

Report of a visit to partners in the USA

7-15 Nov 2018



1 Purpose of the USA visit

The purpose of the visit was to meet with partner institutions / associates of NetACT. NetACT has established relationships with most of the institutions and people that we visited. Drr Amon Kasambala, Devison Banda and Uma Onwunta were on similar previous visits with the then NetACT ED. The 2018 group was: Prof Len Hansen, Executive Director of NetACT, Rev Nico Mostert, NetACT Program Coordinator, Jurgens & Helen Hendriks. Len and Nico will be taking over my responsibilities (after the NetACT visits Helen and I visited our daughter who is on a sabbatical in Princeton). NetACT paid for the two first mentioned group members, I paid my and Helen's expenses).

2 Grand Rapids (Michigan State, MI) visits: 8-10 Nov

Dr Gary Bekker who served in different capacities in the Christian Reformed Church and a dear friend since 2001, very ably coordinated all our visits, accommodation and transport in GRR – an invaluable service.

- 2.1 Cornerstone Trust:** we met with Jason Ferenczi, Tim Peterson and Margareth McKenzie (previously from Kenya & the RCEA). We discussed the NetACT Internet Portal as well as detail about our next funding proposal to CT. Frazer Jackson joined the discussion on Skype. A delightful lunch concluded a very productive meeting. We need to invite CT people to our July 2019 AGM meeting in Nairobi and the NIP training the following week (1-12 July 2019 at St Paul's University).
- 2.2 Christian Reformed Church:** We met with Dr. Zachary King, Director of Resonate Global Mission in the CRCNA building as well as with the Executive Director of the CRCNA, Dr. Steven Timmermans. At a later stage we met with Albert and Carolyn Strydhorst (Timothy Leadership Training Program Manager. Look at: <http://www.neerlandiacrc.org/missionaries.cfm>). The CRC / Resonate ministries supported every single AGM held by NetACT! We had evening meals with the Bekker and Timmerman families where a host of friends from Calvin College and Nagel Institute joined. We really felt welcome and blessed and part of a wonderful family. The basic themes in the discussions were exchanging information and discussing cooperation.
- 2.3 Calvin Theological Seminary** President Jul Medenblik and nine staff members met us at a restaurant where we had lunch and a delightful discussion on many issues. Spontaneous questions and answers across the table marked the fruitful discussion. A tour of the Seminary's buildings followed after which we met with Dr Joel Carpenter of the Nagel Institute. We asked him to advise us on the Andrew Murray Centre for Spirituality in Wellington SA (Huguenot College being a member of NetACT). At previous AGMs a request was put to the EC to try and get more venues in Africa where members can go for sabbaticals, writer retreats and research. Also requested was funding for such meetings. Nagel has a ministry in Grand Rapids that they call "The Prophet's Chamber." It serves this purpose. He shared information and possible funding resources encouraging us to go ahead with this crucial ministry in Africa.
- 2.4 Theological Book Network.** We met with Chief Operating Officer Justin Holford and Chief Executive Officer Jeff Clark who gave us a tour of their facility – a *huge* storehouse full of books (bigger than a soccer field). We take it that the ministry of TBN is known to the Exec ... if not, just Google it. In one of the most valuable two hour discussions of our visit in the USA we discussed the NIP (and missed Fraser Jackson and the librarians deeply). We agreed to have a Skype meeting in the first week of December 2018 with Fraser and librarians taking part. Their input in developing the NIP and lots of practical stuff were simply invaluable. They will cooperate with us in all ways possible.

3 Holland MI 10-12 November 2018.

Albert Strydhorst took us to Holland. NetACT Board Member for SPU, Kenya, Rowland van Es (and his wife Jane) took care of us in Holland, providing housing and making our appointments with Western Theological Seminary.

3.1 Western Theological Seminary. Jurgens spent a sabbatical at WTS in 1999 and has a longstanding personal relationship with missiologist Prof George Hunsberger (David Bosch and Lesslie Newbigin scholar), now retired (we had a wonderful dinner with him and his wife). NetACT is well known at WTS, one of the prominent seminaries of the Reformed Church in America. We went to church at “Third Reformed Church” and spent Monday morning meeting with staff at WTS, amongst others Dr. Ben Conner (practical theology) and Academic Dean Alvin Padilla. We attended Chapel service, led by students, and explored WTS’ Library and facilities. Some interesting info:

- They have a graduate Certificate in Disability and Ministry that can be taken online or in residence. All courses are transferable to a Master of Arts or a Master of Divinity degree.
- They offer a Master of Arts program in Christian leadership that can be followed on campus, online or in a blended way.
- They offer a ThM program for people from developing countries that is financially 80-100% covered by a scholarship.
- One can specialise in church planting & multiplication ... in online distance learning programs.

We were impressed by the way in which their programs were “head and heart” based. WTS is a good example of a seminary where constant curriculum development is taking place. Impressive. The office has brochures and info on what they offer. Ask!

3.2 Visit to Ron Hartgerink and his family

From point 6 in the 2018 NetACT AGM minutes:

Dr Ron Hartgerink, one of the founding members of NetACT whose family trust supported the network financially for the first six years of its existence, has Alzheimer’s disease and now needs daily care. We ask for everybody’s prayers in support of Ron, his wife Barbara and the family. His son Kevin now stays with them and helps Barbara to meet his needs. The NetACT Office keeps in touch with the family.

Decision: *The meeting accepts the suggestion from the floor that the Programme Coordinator visits the Hartgerink family during his visit to the USA in November in order to express NetACT’s best wishes to the Ron and his family and to assure them that they are in our prayers during these trying times.*

We spent the most of Sunday, after the church service, with the family in South Haven (where they stay). Ron remembers NetACT! He recognized photos. We shared NetACT stories with his wife, sister and son. It was a rich and heart-warming afternoon greatly appreciated by the Hartgerink family and all of us. Ron’s son, Kevin, took care of our transport to Chicago.

4 Chicago: 13-15 November

4.1 Tyndale House Foundation: CEO Mary Kleine Yehling and staff met us at their Head Office in Wheaton. Jeremy Taylor, board chairperson, took part in some of the discussions. The agenda covered the following:

- 1 We reported about the developments in Angola regarding the Kinkuni skill-training seminary.
- 2 The African Christian Leadership project topped the THF discussion list. The book, website and NetACT helping with follow-up work at our regional workshops were the topics. A filmed Interview took place where the three of us shared about the ALS, NetACT and leadership development. We also volunteered to help with getting help in doing Portuguese translations for the website.
- 3 NetACT Internet Portal report on the progress thus far and the next step to train librarians and staff on how to use the NIP. We explained the planned regional meetings of 2019. The regional NIP training session in Angola (24-28 June at ISTEEL, Lubango) was discussed in more detail because we can use that occasion to give detailed feedback and training to the Angolans that helped with the ALS project. Parallel to the NIP training we want to have a four day training workshop that will deal with a number of urgent topics: African Public Theology, Community development, curriculum development and the ALS research and how to make use of the website.
- 4 We discussed collaboration between NetACT and the French speaking countries and seminaries. Three important French seminaries are meeting May 18, 2019 in Ghana. We suggested that Frazer Jackson and

Sunday Agang represent NetACT at that meeting. Library cooperation and Public Theology are high on the French agenda. We planned a follow-up skype meeting with THF, Sandy Ayer, and Frazer in the first week of December 2018.

- 5 We discussed the NetACT African Public Theology project and THF funding it.
- 6 We also discussed sabbatical, writer and research scholarships for the Andrew Murray Centre of Spirituality.

4.2 **Media Associates International. CEO, John Maust and Ramon Rocha.** THF introduced us to MAI. This organization specializes in training local people to write and address contextual issues as well as all aspect of publishing and editing. They conduct training conferences and retreats all over the world. A workshop focusing on Africa is planned for March 2019 in Ghana. Len Hansen wants to attend this workshop. NetACT is now on their mailing list. We will communicate important events to our members. <https://littworld.org/>

4.3 **Oasis Publishers (of the African Study Bible), CEO Matthew Elliott.** The NetACT Office helped Oasis in getting African writers / contributors for the ASB project. <http://oasisint.net/africa-study-bible/>

Our discussion dealt with the following issues:

1. NetACT can help to promote the usage of the African Study Bible at training events and seminars across Africa. Oasis will provide the ASB at subsidized prices. They developed outstanding training material (We received it ... it is really good! ASK!).
2. Oasis would like to do book projects with NetACT / the cluster universities. One possibility that the NetACT Office suggested was on Youth Ministry.
3. Oasis would like to investigate translating the ASB in Portuguese. We promised to get in touch with North West University in this regard.
4. We discussed the important role of women and the Women's Guild in Africa. Matthew sent us a Bible Study on James based on the ASB. We promised to share / promote this recourse as widely as possible among our members. It is outstanding material ... all aspects of the program or course is available!

We stayed in the lovely home of Ed and Virginia Elliott that took care of all our needs and delivered us early Nov 15 to the airport.

Concluding remarks:

We could hardly believe it, but every visit exceeded our expectations. NetACT have very good associate members and friends.

Early snowstorms took everybody by surprise. It was cold and we has some tense moments when all the New York flights were cancelled on the 15th.

People have faith in our network.

The three of us enjoyed working together, we feel like a good team even though Jurgens will become less involved.

We are thankful for the doors God opened and is opening. It was a privilege to represent the network.

Jurgens, Len & Nico

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