

Klein portret Evert Van de Poll

By Jeff Fountain

Evert Van de Poll (1952) is pastor, musician, writer, teacher and developer of new Church initiatives. In one respect he may be called 'atypical evangelical'. Someone once said: Catholics see forests, Protestants focus on trees and evangelicals only on branches. That is, for Catholics, the (Roman) church is a world church (the 'forest'). Protestants have traditionally been part of national churches ('trees') while the focus of Evangelicals is usually the local church community ('branches') Evert sees forests next to branches and trees. From his experience in various European countries he has a view on the cultures and societies of the entire continent and on what interconnects them.

In his teaching and publications, such as *Europe and the Gospel* (London, De Gruyter, 2013), he focuses on Europe as a specific context for the communication of the Gospel. European societies and cultures are more shaped by the Bible and Christianity than any part of the world, and at the same time more impacted by the abandonment of the Christian religion than any other region of the world. Bringing to light this paradox, Evert shows that it is the key to understanding the history, cultural dimensions and secular / religious developments of Europe.

In his books (Dutch, English and French), Evert treats a wide range of subjects: baptism, evangelical liturgy and music, the relationship between Israel and the church, the Messianic movement, the feasts of Israel and their significance for Christians, and missionary themes such as the social mission of the church, Christian and environment, Christian and political, integral mission, current developments in the intercultural mission.

Raised in the village of Oldebroek (in the province of Gelderland), Evert studied piano and organ at the Conservatory in Zwolle. After that, he and his wife Janna studied at the Birmingham Bible Institute and at the University of London. Later he continued his theological studies at the University of Utrecht (doctoral and ecclesiastical exam in 1983), and the Evangelical Theological Faculty of Leuven (PhD, 2008).

From 1976 to 1982 Evert worked with the Near East Ministry and developed the concept of renewal conferences (Reveilweken). He was editor-in-chief of the evangelical magazine *Reveil* for a long time. In 1983 he launched the evangelical theological magazine *Soteria* with some friends.

As a consequence of a 'late calling' he became Dutch-reformed minister in Lelystad. At that time he took the initiative to form the Evangelical Network (*Evangelisch Werkverband*), to give more visibility to Evangelicals in the Reformed Church and promote their views and initiatives. This work continued and expanded after others took over the leadership after 1995.

He and his wife were involved in the formation of evangelical congregations in Voorthuizen (1976) and Lelystad (1995).

Since 1998 they have continued this line in France, both as pasteur of the French Federation of Baptist Churches. Their task was to help newly started communities develop further to become self-supporting churches within the Federation. Until 2012 Evert served as director of the École Pastorale, a program of ongoing education for pastors and other Church workers.

Having ended their task within the Baptist Federation, Evert and his wife Janna now live in Nîmes.

At the same time, Evert continues as professor of religious studies and missiology at the Evangelical Theological Faculty (ETF) in Leuven (Belgium). As such he participates in several missiological

networks. He regularly gives lectures and Masterclasses on society, religion and mission in Europe for various organizations, such as the Schuman Centre for European Studies.

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