

Hello,

You are about to visit four sites of historical baptist interest. You may visit the stops in any order you like. The four sites are all within walking distance from each other.

The Nieuwe Kerk is located at the Dam (Damplein)

The English Reformed Church is located at Begijnhof 48

The Singelkerk is located at Singel 452

The Bakehouse is located at Bakkersstraat (off of Rembrandtplein)

Enjoy your exploration as you walk where the first baptists lived, worked, and worshiped 400 years ago!

The Nieuwe Kerk is located at the Dam (Dam square)

When you arrive at the Dam and are facing 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 (a member of the Mennonite church), and Isaïc da Costa were buried

in the Nieuwe Kerk. The church has served as coronation site of all Dutch monarchs starting 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, the founding father of the baptist church, 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 17th 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. In June, the Nieuwe Kerk hosts The World Press Photo Exhibition 2025. Visitors may tour the church and exhibition after paying the admission fee. 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.”

English Reformed Church is located at Begijnhof 48

The English Reformed Church is located in 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 in the court around. The wooden church, along with most of the Begijnhof and a significant part of Amsterdam was burnt 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.” (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 the



Gainsborough congregation in England led by John Smyth. The larger group split when it became too dangerous for such a large group to meet together. The group remaining in Gainsborough was led by Smyth. Robinson became the pastor of the group that met at Scrooby Manor. William Bradford and William Brewster were both

members of the church at Scrooby. This church migrated to Amsterdam about 1608 from where Robinson led the church to Leiden, possibly due to conflicts with the Ancient Church and the Smyth group. The Robinson church 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.

During visiting hours, you may visit the English Reformed Church free of charge. Their knowledgeable tour guides will gladly assist you.

The Singelkerk is located at Singel 452

The Singelkerk was built in 1608 for the Flemish Mennonite congregation. The church was named Bij het Lam (At the Lamb) because the building next to it was the brewery Het Lam (The Lamb). In 1639, the Singelkerk was enlarged. The Waterlander congregation, with whom the Smyth group was in contact, did not meet at this church until 1668 when they merged with the Lamists. Until then they met at the church Bij de Toren (At the Tower).

The Lamists were progressive Flemish Mennonites who continued meeting at this address after a group of more conservative Flemish Mennonites, called the Zonists (the



Sunners), left and met separately at the church named Bij de Zon (At the Sun). Only in 1801 did the Lamists and Zonists reconcile and meet together at the Singelkerk. A stone in the façade of the church reminds of this merger. The text on this stone reads “amore et pace coniunctae” (joined in love and peace).

In 1615, the Waterlander congregation Bij de Toren grew due to the acceptance of the Smyth group. Already in 1610, Smyth had petitioned for recognition of his group as a true church. The Waterlanders informed other Mennonite churches of this request. Most churches turned it down. On his deathbed in 1612, the Waterlander teacher Lubbert Gerritsz urged the teachers and elders present to revisit the English request. Both Gerritsz and Smyth died that year. The Smyth group petitioned in 1615 to merge with the Waterlanders. The merger took place that same year.

The information found in the Singelkerk shows the (joint) histories of the Flemish congregation Bij het Lam and the Waterlander congregation Bij de Toren. A plaque shows the teachers of the churches, including those of the Smyth group.

Did you know that the Netherlands have many so-called schuilkerken (hidden churches)? During times of persecution, many churches made sure they could not be recognized as such from the outside.

Believers would meet at these churches without getting caught. The Singelkerk is one such church. Located on Oudezijds Voorburgwal 40, the Roman Catholic church Onze-Lieve-Heer-op-Zolder (Our-Dear-Lord-in-the-Attick) is another fine example of a hidden church.



Jan Munter's Bakehouse is located at the Bakkersstraat

Jan Munter (1570-c. 1620) and his wife Sara van Tongerloo (1578-after 1639) were important as well as rich members of the Amsterdam Waterlander congregation. A merchant and shipowner, Munter bought the bakery of the East India Company on May 18, 1610. Munter allowed the Smyth group to live, work, and worship in the bakehouse. The bakehouse gave its name to the street Bakkerstraat (Bakerstreet) which should have been named Bakhuisstraat (Bakehousetreet). Today, the Bakkersstraat still exists – it's the street to the left of the store Tante Poppy on the Rembrandtplein. If you walk down the street and turn left, you will see to your left the site of the former bakehouse (near Restaurant Portugalia).

After Munter died, his wife Sara sold the bakehouse to John Jordan from Wolverhampton, England, hence his nickname "the Englishman." In 1623, Jordan also bought an empty plot right next to the bakehouse. By that time, John Smyth had died (1612) and his group had merged with the Waterlanders (1615). The group, however, often met separately to worship in English. Jordan, who was a member of the English Reformed Church in the Begijnhof, allowed them to hold their meetings at the bakehouse. Several of the English lived in the houses surrounding the bakehouse. The English continued their meetings at the bakehouse until 1639 when their leader Thomas Pigott died. Then they met at the Waterlander church for worship.

Some interesting facts about the Munter family:

- Jan Munter's brother, Bartholomeus, also was a prominent merchant in Amsterdam. They were both born in the northern

province of Friesland. In 1616, Bartholomeus was baptized in the Waterlander congregation by the famous leader Hans de Ries. In 1621, Bartholomeus was found guilty of forgery (false coins) and was exiled for life.

- Jan Munter's son Joan (1611-85) left the Waterlander Mennonite congregation and joined the Dutch Reformed Church. In 1638, he became a Governor of the East India Company and in 1670, he became the first of the burgomasters of the Munter family.

View of the site of the former
bakehouse along the Amstel river.



Some Museums in Amsterdam (book tickets in advance to ensure your visit)

Rijksmuseum

Jan Luijkenstraat 1 (Museum district)

Van Gogh museum

Paulus Potterstraat 7 (Museum district, located between Rijksmuseum and Stedelijk Museum)

Anne Frank Museum

Prinsengracht 263