



# Recognizing faults and taking responsibility

01.12.2020 | Protestant Church in The Netherlands

**About recognizing faults and our responsibility for the future. Statement by the Protestant Church in The Netherlands.**

### Preface

A 'Declaration of acknowledgement and our responsibility for the future' is finally here. For too long, this declaration on the role of the churches in and immediately after the Second World War in relation to the Jewish community in The Netherlands has been delayed. Now is the time, over 75 years after the liberation, following a period of unimaginable oppression and destruction of living Jewish communities.

In this brochure, you will find the statement of the Protestant Church to the Jewish community in The Netherlands, followed up by an explanation. There's a short article on apologizing and confessing guilt. It is set in a historical context, looking at the role of the Nederlands Hervormde Kerk, the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland and the Evangelisch-Lutherse Kerk in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden, the predecessors of the Protestant Church in The Netherlands, in and immediately after the Second World War with regard to the persecution of the Jews.

This is a moment of reluctance, modesty and an outstretched hand to the living Jewish communities. It is our desire to continue on the path we have already taken together, so that we can get to know each other better, strengthen each other, support each other where necessary and grow in friendly relationships. All this in a deep desire to be meaningful in society and to make a positive difference.

*On behalf of the General Synod of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands*

**Rev. Marco Batenburg, preses**

**Rev. René de Reuver, scriba**

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### **Statement by the Protestant Church in The Netherlands - about recognizing faults and our responsibility for the future**

*Kristallnacht commemoration, 8 November 2020*

Also at the end of this 75th year of our liberation, the Jewish community of The Netherlands will meet in Amsterdam for the November Pogroms Commemoration. On the night of 9 to 10 November, 1938, the unscrupulous mechanical murder campaign, which killed six million Jews in the following years, began with a first pogrom. But as Abel Herzberg wrote in his diary from Bergen Belsen: There were not six million Jews murdered; there was one murder, six million times. Other groups were also excluded, taken away and murdered.

The vastness of the sorrow the Shoah brought to the Jewish community and the depth of the pain felt by its survivors is inconceivable. A pain that will be carried and experienced by next generations. It is in recognition of that sadness and that pain that the Protestant Church in The Netherlands is addressing the Jewish community in our country. Never before has the Protestant Church sought dialogue with our Jewish interlocutors in this way. This taking place only in the 75th

year of liberation is late. We hope it won't be too late.

The Protestant Church in The Netherlands wants to acknowledge unreservedly that the Church helped to prepare the breeding ground in which the seeds of antisemitism and hatred were able to grow. For centuries, the gap that later enabled the isolation of the Jews in society in such a way that they could be taken away and murdered, was maintained. Even in the war years themselves, the church authorities often lacked courage to choose a position for the Jewish inhabitants of our country. This was in spite of incredibly courageous individual acts which, thank God, were also carried out by members of the churches. It is with gratitude that we remember those who had the courage to resist during the war.

The Protestant Church also recognises that the reception of the Jews who returned to our society after 1945 led to distressing situations. The problems encountered in returning war foster children to the Jewish community and in the restitution of property are painful examples of this.

In acknowledging all this, the church confesses guilt. Today, in particular, it does so towards the Jewish community. Because antisemitism is sin against God and against people. The Protestant Church is also part of this guilty history. We failed in speech and silence, in actions and omissions, in attitude and thought. May all the victims of the great horror have a memory and a name (Hebrew: Yad vaShem) in the heart of the Eternal One, the God of Israel. May all loved ones who are missed not be forgotten. As it is written:

*Earth, cover not my blood, and let my cry for justice find no resting place. (Job 16:18 N.I.V.)*

We take it upon ourselves to do all we can to further develop Judaeo-Christian relations into a deep friendship of two equal partners, among others, linked in the fight against contemporary antisemitism.

**General Synod of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands**  
**Dr. René de Reuver, secretary**

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*Please note:*

An accompanying volume was published to the declaration with further explanatory texts, among others:

- \* Some extra words about the statement, by dr. Eeuwout Klootwijk
- \* Excuses and faults recognized. A brief exploration, by dr. Eeuwout Klootwijk
- \* The predecessors of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands and the persecution of the Jews, by dr. Bart Wallet

You may [download this volume here](#).