

A Brief History of the Filadelfia Pentecostal Church in Deventer Netherlands

On the occasion of the celebration of the 50th jubilee (1960-2010) by Carl Koch

A flying start

In the Southwestern United States in 1906, the Pentecostal fire was ignited by William J. Seymour, a son of a slave. It is noteworthy that this revival movement within one year reached many countries around the world, despite the limited capabilities of both telephone and international traffic (both still in its infancy). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was for many the answer to the lack of

missionary power to reach a lost world. From Norway, this good news passed as a wildfire to many countries in the still undivided Europe. The same happened in Sweden and in 1907 in the Netherlands. In the Netherlands the movement expands mainly in the west, led by Gerrit Polman of the Salvation Army. Twenty years later, the movement has about 2,000 active believers. Initially it

was planned to pass this blessing to existing churches and to remain a movement. Since at that time almost all churches were reluctant to allow this message in their churches, Pentecostal churches were established in spite of the initial intention. Pentecostal missionaries went into all the world, e.g. from the Netherlands to China and Indonesia.

From church to movement again. The initial denunciation of the Pentecostal message by the already existing churches has now, almost a century later, slowly turned into a cautious embrace of the message by many Protestant churches. Almost every church in Holland and other countries uses the Pentecostal song book now and then. After the second Vatican Council in 1965, the gifts of the Spirit were officially allowed within the Roman Catholic Church. Two years later the Holy Spirit fell here in a similar manner, although 61 years later than in the Protestant churches. One obvious difference is that the resulting Catholic Charismatic Renewal is an integral part of the R.C. Church. A side note is that most Catholics in Europe are not active in the Charismatic Movement.

Sweden

In Sweden, Pentecostalism is growing strongly, led by Lewi Pethrus (1884-1974), originally a Baptist. Within hardly 15 years approximately 500 churches were founded, with missionaries all around the world. The Swedish Pentecostal churches, especially in Stockholm, were successful and known all over Sweden in their ministry to alcoholics and homeless. Alcoholism was at that time a deep-rooted epidemic. The Swedish Pentecostal movement banned the use of alcohol in its own ranks, especially in public, to not bring former addicts into temptation.



ninety years old Lewi Petrus was still preaching (1974)

Lewi Pethrus about his role in the spreading revival: "If farmers take water to their cows on the land, they take a barrel, that they put on a car. When the road gets bumpy, the water starts to lap violently. Then they put a board in the water, so that it does not spill. I am that board."

Impulses after the second world war

After the second world war new impulses came from different sides. Many Pentecostal Christians came from Indonesia after this nation obtained its sovereignty at the end of 1949. You can describe this as a boomerang effect of previous mission from the Netherlands. In the fifties several couples came from Sweden. After consultation with the leaders of the

Dutch Pentecostal movement they start to work in the north and south east of the Netherlands, where there were not many Pentecostal churches yet, and in the Northern part of Flanders. In a dream Stig en Tonny Sagstrom became a vocation for Asia. But in 1954 the family Sagström came to live in Arnhem NL and they traveled together with Wendel Malm-

ström in the East Netherlands. They found small separate prayer groups of mostly Indonesian (...!) background and brought them together in order to organize and make them grow. Under broad media attention the evangelist T.L. Osborn in 1958 came to the Netherlands. He organized mass meetings and prayer for the sick. A revival followed in the Netherlands,

Start in Deventer

In an attempt to start the first Pentecostal congregation in Deventer, Stig Sagström (1921-1993) called at the door of the Deventer family Croiset van Uchelen (later one of the first elders, Uncle Ot and Aunt Dee) who were praying at that moment with the Zijlstra family and some others.

In the year of Osborn the first tent campaign was organized by Stig Sagström at the New Market in Deventer. After a church was founded in Arnhem and Nijmegen, in May 1960 officially the "Filadelfia Pentecostal Church in Deventer" was founded. Filadelfia is the name of one of the seven churches in Revelation and in Sweden a common name for Pentecostal churches. A few years later from Deventer the Filadelfia Church was founded in Apeldoorn, which after some time became independent. In the sixties several editorial initiatives led to a modest publishing activity. The best known examples are the nationally distributed children's magazine "De goede Herder" (The Good Shepherd) and the widely-known national magazine for the youth: "Jong en Vrij" (Young and Free). These two

Diverse Pentecostal flavors: During the fifties, different leaders within the Pentecostal movement gave their own shape to the Pentecostal Faith. Filadelfia Deventer has aligned itself to this day with the world's largest Pentecostal movement "the Assemblies of God," in the Netherlands represented by the VPE. Because of his wide contacts in the Netherlands, Stig Sagström has been the only non-Dutch chairman of the precursor of the VPE: the Brotherhood of Pentecostal Churches, in 1962-1967.



widely read newspapers were later independently managed by foundations elsewhere in the Netherlands. In the early years, various church halls and rooms were rented, until a small hall was purchased in the "Walstraat" (Wallstreet). A few

years later, this became a favored spot for the expanding Rabobank (a cooperative bank institution) and so Filadelfia was bought out with very well and could buy a much larger building at the "Schurenstraat".

Brothers and Sisters. Until the seventies everyone was called brother and sister, the suffix was a first or last name. This label "Brother or Sister" under each other was often used in the presence of "outsiders", as evidenced by the following true story. Once Br. Sagström (otherwise known as Uncle Stig) surrounded by a small army of brothers went to the Opel car dealer Boeve at the Hoge Hondstraat. The seller of the car was surprised at the frequent use of the title brother amongst the buyer and his "advisors" and confessed much later that he thought it to be a little sectarian.

Blossoming Period

Early seventies a new revival started, now from the world of hippies, called the "Jesus Movement". Stig Sagström organized tent campaigns for many years in the center of Deventer with the help of this movement and the church continued to expand.

For many years weekly markets were visited from Filadelfia Deventer to sell Bibles and evangelical books and of course to make local contacts in order to form churches, which were led out of Deventer. Vriezenveen, Nunspeet, Lelystad, Zwolle, Nijverdal, Epe, Rijssen, Zutphen, Holten and Raalte, all cities and villages in the mid-eastern part of Holland are examples of these outreaches. Besides Stig Sagström a team of three full-time evangelists was formed. The family Sagström Sr. was from beginning to end entirely supported by the Pingstkyrkan Filadelfiaförsamlinge Lycksele located in Lapland, about 750 km above Stockholm. The family of Thomas Sagström was maintained by Sweden as well. The two evangelists, Roy Pietersz, now a missionary in Austria, and Danny Hempel, were supported by Filadelfia itself. Partly supported by Sweden in the mid seventies an evangelical bookstore opened in the "Kleine-Overstraat". Four years later a coffee shop staffed by members of the then youth group, is opened in

the building next door. Opening a coffee shop was an effective means of outreach in those days nationwide.

We regularly received enthusiastic speakers and teachers from Sweden. At the other hand individuals and groups went to Sweden every year. The meetings on Sunday were generally very lively. After a few songs from the songbooks "Glory

day services. The prayer meetings, initially on Tuesday evenings, were attended by 40-50 persons. People literally went on their knees after a lot of colorful cushions were distributed. Almost every week there were open air outreaches in the city. Revival songs (Nos. 1-51) were sung interspersed with testimonies. Many youth groups sent outreach teams to pop concerts such as on Ascension Day in Lochem and the concerts at Pinkpop.



Klokken" (Glory Bells) or "Johannes de Heer" and sometimes a testimony, the sermon lasted about an hour, and then, depending on the message, 'the Spirit fell', especially if it was a Swedish sermon. Some found it too noisy, it certainly was lively; the Spirit often worked vigorously and added slowly but surely souls to the church. Late seventies about 150 people attended the Sun-

There were two split-off groups: in the sixties a group broke away and joined the already existing Full Gospel church called "de Bazuin" (the Trumpet). From the seventies a positive collaboration with this church has come into being. In 1979 a group that met in Raalte, a village on 20 km distance of Deventer, separated and fell apart a few years

Move to the Oase (Oasis)

For some time de "Schurenstraat" was too full and we started to look for another church hall. This was found in the building "the Oase" (Oasis), which was bought in 1984 from the Dutch Reformed church. Within weeks the Oase with its more than 200 seats was completely filled; at that time a higher seat density was allowed than now in 2010. Gradually the era Sagström ended, this also reduced the Swedish influence in our church. Tomas Sagström became pastor in 1982,

and handed the pastor's staff to another evangelist, Leo den Hertog took over in 1987. The bookstore was closed for financial reasons and also the coffee shop closes. The board became more and more a weakness in the Filadelfia church and this culminated in the crisis of 1995; help was received by the Brotherhood of Pentecostal Churches, who appointed an interim pastor. Unfortunately, this led to a new, final split round his deposed pastor. This ultimately led to two



new Pentecostal churches in Deventer: the Banier (the Banner) led by Ronald and Joke Tan and the Fontein (The Fountain).

Recent years



The open air theatre "the real story of Christmas" complete with livestock has been played several years on the exit of the Charles Dickens festival weekend in Deventer with about 150.000 visitors annually. The play not only sets the story straight, but shows the moment the holy spirit comes over Mary in order to carry the worlds saviour inside of her.

The Filadelfia Church needed time to recover and this happened under the leadership of a couple, Ronnie and Claire van Norel, and since 2000 through a team of elders. The relationship with pastor Den Hertog and his wife was restored as well. Meanwhile, in spite of all the complications, from around 1990 a large and active youth group formed under the leadership of Giovanni Veldhuis. From the mid nineties, this group has been active in the youth centre the Base at the Brink, the big market place in the centre of Deventer, owned by the Christian Reformed Church. From here, led by among others by Henri and Joke ten Napel, many activities developed in smooth and cordial coo-

peration with several other churches and the Christian organization Agape. Some examples were the mega events, where in a large part of the Brink sports are organized with evangelical input, the contributions to the Charles Dickens weekend (see photograph above, on the left), and the performances Dolorosa at Easter (see photo above at the right). The artistic brain behind the last two activities is Carla Veldhuis. Throughout the year there were several courses in the Base and activities for teenagers and students. In 2005, Rob and Desirée van Os became leading elders and church leadership was stabilized. On an average Sunday about 160 people visit the church in the



Dolorosa statues in a shopping street to give attention to the since 2008 annually performances of the Easter drama take place in the municipal, Bergkerk" (mountain church), a former historical church. Seventy volunteers from various churches contribute to this special event that every year is attended by about 1500 spectators.

"Rivierenwijk". In this suburb of Deventer that out of social reasons will completely change over the next years, the church is looking forward to a new period of blossoming and spiritual fruitfulness.



Rob van Os

For contact about this article:

Carl Koch

kochbodem@eurolab.nl

tel. + 31 570 655643

Pinkstergemeente Filadelfia
Grevelingenstraat 1
7417 TA DEVENTER NL

www.filadelfiagemeente.org



Sources:

- Enquist, Per Olov, "Lewi's Journey, Norstedt Forlag, Stockholm 2001," Lewi's Journey "(transl. by Tiina Nunnally, 2005," the journey of the predecessor, Ambo / Anthos Publishers, Amsterdam NL 2003.
- Laan, C. and P.N., "Pentecost in Motion", Ed. J.H. Cook, Kampen NL 1982.
- Laan, Cees van der and Paul, "When the power of God fell upon me," Cook Publishers, Kampen NL 2007.
- Liardon, Roberts, "The Azusa Street Revival, When The Fire Fell", Destiny Image Publishers, Inc.; Ship Pens, PA, USA 2006
- Constitutions Decrees & v / h second Vatican Ecumenical Council, council to text 3, 4,7,12 blocks.