

Bruxelles-Woluwe church: 2023 building project

Resourcing gospel growth in Brussels

EPEBW is a Brussels based, French speaking Evangelical Church, committed to proclaiming the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ in obedience to the great commission of the Lord Jesus to his disciples to make disciples of all nations, teaching them to obey everything that he has commanded us.



WHO ARE WE AND WHERE ARE WE?

EPEBW was planted in 1979. It is part of a free church evangelical association of churches (the AEPEB¹, which is a member of the IFFEC²). Today, January 2021, our congregation consists of approximately 170 adults and 70 children and teenagers.

The church is situated in a highly built up residential area: Woluwe Saint Lambert is one of the nineteen districts (“communes”) of Brussels, which has a population of approximately 60,000 people. Within the commune there is a major university hospital and a university campus.

Brussels itself has over a million inhabitants. There are, of course, a wide range of churches catering to the many different nations and languages represented in Brussels due to its position at the heart of the EU. Many, however, do not share the same commitment to the authority of Scripture, to the biblical gospel and to a philosophy of ministry that has the proclamation of the word of God at the heart of its church life. The church therefore attracts people both locally, and also a good number from further afield.

Our church motto in French is “une église qui aime, qui sème et qui essaime” - which roughly translates as “A sowing church, a loving church, a sending church”. We aim, through sowing the word of God and through the love for God and for our neighbour that such sowing produces, to see believers won for Christ, equipped and sent out from amongst us to spread the good news of Christ crucified further afield.

WHY ARE WE EMBARKING ON A BUILDING PROJECT?

Praise God, the church has grown significantly in the past 5-10 years. Our current building can manage to sit 120 people very tightly packed in. We currently (covid permitting) operate 2 services back to back on a Sunday morning. However, the increase in numbers means the building is operating beyond its capacity - Sunday school classrooms are not fit for purpose, the kitchen is a small domestic one, there are too few toilets. We are in danger of infringing fire regulations for the number of people gathered on a Sunday morning.



¹ [Association des Eglises Protestantes Évangéliques de Belgique](#)

² [The International Federation of Free Evangelical Churches](#)

In the past 6 years, EPEBW has seen two church planting teams sent out from among us- one to plant in a neighbouring commune in Brussels, the other in a major university town half an hour from Brussels (Louvain-la-Neuve). We praise God for these churches, but we have seen that the pool of people willing and ready to join those projects from our church is very small (generally those who are socially mobile, younger, and well established in the faith).



Brussels sees many arrive in the city (and so the church) on short term contracts, and there are a large number of Christians at church either for whom French is a second language, or who arrive from other church traditions and discover evangelical convictions with us for the first time. Under God, therefore, we see the need to continue to disciple the growing number of new and young believers in our midst - not at the exclusion of further plants, but in order to properly resource such plants in the future.

WHY THIS PARTICULAR BUILDING PROJECT?

We have been exploring ways of either purchasing a new building or adapting our existing building over the past 3 years, but have to date either been blocked by planning constraints or by prohibitively expensive new building projects that local Woluwe authorities have proposed to us (in the range of 2 million euros) : Woluwe Saint Lambert is an area of Brussels with very high property rates³.

At the end of December 2020, we were made aware of a new project to transform a commercial office building in the area into residential apartments, but leaving a 2 floor equivalent commercial space at ground floor level. This space is big enough to plan a significantly bigger service area (roughly 300m²), with a balcony for extra seating. We anticipate being able to seat between 300-350 people - and to have a host of ancillary rooms and facilities equipped to cater for the needs of a church with a range of Sunday and mid-week ministry activities.

The building is situated on a major double avenue in a large modernised residential area - with excellent public transport links (a new Brussels tramline will run right next to the building by 2023). It is a 2 minute drive from a main Brussels motorway exit, 1,5 km to the university hospital and campus, and to a major Brussels shopping centre.

Our current building is already the registered headquarters of several Christian parachurch organisations - including the Groupes Bibliques Universitaires, the IFES affiliated student movement. This new and large building will doubtless serve several different strategic works of this sort, in addition to hosting conferences and outreach projects. As such, it will function as a hub of gospel activity in an area of the world (French speaking Europe) which critically lacks evangelical witness and is also (Brussels) so strategically placed to reach the many nations that gather there. Indeed, we are keen to encourage and support a conservative evangelical English language work to reach the many expat European professionals in Brussels whose operating language is English (diplomats, lobbyists, European civil servants).

³ Our church is formally accredited by the communes of Woluwe Saint Lambert and Woluwe Saint Pierre. We have good relationships with the authorities in both communes and have regularly exchanged with them in relation to our building constraints.

WHAT ARE THE COSTS?

The cost is significantly lower than other similar commercial spaces that we have looked at in the area because it is not a new construction but a refurbishment of an existing structure.

The asking price, including taxes, for the bare commercial space is 1,100,000€. Our initial estimate to then build the interior space (all interior work, including electricity, heating, fixtures, fittings and furnishing) is 300,000€.

Our current building is estimated to be worth between 670,000€ and 790,000€. If we sell the building for 730,000€, and we deduct both that sum and the current reserve of 150,000€ in our account, **we are seeking to raise a figure of 520,000€.**

HOW CAN WE SUPPORT THIS PROJECT?

We are conscious that such a figure remains a significant challenge - but we are persuaded that in our context in Brussels, this is an excellent opportunity, which will, God willing, secure a fit for purpose modern church building that will serve the cause of the gospel and the extension of God's kingdom for generations to come.

So do please pray with us that we would be able to raise the money required, and that the vision for the church and the use of the building would be realised, to the glory of God and the good of his people.

We are of course asking our own church membership to sacrificially back the project - **we have fixed an objective amongst the congregation to raise 100,000€ ourselves.** However, the percentage of those currently in our congregation with the ability to contribute significantly to our overall total is very small - Belgian evangelicalism, for so long considered a sect in a historic Catholic context, has made little inroads into winning the professional classes for Christ. For that reason, we are also asking you to prayerfully consider partnering financially with us in this project.

WHAT IS THE TIMETABLE?

We hope to place a formal offer by March 2021. To that end, we are seeking pledges by that stage from donors that will give us a first indication of the total that we may be able to raise. The initial work on the whole building complex is due to start in the summer of 2021, and the major construction work is projected to continue until mid-2022. Our own work on the interior would then take place until the end of 2022. We would hope in that time to find a buyer for our existing building and move to the new building in the course of 2023.

CONTACTING US

Our church leadership team, Stephen Orange (pastor/elder), Samuel Furfari (elder and president of the AEPEB), Benjamin Eggen & Adrian Price (assistant pastors), in addition to members of our church building committee would be delighted to speak further with you in relation to this project and to the ministry and vision of the church, or to explain in more detail the history and context of Belgian evangelicalism.

More specific technical information about the project is of course available on request.

www.protestants-bruxelles.be/projet2023

Avenue Slegers, 96, 1200 Bruxelles | info@protestants-bruxelles.be

Bank account : BE41 0012 3136 7510 (BIC: GEBABEBB) – Union Evangélique Woluwe-Saint-Lambert