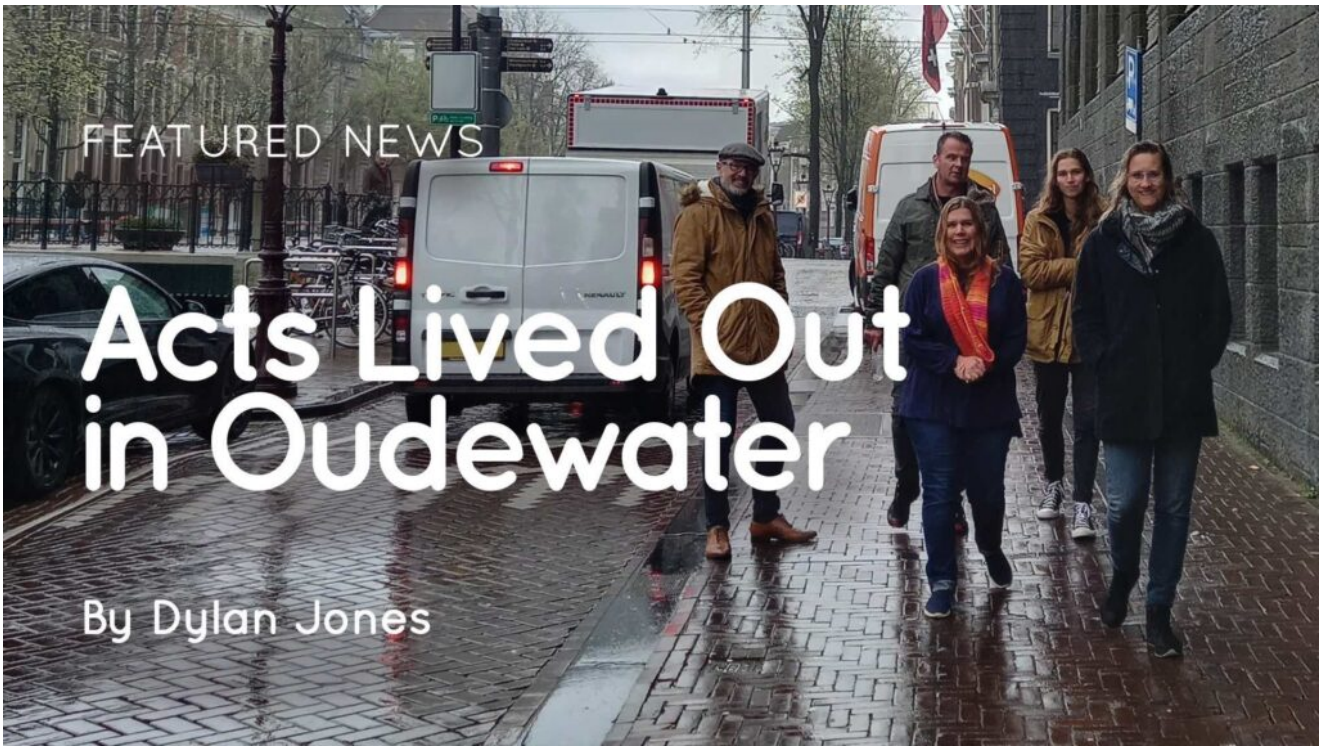
Acts Lived Out in Oudewater

Dylan Jones 14 March 2023



I'm currently sitting in Schiphol airport, at the Starbucks, reflecting on the time we have just spent in the Netherlands. What started as a small seed, planted by Rich and Sue, ended with us flying to the Netherlands to attend the European training time in Oudewater.
And while the conference was amazing in so many ways, from the preaching and teaching to the worship and ministry times, I found myself profoundly impacted by the small, everyday gestures and interactions we had with the saints. Let me share a few.

> **Their home became our home, and our hearts were joined to their hearts.**

We felt so privileged to be hosted by Geaton and Berni, a young couple who had heard the voice of the Lord and relocated their lives, six months ago, from Stellenbosch to the Dutch countryside to support what was happening in Living Waters church, having never even been to Europe before. We were welcomed into their modest flat and given their bedroom while they slept on a sleeper couch in the lounge. We shared space, lots of laughter, delicious meals, and way too many Stroopwafels. Their home became our home, and our hearts were joined to their hearts. We were foreigners who found family (Acts 2:44-45).

We were invited to dinner with Rich and Sue on our last evening in town, which was one of the most impactful times of our trip. Caleb and Ewert joined us, and Ewert told us a bit of his story before dinner. On Sunday, at the conference, he had felt an overwhelming sense that he needed to stop studying and dedicate a year of his life to the Rooted Discipleship School in Benoni. Now that in itself is remarkable, but considering this was Monday evening and he had only felt the call on the Sunday morning, and would be leaving on Tuesday (the next day), it made it all the more amazing. After originally feeling to only leave in 4 weeks' time, he and others had felt an urgency in the Spirit for him to leave that week and start his journey of faith. As we sat around the table, he explained how everything had fallen into place: his boss had been understanding, his parents and family were understandably dumbfounded but ultimately supportive, and every detail had been sorted in only two days.

What was so special was that Ewert was leaving the next day, but still found time to fellowship with church family (he drove to Rotterdam later that evening to see his folks). We finished our meal, Rich led us in a Bible reading and we broke bread. As I sat at the table in a small country town in the Netherlands, I was struck but the mission of the Gospel. Around one table were South Africans, Britions and Netherlanders, all united around the body and the blood of Christ. Even now as I write, I'm filled with awe at this global family that we are all a part of, no matter where we are in the world.

> **It is incredible what can happen between people in a short space of time.**

After communion, we gathered around Ewert to pray, and there was something of a commissioning that evening – not by us, but by God – that this young man was being sent to learn, serve and mature, so that he could play his part in the Gospel story.
It made me think of Matthew 19:29, "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters of father or mother or wife of children or friends for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life."

We left excited at what God was doing, but sad that the next day we would be leaving. After packing, having a quick but memorable breakfast with Rich and Sue, it was time to catch the train to Amsterdam. It is incredible what can happen between people in a short space of time. As we stood huddled outside Woerden station in the freezing cold wind and rain, saying our goodbyes to Geaton and Berni, I was profoundly impacted and couldn't help thinking of Paul's departure in Acts (20:37). We all wept and prayed and wept and prayed. Some tears of sorrow – knowing that we were leaving, unsure of when we would meet again – but mostly tears of gratitude. Grateful to be partners in the Gospel, for the price this young couple had paid, for what God is doing in the Netherlands, and for what we had shared in.

> **…this doesn't just happen without faithful saints throwing their lives into the Kingdom.**

As I mentioned above, the conference was an incredible time – there was a sense that the whole room truly was devoted to the apostolic teaching and training. Ryan, Jonathan and Chris all shared amazingly well! We were encouraged to fill valleys, find joy and flourish, and Peter preaching a powerful word in Dutch was a highlight.

The book of Acts often came to mind while we were with the Dutch church. We felt the same sense of anticipation and expectation, and realised that this doesn't just happen without faithful saints throwing their lives into the Kingdom. I think in many ways the church in Holland is experiencing a revival – a profound move of God – that feels as simple and as complicated as a church's saints and leaders genuinely living out Acts 2:42-47, with an insatiable hunger to be led by the Holy Spirit.

Surely this is something we all desire.