

## CHAPTER 4: GROWTH

These first years were a time of immense growth. Within 2 years we had our first full-time worker. Leen did not want to be full time himself as he had seen so many parasites who under the name of 'ministry', were only a burden for their churches. So he decided to stay like Paul: tentmaking..... and he remained a teacher during the day. After a few years, there was an office (we rented another apartment in 1973 for this purpose and that brought great relief for Leen and Ria's family life - to be able to separate office from family), there came several full-timers for bookings and for the new record-company (started in 1973, the step from Continental Singers concerts to the products of the Conti's was easily made and those sales provided much needed income; soon contracts were signed with the major American labels for distribution of all their products; so Continental Sound became the first christian record company for contemporary christian music on the continent) and we increased the number of concert projects (like the first European dance & praise project with Shekinah in 1974) besides the Continentals. The Continentals became incredibly successful (including a lot of TV-work). As in those early years all groups were American, Cam Floria could hardly keep up with the increasing demands Leen had created in Europe. Up to 6 summer-groups were a normal picture. For all those groups busses were provided, European roadmanagers were trained to guide the Americans, and national coordinators were trained, European promotion was developed as the American designs did not relate to the European mindset. This office was like a busy swarm of bees having soon 6 fulltime people and a circle of 30 directly connected volunteers for all types of services and help. This office also got as many requests for help from churches and national musicians, so during the year several seminars, workshops and training-days were organised and that all led to the need for a more ongoing form of communication so the in-house Dutch magazine SjoFar was created in 1974 and has since then come out almost every month till today. But not all was glory as success also makes enemies. Several church-leaders got a bit jealous on these newcomers Leen & Ria and their growing Continental empire. The same people who had been so against Leen in his teens opposed him again by writing now and then nasty articles about this so called 'ministry' in their magazines. One article had even a headline 'This can NOT be from God'. But local churches knew better, they saw the great and blessed results at concerts. At the concerts God was at work. Leen & Ria and their board decided not to act against those stupid narrow-minded articles, but win the war based on a solid theological debate and that became the reason to write solid studies and books about the biblical foundations for music and later all the arts. The first book appeared in 1975 and year after year more books came out and that silenced all the negative voices as they could not argue with the abundance of theological evidence that God is using all the arts. Today Leen has over 20 books in his name and Ria 5 books. 1974 was also an interesting year as it was decided to start with an artist-management organisation, who brought for a number of years, the leading artists to Holland and other parts of Europe like Choralerna, Jamie Owens, Barry McGuire, Second Chapter of Acts and so many more. In 1974 there was also launched as a new national event: every year a large christian contemporary music festival was held in the popular Ahoy-arena in Rotterdam. A highly innovative step. And 1974 was the start of the coming of the first christian rock band NEW HOPE consisting of professional ex-Conti's (later the name changed into Wings of Light). This rock group came every year till 1983 for a period of 3 months a year and has ministered to an incredible number of youth, schools, clubs, etc. This group created the breakthrough for any type of music on the continent. Finally (in 1974) due to the growth of the whole ministry and as result of the crises in their

personal life Leen faced the important decision: going full-time or quit as it was no longer possible to have two full-time jobs every day and being totally occupied every week-end with almost no possibility to be with the family or having a holiday. So that meant prayer, prayer and consideration. Going full-time meant another income added to the payroll of Continental Sound and would that work? It meant leaving the financial safety as a teacher and taking a step into the unknown..... Leen and Ria felt caught in the middle, but having just made it through their personal crises, they were not asking for another crises, so a decision had to be made. Leen overlooked his 5 years of creative ministry and you could be very thankful for all the innovative steps that had had an enormous impact on people and churches. So was it time to hand it over to others? Or did God have a plan? In these days God asked very clearly: *'Leen, do you want to take up this call for Me?'* It was not Cam or a church or other leadership that asked Leen and Ria to do this job, it was not a substitute for 'real work'. Looking back it seems that God had been watching the true motives in Leen's heart. Was Leen going for the success or would he beat the arrogance and would he go for the attitude and heart of a disciple, so that God really could use him. As this got clear, God intervened personally and Leen answered that call. That very special moment became later of enormous importance and help. So Leen quit his job at school and God became his new boss.