

## AMSTERDAM HISTORICAL WALKING TOUR

You are about to visit some sites of interest to Baptists. On Saturday afternoon, 25 July, volunteers are waiting for you to point you in the right direction or answer any questions you might have. You may visit the stops in any order you like. If you see many people at one stop, please visit another stop and return later. The four sites are all within walking distance from each other. Please, note that the Singelkerk will close at 17.00 hrs. So, if the Singelkerk is your last stop, make sure you get there in time. Enjoy your afternoon as you walk where our fellow Baptists lived, worked, and worshiped 400 years ago!

### *How to get to the City Center from the EBF Convention Center Venue:*

**Tram 4** leaves from RAI station (beginning point) and takes you all the way to Central Station. The best tram stops to exit are Rembrandtplein and Spui/Rokin (see map). To get back to the RAI, take tram 4 in the direction of RAI. All others begin the tour at the Dam (central Cathedral in City Center).

### **The Nieuwe Kerk**

Arrive at the Dam and face the monument (the white pillar). The Palace is located behind you and the Nieuwe Kerk is to your left. First built in 1408, the Nieuwe Kerk survived three major fires, the worst one in 1645 which left the church without its roof and severely damaged its interior. During the 1578 iconoclasm, Reformed believers robbed the church of much of its Roman Catholic interior. Until December 1865, many Dutch heroes like naval officers Michiel de Ruyter and Jan van Galen, and authors and poets P. C. Hooft, Joost van den Vondel, and Isaäc da Costa were buried in the Nieuwe Kerk. The church has served as coronation site of all Dutch monarchs, beginning in 1814. Royal weddings have taken place here as well. Today, weekly church services are no longer held in the Nieuwe Kerk. Instead, the church has become an exhibition site, featuring a museum shop, café, and reception hall.

John Smyth was buried in the Nieuwe Kerk September 1, 1612. The fee for his burial was paid September 8 as his burial entry tells us. At that time, the church still had two cemeteries located outside the church on the Dam. We do not know whether Smyth was buried inside the church or at one of these cemeteries. Only those who could afford it were buried inside the church, either in their family chapel or their family grave. An estimated 10,000 people were buried permanently inside the Nieuwe Kerk with four to five caskets stacked on top of each other. In the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the two cemeteries outside the church were cleared for the expansion of Amsterdam's city hall. The last burial inside the church took place December 30, 1865. Starting January 1, 1866, it was forbidden to bury people inside the church. Health concerns contributed to this city hall decision: it was believed the decaying corpses could still spread viruses and illnesses. Also, during the hot summer months the stench of the corpses was almost unbearable.

The major renovation of the church between 1959 and 1980 called for the clearing of nearly all graves inside the church. Many tombstones were replaced with thinner stones so floor heating could be installed. During the summer of 2009, the Nieuwe Kerk has no special exhibition. Visitors may tour the church after paying the admission fee of €4 - to

help defray the cost of maintenance. You may also visit the museum shop free of charge from where you have a nice view of the interior of the church.

Did you know the Dutch expression "rijke stinkerds" ("rich stinkers") originated with people buried in churches? As mentioned, only the rich could afford to be buried inside the church. During the hot summer months, the stench of their corpses was horrible. Common people, therefore, referred to them as "rijke stinkerds."

Nieuwe  
Kerk



Burial entry John Smyth (halfway down the page; original from Amsterdams Stadsarchief)



### English Reformed Church

The English Reformed Church is located within the Begijnhof. The first church in the Begijnhof was consecrated in 1419 and provided a place of worship for the lay community of nuns, the Begijnen or Beguines, who lived within the circular court. The wooden church, along with most of the Begijnhof and a significant part of Amsterdam, was burned down in the fire of 1421. Towards the end of the fifteenth century, the Begijnhof and its chapel were rebuilt in brick and stone. During the Reformation the church was closed when the city fathers disallowed all but Reformed worship. The building lay unused for some time, except as a storehouse and wash place for the Begijnhof.

When English-speaking worshippers in Amsterdam petitioned for a place in which to worship, the city fathers decided to give them the use of the redundant building in the Begijnhof. The first service took place in February 1607, shortly before John Smyth and Thomas Helwys arrived in Amsterdam with their group. The building was extended in the latter part of the seventeenth century, and officially became the property of the congregation in 1812. Its layout was changed in 1912 and it was restored in the 1970s. A further major restoration of the foundations and renovation of the inside of the church was carried out in the summer and autumn of 2005 (above information from the English Reformed Church).

Inside the church, visitors will see the plaque commemorating Ainsworth, Johnson, Robinson, Brewster, and Bradford. All were Separatists, meaning they had left the Church of England, and fled to the Netherlands at different times, starting in 1593. Johnson and Ainsworth led the Ancient Church in Amsterdam. In Amsterdam, Johnson, who was Smyth's tutor while at Cambridge, had some fierce arguments with John Smyth over church government.



The group formed around Robinson was part of a Gainsborough congregation from England led by John Smyth, which split about 1607 when it became too dangerous for such large numbers to meet together. Part of the group remained in Gainsborough and was led by Smyth. The other part, led by Robinson, moved to Scrooby Manor. William

Bradford and William Brewster were both members of the church at Scrooby. This church migrated to Amsterdam about 1608 under the leadership of Robinson, and then to Leiden, possibly due to conflicts with the Ancient Church and the Smyth group. The Robinson church then became the nucleus of the Pilgrim Fathers who sailed for the New World in 1620. Ainsworth, Johnson, Robinson, Brewster, and Bradford were apparently not official members of the English Reformed Church, since this church had a different minister at that time, and Ainsworth, Johnson, and Robinson remained ministers of their respective churches. However, along with Smyth and Helwys, they were likely in contact with the English Reformed Church as it provided a haven for all religious refugees from England and Scotland.

You may visit the Reformed Church of England free of charge. Their knowledgeable tour guides will gladly assist you – they are already waiting for you!