

# International Churches in Time of Crisis

The outbreak of the coronavirus in 2020 turned the Netherlands and the rest of the world upside down. The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on international churches, particularly due to their often limited financial resources and the socio-economic background of their attendees.

## *Impact coronapandemic*

Churches had to transition to online services, and many church members experienced a lack of community and physical contact. This led to loneliness and an increased demand for spiritual and social support. Two pastors themselves succumbed to COVID-19, which had a profound impact on those churches.

## *Pillar of support*

Three years of the COVID-19 pandemic have left their mark on international churches. Regardless of how vital and resilient the churches may be, many are struggling to get back on their feet. Attendance numbers have changed, and financial difficulties have increased. The price hikes due to the energy crisis exacerbate this further. For many churches, the costs of accommodation have become nearly unbearable. The recent crises have tested the international churches in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, international churches have demonstra-

ted their value as a community and a pillar of support in times of crisis. Their role in providing spiritual and practical aid to those most affected deserves recognition and support.



## *Building Bridges*

The government relies on churches to face crises. This interaction between government and church has always existed and is also acknowledged by the government. What is not always clear is that the playing field is shifting. While established Dutch churches are primarily shrinking, there is growth in international churches. With their more than a million visitors, international churches represent a large potential and serve as an important bridge to people with a migration background who are difficult for the government to reach.

## *Partnership*

Due to their crucial role in society, it is necessary for international churches to be visible as partners of the government. This visibility should be reflected in laws, regulations, policies, and representation. Because of the extensive reach and position of international churches at the heart of crises, it is important for the government and politics to see SKIN as a dialogue partner before and during impactful crises and key moments in society, and to embed this in consultation structures. SKIN is a dialogue partner at the national level, and SKIN-Rotterdam at the local level.



### **SKIN-Rotterdam** (Samen Kerk in Nederland)

*SKIN-Rotterdam (Together Church in the Netherlands) builds bridges and gives voice to the international churches. It does this by representing the interests of the international churches in Rotterdam and surroundings, giving advice and information and organizing activities and projects for the strengthening of the international churches, their members and their environment.*

