



Vredenoord - Netherlands Senior Citizens' Home, April 2020.

Photo courtesy of Reinder Bruinsma.

Vredenoord

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Vredenoord, the Adventist nursing home in the Netherlands, started as a home for senior citizens operated by the Netherlands Union of Churches Conference. Today it is a registered nursing home operated as a supporting ministry and subsidized by government grants.¹

Origin

In the summer of 1950, a Netherlands Union Conference session convened at the recently acquired estate, "Oud Zandbergen," a site purchased with financial aid from the General Conference. An important issue on the agenda was: "A home for elderly brothers and sisters belonging to the Seventh-day Adventist church."² A deacon of the local church in Rotterdam, Mr. B.J. Muyselaar, had been key to establishing a home for elderly members³ At the time older members from his church were facing problems in institutions for senior citizens run by non-Adventists. The Adventist emphasis on the importance of health and the body being the temple of God, as well as the belief that the health message went part and parcel with the three angels messages, urged him to provide an environment for those elderly members in which they would have no problems obtaining an Adventist healthy diet, other people in the home smoking cigarettes and cigars, as well as Sabbath observance. The mission was to care for such members until the end of their lives. The union president, Pastor F.J. Voorthuis, had previously looked at the possibility of setting up an Adventist "Home for the Elderly" when the conference had bought Oud Zandbergen in 1948.

The Netherlands Union Conference session in 1950 approved the proposal to establish a home for elderly Adventist members. An anonymous donation from a member in the U.S.A. made it possible for the project to get started. Members throughout the Netherlands donated furniture, linen, and tableware. The "Vredenoord" villa was purchased in 1952 in the hamlet of Huis ter Heide, just outside the grounds of the Oud Zandbergen estate.⁴ The first six residents moved in while remodeling to make the villa suitable for multiple occupancies was still in process. Within a short time, leaders received so many applications that they had to add a new wing.

Organization

In 1952 the Vredenoord Senior Citizen Home became legally and administratively part of the Netherlands Union Conference. In 1956 administration decided to transfer the ownership of the building to the S.D.A. Benevolence Association. Due to a change in government regulations regarding associations, the S.D.A. Benevolence Association became the S.D.A. Foundation for the Care of the Elderly. In 1984 the government introduced new regulations which meant that people needing any type of nursing care had to live in an approved nursing home and not just a care home. In order to avoid residents having to move to another organization, the government created a special status for Vredenoord, i.e. a "national care home," a new and separate category of health care institutions. The operation of Vredenoord shifted from the S.D.A. Foundation for the Care of the Elderly to the "Nationwide Vredenoord Foundation."

In 1994 authorities granted Vredenoord the status of a "national care home" providing extra nursing facilities. Once again government regulations changed regarding how nursing homes had to operate. They now required that a board of directors manage the company with a supervisory board meeting held regularly to approve the

decisions made by the company's director(s). The Dutch government has since phased out care homes and nursing homes have taken their place. Vredenoord is now officially a registered nursing home.

History

The new home for elderly church members was a success. In 1956 administration purchased and remodeled the villa next to Vredenoord. A covered walkway joined the two buildings, allowing 80 residents to occupy the two adjoining structures. At the beginning the home gave residents support when they needed assistance with getting dressed and undressed or going out on their own. Soon some required more care and nursing which resulted in opening a special sick-bay with day and night care in 1961. It eventually resulted in providing full nursing care for chronically ill and terminal residents in 1963.

Government regulations regarding the admissions criteria changed. Anyone who had reached retirement age could be admitted to a home for the elderly. A local assessment committee had to judge whether or not a person was well enough to stay at home and live independently. If not, they would be eligible to enter a home for the elderly. If the individual later required nursing care, they would have to move from the home for the elderly to an official nursing home. Usually rooms in a nursing home were small with only space for a bed and a bedside cupboard instead of the bed-sitting-room with bathroom and kitchenette of a home for the elderly. Since Vredenoord was the only home for the elderly for Adventist members in the country, if a resident living needed nursing care it would mean transferring to a non-Adventist nursing home, because Vredenoord was not categorized as one. Chronically ill and terminal residents would have to leave their home in Vredenoord. But its mission had been to provide care and nursing in an Adventist environment until the grave.

In 1975, after years of negotiating with the national and local governments, Vredenoord received permission to demolish older parts of the building and build accommodations that would comply with nursing home regulations. In this way, the institution could officially provide nursing care to its residents and receive government subsidies. In 1978 the new building officially opened. It had room for 100 residents housed in small apartments as well as facilities for the physically and mentally disabled. A separate section cared for residents with dementia.

In order to meet the demands of ageing members, Vredenoord, in cooperation with a housing association, arranged for the construction of sheltered accommodations (42 apartments housing two people). It meant that members needing no care could live independently but still be close to services that could be provided in their own homes if eventually needed, thus helping them to delay having to move into a nursing home.

When Vredenoord received the status of "national care home providing extra nursing facilities" in 1994, it was possible for Adventist residents to remain in an Adventist institution until the end of their lives.

In order to meet new building standards regarding the size of apartments, rooms and bathroom facilities, the administration had part of the building demolished and re-built while the rest of the structure underwent a complete renovation. The remodeling commenced in 1998 and took until 2003 to complete. Volunteers created an Alzheimers' garden designed especially for the residents with advanced dementia. Now those individuals could safely be in the fresh air without the danger of wandering off and getting lost.

Health care in general, and for the elderly in particular, is a challenge now in every country, because of the short supply of nursing staff. At the same time the public calls for higher quality of care and more luxurious accommodation. The cost of health care for the elderly is therefore soaring, and it has become a challenge for a relatively small health care institution like Vredenoord to make ends meet.

Another challenge is how to preserve the Adventist character of the home. The government wants to reduce waiting lists so registered homes are not always able to choose who and when residents get admitted. Vredenoord has to accept a non-Adventist person if they are higher on the waiting list. It will alter the ratio of Adventists and non-Adventists in the home. The general shortage of nursing staff also has an effect on the number of Adventist employees. In order to protect the Adventist way of life within the home, its charter explicitly states the institution must be run according to the beliefs and practices of Seventh-day Adventists. The majority of the supervisory board must be members in good and regular standing of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The administration has established an identity committee consisting of Adventists to help oversee this.

The home celebrated its sixty-seventh anniversary in 2019. Everyone involved with Vredenoord is confident that they will be able to continue to provide a warm, safe, and caring home for those who desire to live in Adventist surroundings while they wait for the return of their Savior.

List of Directors

J. H. C. Klop (1953-1969); W. Eijkelenboom (1969-1981); J. P. F. van Vollenhoven (1981-1996); E. D. Weening (1996-2002); P. A. Koeweiden-Cane-Tuppen (2002-2017); G. S. Holterman (2017-2018); J. van Ginneken (2018-2019); P. E. Eikelboom (2019-).

Address

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The Netherlands

SOURCES

Algemeen Kerkbestuur, Notulen, September 29, 1952. Kept at Stichting Historisch Archief Nederlandse Adventkerk (SHANA) [Netherlands Union Historical Archives], Amersfoortseweg 18, 3712 BC Huis ter Heide, The Netherlands.

Rijn, Henk van and P. A. Koeweiden-Cane-Tuppen. *60 jaar Vredenoord*. [Huis ter Heide]: Stichting Historisch Archief Nederlandse Adventkerk, 2012. Kept at Stichting Historisch Archief Nederlandse Adventkerk (SHANA) [Netherlands Union Historical Archives], Amersfoortseweg 18, 3712 BC Huis ter Heide, The Netherlands.

"Verslag van de conferentie van de Zuid-Hollandse afdeling gehouden Mei 1948. Besluit no. 9." *De Adventbode, Gemeentebld van het Kerkgenootschap der Zevende-Dags Adventisten*, June 1, 1948. Kept at Stichting Historisch Archief Nederlandse Adventkerk (SHANA) [Netherlands Union Historical Archives], Amersfoortseweg 18, 3712 BC Huis ter Heide, The Netherlands.

"Verslag van de conferentie van de Noord-Hollandse afdeling gehouden van 1-3 September 1950 op het Landgoed 'Oud-Zandbergen' te Huis ter Heide (Utr.) Besluit no. 12." *De Adventbode, Kerkblad der Zevende-Dags Adventisten*, 46^{ste} jaargang, October 1, 1950. Kept at Stichting Historisch Archief Nederlandse Adventkerk (SHANA) [Netherlands Union Historical Archives], Amersfoortseweg 18, 3712 BC Huis ter Heide, The Netherlands.

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise cited, this article is written from the personal knowledge of the author who worked at the archives of SHANA 2009-2016 and at the archives of Vredenoord 2009-2020.
2. "Verslag van de conferentie van de Zuid-Hollandse afdeling gehouden Mei 1948. Besluit no. 9," *De Adventbode, Gemeentebld van het Kerkgenootschap der Zevende-Dags Adventisten*, June 1, 1948, 3.
3. "Verslag van de conferentie van de Noord-Hollandse afdeling gehouden van 1-3 September 1950 op het Landgoed 'Oud-Zandbergen' te Huis ter Heide (Utr.) Besluit no. 12," *De Adventbode, Kerkblad der Zevende-Dags Adventisten*, 46^{ste} jaargang, October 1, 1950, 5.
4. Algemeen Kerkbestuur, Notulen, September 29, 1952, 1. Netherlands Union Historical Archives (SHANA).

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