wider communion, a fellowship kind.  
We treat our environment with respect,  
for its beauty we should not neglect.  
As stewards of creation, ensuring all's right,  
with the Gospel's flame, a beacon so bright.

In a world where colours are intertwined,  
we embrace diversity with hearts aligned.  
Fighting for justice, equality, a better life,  
hand in hand through struggle and strife.  
Empathy and compassion will pave the way,  
for a future where love forever will stay.

Beneath the surface, a conflict may hide,  
where goals misalign and resources divide.  
Conflict defined equals divergence and strain;  
our challenge: to bridge discomfort and pain.  
With fervent prayer, and love's embrace,  
To troubled lands, bring healing grace.

Reconciliation's call, rings loud and clear,  
From brokenness healed, a future held dear.  
Let's ponder the path, with wisdom's embrace,  
mending the wounds, with God's healing grace.  
For peace, like a seed, in troubled ground waits,  
nurtured by prayer, where the Spirit creates.

But business too, with focused might,  
the needs of the Diocese is bathed in light.  
For new representatives we had to search,  
and engage with issues facing the Church.  
There's time too for fellowship and grace,  
to build each other up and time for praise.

From these meetings renewed we return,  
With hearts ablaze, and spirits that burn.  
United we stand, to serve and create,  
a church reborn for a future's sweet fate.  
To nurture the flock, a love that will yearn,  
the mission of Christ is like a fire, we learn.

## Church Council Report (Matt Thijs)

What is the role of the church council? In 2016, the council produced a statement summarising its role: *“The church council is an elected group that works with the chaplain to seek God's direction as we build a loving and healthy church together and reach out to others in mission. We do this by generating and implementing actions and policies that are grounded in prayerful reflection.”*

In practice this means that the council takes responsibility (together with the chaplain) for co-leading the church. It does this by helping to make decisions, both large and small, regarding the direction and priorities of the church. It consists of a combination of ex-officio members and elected representatives, with a mixture of spiritual and legal responsibilities. The Church Council shares with the Chaplain in the decision-making process, and met nine times in 2023. A smaller Standing Committee consisting of the chaplain, the churchwardens, and two other council members meets in-between Council meetings to carry out the actions agreed by Council.

The Council is made up of the following members:

- Chaplain
- Two Churchwardens (elected annually)
- Two Archdeaconry Synod Representatives (elected tri-annually)
- Ten elected lay members-one (one of which is usually treasurer and another secretary)
- In addition up to two members may be co-opted onto council

In 2023 the following members served on church council:

Matt Thijs (Chaplain), Peter Stretton and Fredrik Knoeff (Churchwardens), Fulco Jongsma and Sue Kirby (Archdeaconry Synod Representatives), Iris Boerhout, Rebekka Gelders, Katie Hanford, Stephan Hinderer, Gillian Weinberg, Anja de Reus and Ada Uche (Council members), and Poornima Whomsley (co-opted). The treasurer (Graham Mapp, later Boaz Kuiper) and secretary (Louise Hunter) opted not to be on council.

Warm thanks are extended to the outgoing council members for their devoted service. If you are interested in standing as council member, please visit [www.stjames.nl/agm](http://www.stjames.nl/agm) or speak to Matt.

## Electoral Roll (Bronwyn Lucas)

The Electoral Roll of the Church of St. James Voorschoten, stands at 98 at the time of the Annual General Meeting of 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024. In 2023 the number on the Electoral Roll was 88. In 2023 there have been 12 additions and 2 deletions.

## Safeguarding (Sue Kirby)

It has been a busy year for safeguarding, but St James has enthusiastically adopted the stance that safeguarding is all about supporting the church and enabling ministers and all lay members to carry out activities in a safe and open way. We want to look after all people physically, mentally and spiritually and are constantly on the lookout for ways to spot things which are 'not right'- with a particular focus on protecting young people and vulnerable adults.

As a church, we are given guidance by the diocese on who needs what clearance, appropriate training with flexibility as we balance the needs of the church with real live people who want to serve God through volunteering. Some positions are cleared at diocesan level, some clearances are done locally.

At St James, we have approximately 45 volunteers or staff with 'VOG' clearance, who work with Matt to make our church happen – praise God for such abundant provision! These clearances have to be redone every 3 years, but the new online system is very quick and easy. All volunteers then have training, which we are trying to do either through online courses or as group sessions, of which we have done two. All people running children's church or activities also have to do leadership training with the diocese, both useful and helpful, as you get to chat with others from around the diocese and talk about their needs and experiences.

We are gaining experience with different types of vulnerabilities, such as how to develop a dementia friendly church, how to run 'safe' external meetings, how to do risk assessments to be fully inclusive and so on. We are also working on how to develop 'safe spaces' for people to talk about past encounters with 'church' and how we can listen, accept our own culpabilities with grace and repentance, and then not only be welcoming but nurturing. This can be a challenge with so many different nationalities in our midst!

During 2024, we will be looking for somebody to take over from Sue Kirby, our current safeguarding officer as she is now retired and might move. If you have any call to do this type of volunteer work, please get in touch so that we can work together and keep St James safe and sound.

### Treasurer's Report (Boaz Kuiper)

#### Income

- Less income from our planned giving scheme (133k vs 140k)
- Slightly more income from our property (Renting out Ambachtspad)
- We received a final curacy grant (22.3k)

#### Spending

- Salaries were as expected
- Rental costs were a lot higher than expected due to a long overdue increase of British School rental fees (20.5 k vs 12.5k)
- Outreach, Literature, Conferences, Publicity was higher than expected, which includes costs of reader training done by Iris Boerhout (7.2 k vs 2k)
- Less spending on property operating costs than expected (7k vs 10k)

#### Giving

- Giving to mission partners was slightly below target due to an amount held in reserve from 2022 for Tim & Nicky Sandell, who have transitioned from being Mission Partners to ordained ministry in the Anglican church (12.5k vs 15.5k)
- Diocesan contribution was as expected

#### Bonds Ambachtspad

- Two bonds totalling 25k were paid off
- Three bonds totalling 75k were extended

#### Surplus

Due to the curacy grant we had a surplus of 28.5k

#### Reserves

We have healthy reserves for our daily operations (6 months church operating costs)  
We don't have additional reserves for bigger property maintenance, but will work towards this in the future.



## Financial Statements

*Income and Expenditure Year to Date Jan-Dec 2023*

	2023 Jan-Dec budget	2023 Jan-Dec actual	Variance
<b><u>Members Income</u></b>			
Planned Giving Scheme	140.000	133.466	(6.534)
Collections	2.000	2.598	598
Curacy grant	22.000	22.351	351
Special Collection & Other Income	14.000	17.001	3.001
Interest received	0	321	321
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>178.000</b>	<b>175.737</b>	<b>(2.263)</b>
<b><u>Expenditure &amp; Outgoings</u></b>			
Rental BSN hall	10.000	16.260	6.260
Property operating costs	10.000	6.958	(3.042)
Cost of other rentals/hall hire/hall fit out	2.500	4.201	1.701
Bond Interest (Ambachtspad)	4.500	3.750	(750)
<b>Sub-total Buildings and Property</b>	<b>27.000</b>	<b>31.169</b>	<b>4.169</b>
Ministerial Salaries and on-costs	70.000	72.322	2.322
Outreach, Literature, Conferences, Publicity	2.000	7.203	5.203
Office and Administration	2.000	1.717	(283)
Professional Costs, Bank Fees & Insurance	2.000	2.581	581
<b>Sub-total ministry costs</b>	<b>76.000</b>	<b>83.823</b>	<b>7.823</b>
<b>Total Church Operating Outgoings</b>	<b>103.000</b>	<b>114.992</b>	<b>11.992</b>
<b>Total Operating Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	<b>75.000</b>	<b>60.745</b>	<b>(14.255)</b>
<b><u>External Giving/Contributions</u></b>			
Diocese and Affiliation Contributions	16.000	16.094	94
Planned External Giving - Mission Partners	15.500	12.500	(3.000)
<b>Total External Giving</b>	<b>31.500</b>	<b>28.594</b>	<b>(2.906)</b>
<b>Net Surplus/Deficit</b>	<b>43.500</b>	<b>32.150</b>	<b>(11.350)</b>
<b><u>External Giving/Contributions</u></b>			
Diocese and Affiliation Contributions	9%	9%	
Planned External Giving - Mission Partners	9%	7%	
<b>Total external giving</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>16%</b>	

<b>Financial Statements for The Church of St James Voorschoten, The Netherlands</b>					
<b>Income and Expenditure Statement - Quarterly Budget 2024</b>					
	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Quarterly Budget</b>			
		<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>
<b>Members Income</b>					
Planned Giving Scheme	119.066	27.504	28.260	22.299	41.004
Collections	2.598	435	735	552	877
Curacy grant	0	0	0	0	0
Other income and special collections	25.400	6.350	6.350	6.350	6.350
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>147.065</b>	<b>34.289</b>	<b>35.344</b>	<b>29.200</b>	<b>48.231</b>
<b>Expenditure &amp; Outgoings</b>					
Rental BSN hall	16.910	4.243	5.242	2.621	4.805
Property operating costs	3.000	750	750	750	750
Cost of other rentals/hall hire/hall fit out	4.369	1.407	0	890	2.073
Interest Expense (Ambachtspad)	3.000	750	750	750	750
<b>Sub-total Buildings and Property</b>	<b>27.280</b>	<b>7.150</b>	<b>6.742</b>	<b>5.011</b>	<b>8.378</b>
Ministerial Salaries and on-costs	76.584	18.219	21.927	18.219	18.219
Outreach, Literature, Conferences, Publicity	5.703	443	3.200	1.249	811
Office and Administration (incl. Office staff)	1.717	468	316	402	532
Professional Costs, Bank Fees & Insurance	2.581	800	613	571	597
<b>Sub-Total Ministry Costs</b>	<b>86.586</b>	<b>19.930</b>	<b>26.056</b>	<b>20.441</b>	<b>20.159</b>
<b>Total Church Operating Outgoings</b>	<b>113.865</b>	<b>27.080</b>	<b>32.798</b>	<b>25.452</b>	<b>28.536</b>
<b>Total Operating Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	<b>33.199</b>	<b>7.209</b>	<b>2.547</b>	<b>3.749</b>	<b>19.695</b>
<b>External Giving/Contributions</b>					
Diocese and Affiliation Contributions	16.000	4.000	4.000	4.000	4.000
Planned External Giving - Mission Partners	17.500	4.375	4.375	4.375	4.375
Local Social Welfare		0	0	0	0
Others (appeals and DDF donation)					
<b>Total External Giving</b>	<b>33.500</b>	<b>8.375</b>	<b>8.375</b>	<b>8.375</b>	<b>8.375</b>
<b>Net Surplus/Deficit</b>	<b>-301</b>	<b>-1.166</b>	<b>-5.828</b>	<b>-4.626</b>	<b>11.320</b>

## Independent Examiner's Report (Brian Routledge)

To the Wardens of St James, Voorschoten

Dear Peter and Fredrik,

As requested, I have reviewed and examined the 2023 accounts of St James Voorschoten. This assessment has been carried out to the best of my knowledge and my abilities. The analysis is not a full professional audit and therefore has a limited scope. Nevertheless, I find the accounts to represent a true and fair disclosure of the financial position of St James and of its income and expenditure for the year 2023.

Many thanks, in particular, to Thérèse Jongsma for her clear and organised maintenance and preparation of the accounts, Also, thanks to Graham Mapp and Boaz Kuiper for their significant contributions to presenting the accounts in a professional manner.

Brian Routledge

*Received by email on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2024*

## OTHER REPORTS

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### Ministry to children and youth

*Lizelle Thijs (First Steps; ages 0-3)*

Our young children (ages 0 to 4) have moved around the BSN a bit, but we have decided that the library is definitely the most comfortable place to meet. We have around 4 babies in First Steps on a Sunday and we look forward to welcoming Baby Emily after the summer.

We have recently added (gluten free) playdough to our collection of activities and put these out on the table as the children arrive. This really helps them to calmly settle into the session and has proven to be a great tool in helping distract our little ones as their parents leave to join the service.

We have introduced a very relaxed programme which we hope will engage the toddlers a bit more. The session starts off with singing and playing instruments. This is a particular highlight! We then sit in a circle to read a Bible story and move on to a simple craft that relates to the story. We end the session playing with toys and reading books. During all-age services all children are encouraged to join the service, but a mat with toys is available in the back of the church for the very little ones who need a place to play.

We are extremely grateful to all our wonderful volunteers and look forward to welcoming three new volunteers in the coming weeks.

*Rebekka Gelders (St J's Club; ages 4-10)*

Children from ages 4 (when ready) to 11 are welcome to join St J's Club during the service. We listen to and discuss a bible story and make a nice craft. As most of our children speak Dutch, we mostly teach in Dutch with translation to English if necessary. We aim to offer bilingual teaching each week. In December we received 2 new volunteers to help with the sessions – Boaz van der Velden and Charlotte Rijdsdijk. Charlotte is now with maternity leave and will support the team of First Steps from June onwards.

In order to be able to offer continuous lessons for our children - the future of the church - we are still looking for about two volunteers who feel called to lead the sessions in Dutch. We would be delighted to get you on board which then would mean for all of us to be on the rota once a month and also be able to enjoy the services. If you are interested, please speak to Rebekka Gelders.

We are also planning a nice spring activity with the First Steps and St. James Club towards end of May/ beginning of June. Please keep an eye on the church agenda and weekly email for specific date and time.

*Javellah Dusengemungu (Youth; ages 11+)*

My name is Javellah Dusengemungu. In the middle of April 2023 I started to serve the youth group at St James. In this group, we meet with youth from age 11 to 16. Currently we count 13 young people in that age group and at least 3 to 8 are present in every meeting. Our sessions are every Sunday during the service except the Sundays of all age service when we all remain to celebrate Holy communion. In the last year our main topics were around apologetics where we discussed different topics around Christian faith. In the first half of 2024 we will be discussing topics as scheduled in the common Episcopal Lectionary.

In the last year (2023), we started to meet every once a month for a social event. During these events we share meals, play games and do different fun activities together. We pray that these social meetings encourage young people to see that the church community is not only for Sunday meetings but much more.

In the fall last year, we formed a band in collaboration with St J's club. Our volunteer Julia Bolt leading a team of various volunteers, they lead children and youth in learning how to play various worship songs. The meetings take place on Sundays after the church service, every other week. This band was launched and played during the Christmas season and it was a beautiful thing to witness. The band continues as they aim to play in (all age) services around every two months and other special or needed occasions.

Our team has raised a need to start another group of young adults who have graduated from the younger one. In this past period, we have tempted to form it however, we have not been successful mainly because we don't have enough volunteers to run it. This is one of our biggest prayer in 2024.

Our team of volunteers is current made by 6 dedicated adults. All of them have completed safeguarding procedure as it is given by the Diocese and they hold a certificate of good conduct from the local authority. As a leading team, we meet every quarter of the year to evaluate ourselves and look for areas that need improvement.

*Iris Boerhout (Reader-in-training)*

As I reflect on my journey thus far, I'm grateful for the opportunity to have passed every class, inching closer to the completion of my training this summer. It's been a rewarding experience filled with growth and learning, and I am eager to embrace the responsibilities of ministry ahead. I extend my heartfelt thanks to all who have supported and guided me along the way.

## Paul Leach (Church Weekend 2023)

### Spiritual Growth—and the slightly gross

From the serene surroundings of the Emmaus Centre in Helvoirt, our church embarked on a weekend that promised spiritual enrichment and fun. Over the course of April 21st to 23rd, we delved into the theme of 'Barnabas - a man of welcome and encouragement', with enriching teachings from our guest speaker, Grant Crowe. Anchored in the Acts of the Apostles, we explored what it means to be a welcoming community.

The children also had a great time with 'Camps 4 Kids' providing learning and entertainment and making sure that the weekend was as fun and memorable for them as it was for us grown-ups!

All the spiritual stuff was fine of course, but the real peak had to be the Saturday evening entertainment program. Ingeniously orchestrated by Katie and Niels, the program could only be described 'gezellig!' (probably... mijn Nederlands is nog niet zo goed...) A great way to get us all to step out of our comfort zones and connect across ages, backgrounds, and nationalities in a spirit of friendly (or in some cases fierce—not mentioning any names (JENNI)) competitiveness.

For a congregation like ours there could be few themes more crucial than the ability to welcome and embrace people from all walks of life. Whether it was the unedifying spectacle of people trying to speak with mouths full of marshmallows, displays of incredible flexibility to pick ever shorter cereal boxes off the ground using only one's mouth (don't ask), or more frivolous activities such as deep times of worship, prayer and reflection, the weekend was a true testament to our wonderful spiritual community. Definitely not something to be missed.

It would be remiss not to extend a heartfelt thanks to those who organized the weekend, as well as the ever hospitable staff at the Emmaus Centre, Matt and Grant for their leadership and preaching, and of course to Katie and Niels for their exceptional entertainment program. Everyone who contributed really helped to ensure that the experience transcended our normal weekly program and provided an unparalleled opportunity for new and old members alike to immerse themselves in our community's fun, warmth and acceptance. And best of all, I don't think anyone caught Covid this time!



## Matthew Payne (Leading Congregational Worship, Morning Prayer, Small Groups)

### **Leading congregational worship**

As congregational worship leaders, some members of the congregation volunteer to lead occasional services on a Sunday. The role involves preparing the liturgy, suggesting songs and hymns for worship as well as leading the service itself. Matt Thijs provides some guidance and feedback on areas of strength and what could be improved for next time. It's a great way to serve the church.

### **Morning prayer**

We continue to offer midweek services of prayer on Zoom. Currently these are held on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings at 9.00. Matt Thijs hosts the Wednesday and Friday morning services while Matthew Payne hosts the Monday service (Matt's day off). The prayer services use the Church of England's online resource for daily prayer, which features a liturgy that changes with the church calendar, with the reading of a psalm and another passage from the Bible. Normally we also choose a hymn or song to listen to. And of course, there is plenty of time for prayer as well!

Instructions on how to join the prayer service are in the church weekly email and on the website (go to 'What's On' at the top of the home page > click 'Prayer' from the drop-down menu). Please get in touch if you're not sure how to use Zoom or if the instructions aren't clear. And anyone participating is free to do so in whatever manner they wish; if you'd just like to listen, you're very welcome.

### **Small groups**

The church has a number of small groups that meet throughout the week. The details of these groups can be found on the church website ('Get Involved' > 'Small Groups'). Some small groups have also created a group on the church app, although not every group has done this. There is a mix of times, geographical areas and church demographics served by these small groups. The 'rebound' from the pandemic seems to have been successful, with several new thriving in-person small groups established in the last year or so.

Hopefully every member of the church can find a small group where they feel at home. There are groups that meet on an occasional basis, often around a shared interest, such as the Book Club or the Museum Group. There are also plenty of more 'traditional' small groups featuring bible study and time for prayer. There are groups of this kind meeting on a weekly or fortnightly basis in Leiden, Voorschoten, Wassenaar and Sassenheim. The geographically disparate nature of our chaplaincy makes ensuring that everybody has access to a small group meeting at a convenient time and place something of a challenge – please do speak to Matt if you'd like to join a small group but are struggling to find something that works. Or if you're interested in starting a small group yourself!

Small groups are a vital part of the church's community and worship. They provide a way for us to share fellowship during the week, to encourage and strengthen each other in God's love, and to bolster our ministry of prayer for one another.

## Walter & Liz Wassenaar (The Alpha Course)

The Alpha Course is created to outline the core principles of the Christian faith. The mission team of St James has embraced this effective form of evangelism and we were excited to run this course from January till March 2024. After a kick-off meeting in the Voorschoten Film Theatre, we gathered for weekly sessions at the house of Rhys and Poornima Whomsley.

We started each time with a meal so that we could get to know each other better, the food was kindly provided by several members of our church. After the meal, we watched a session of the Alpha film series together, after which we split up into groups, discussing questions like 'Is there more to life than this', 'Who's is Jesus', 'How does God guide us' and 'Why and how do I pray'?

We are grateful that we could welcome guests from outside our church as well as from our congregation, so that we could meet up with a lovely group of 15 people.

We have enjoyed finding out more about our faith and getting to know each other. Alpha is about sharing God's love through friendship. 'We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well' (1 Thessalonians 2:8).