



Swiss Church News

Swiss Church in London
Eglise Suisse de Londres
Schweizerkirche in London
Chiesa Svizzera a Londra
Baselgia Svizra a Londra

Spring 2018

Dear Reader,

Every now and then I go to a café where I sit at the window front, drink a hot chocolate and write. Sermons, articles (like this one) and a lot of emails have been created like this. I like to look up from my computer and watch the world go by, finding inspiration in the continuous flow of life. On every face, young and old, life has left its traces. Every person has a story to tell. Our stories are interwoven and we are part of one big narrative: that of humankind.

The story of humankind seems to be at a low point. Many people feel that the world finds itself in a downward spiral, an on-going mess of violence, egotism, destruction and regression. The flood of information that reaches us every day from around the globe is impossible to digest and so hugely complex that we risk to either ignore it all together or to come to a rush conclusion based on doubtful information. Things are getting out of control and this perceived loss of control is traumatising for many. However hard we try to fix things, it seems we are only just about able to patch up the symptoms but fail to get to the roots and change things around for the better. Governments are visibly overwhelmed with the tasks ahead of them. Somehow we sense that we haven't hit rock bottom yet and that there is more to come. The world changes at a speed that makes it impossible to predict the consequences for our lifestyle. We will have to find new ways to make things work and we might do well to ready ourselves for more big changes.

Easter is approaching and I believe that the symbolism and message of Easter is today just as important as 2'000 years ago. Good Friday is the day when we remember that God has sacrificed his own flesh to die on the cross and suffer the pain of the world alongside humankind: the pain of despair, destruction, loss and death. Without the experience of Good Friday, there can be no Easter joy, without the reality of death no appreciation of the deeper meaning of life. Both are part of the

same narrative. We know deep in our hearts that the deepest lows and highest highs are both part of our individual stories as well as of the story of humankind. Flowers blossom in the desert, whilst rain forests are being destroyed. Love flourishes in war times, newborns die in their parents arms. Seemingly unsurmountable walls are broken down, new ones are built. Soldiers ready to shoot suddenly hesitate, people we trust turn against us. This is our story. This is the Easter story. I wish you all that the hope of Easter will prevail over the feeling of despair.

I would like to announce recent changes in our team. The Swiss Church team are looking forward to welcoming back Anina Smith who was on maternity leave for one year and will return to work two days a week as administrator and accountant from February. Sadly at the same time we will have to say goodbye to Colin McIntyre who covered for Anina during her leave. It was a pleasure to have him on the team. We will miss you! We want to thank Colin for his dedication and friendship and hope to see him back often.

I wish you, dear readership and friends, that you will never lose sight of hope in the ups and downs of life and that you will always be surrounded by people and communities who carry you through the rocky stages of life. Happy Easter!

Yours:

Rev. Carla Maurer

Editorial .p1

Latest News .p2

Greetings from Switzerland .p3

Focus: This is our story .p4

Art and community .p6

Announcements & Events .p7

Latest news

+ New trustee, Human Resources



Katrin Voegeli

“I recently moved to London from Zurich, where I grew up and lived for most of my life. I made this move to London following

a job opportunity in a development bank that allows me to combine my background in economics and finance with my desire to not only study but also support development and welfare improvement for people in developing countries. Based on that same wish to help and support others I also have pursued engagements in social organization to contribute to my local community for many years. Having enjoyed the work as a member of church council in my hometown in Switzerland, it came natural to me

to continue pursuing this engagement here in London as a member of the Consistoire at the Swiss Church and thereby contribute to my new community.

In assuming responsibility over Human Resources, I hope to build on my prior experience overlooking the team of catechists and youth worker. I hope to contribute to the Church and the Swiss Community through my background in the Reformed Church of Zurich, my motivation and occasional organisation of a Jass Abig. I look forward to working in the team and being engaged with the whole Swiss Community in London!”

From the Venue



Nat Breitenstein

The past year here for me has been full of learning

to understand what the Swiss Church in London is not only as a venue, a building and a place, but more importantly what it means to the people who inhabit it. This time has brought with it some challenges but also many wonderfully rich experiences. It has been amazing to meet and work with such a wide variety of people and to see that much of what happens here either helps to fund or in some other way enables people to help each other and themselves, as well as those far less fortunate.

I believe that for our hire clients knowing that their time here helps those who need it most is a great lure and can feel very rewarding to them. From my part I know that what I do when overseeing the myriad of events that take place here, managing the building and keeping it safe for all who use it is just that, incredibly rewarding.

The focus for me in 2018 will be to build on from what I have learnt and this coming year I intend to fine tune the balance between the internal and external uses of the space in a way that aims to minimise disruption and lessen any negative impact on those who need the space as a peaceful safe refuge while still finding ways to welcome new clients.

With this a decision has been made that from now onwards we will mostly restrict external venue hire from Wednesdays through to Saturdays while keeping Sundays through to Tuesdays exclusively for Church and Community work. I hope this decision will be welcomed by all.



+ A brief history of the Swiss Church

By Philip Maillardet

The Eglise Helvétique in London was founded in 1762 by the clockmaker François Justin Vulliamy and a group of fellow expatriates from Geneva, Vaud and Neuchâtel. Originally they rented a building in Castle Street (now lower Charing Cross Road) which had previously been used as a Huguenot chapel. Later in 1775 they were well established enough to have their own church built. This ‘Helvetic Chapel’ was in Stidwell Street, which was close to present-day Cambridge Circus. It was to be their home for the next 80 years. This part of London gradually changed in character, and so in 1854 it was decided to build another church not very far away in the newly laid out Endell Street. The architect was George Vulliamy, great-grandson of the Swiss Church founder. The outer shell of this neo-classical grade 2 listed building remains today, whilst an early 21st century renovation resulted in the current interior. So 256 years, three buildings, and 40 ministers later, and the Swiss Church is still a viable presence in

London. Perhaps Monsieur Vulliamy would be surprised?



Greetings from Switzerland

✚ Sabbatical



Rev. Stephan Degen-Ballmer

Twenty-four years ago my wife and I held a service in the Swiss Church in London as candidates for the ministry there. Yet in the end we realised the time wasn't right and that it was more convenient for us to work in a parish in Graubünden. To spend my sabbatical at the Swiss Church for three months is a wish coming true. My name is Stephan Degen-Ballmer. I am a Minister of the Reformed Church in Switzerland. With my wife Regina I work part-time in the parish Kilchberg-Rünenberg-Zeglingen, but I also work for the Church of the Canton Aargau in adult education where I also teach future teachers in religious education.

We live in a very small village called Kilchberg which is situated about 30 km south of Basel in

the Canton of Baselland. Our three children Jeremias, Kezia and Anna are between 20 to 24 years old and only the youngest, Anna, still lives with us.

As ministers in the Church of Baselland we are privileged to take a sabbatical every seven years. During this time we are free from all ministerial duties and can deepen our interests. I am very glad to be able to work at the Swiss Church during my sabbatical and I look forward to the projects suggested to me by Carla. I will mainly focus on adult education, for example follow up on the bible study course. Of course I am also interested in all the other events that the Swiss Church organises. But most of all I am looking forward to get to know a lot of people inside and outside your community and to dive in the life of the mega city of London.

My sabbatical begins on the 9th of April and will last until the end of June. I look very much forward to seeing you during this time!"



Claudia Strack, primary teacher

from Schötz near Sursee in the Canton of Lucerne, will be on a sabbatical at the Swiss Church from 10 April to 6 May. Her sabbatical is part of the Cantonal programme 'Seitenwechsel' that allows teachers to take off time from teaching and work in a different environment to gain new experiences. Claudia is particularly interested in the social activities of the Swiss Church and is eager to improve her English. She also sings in a church choir and enjoys being part of the church congregation.

This year the financial contributions towards the Swiss Church in London from the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches (Schweizerischer Evangelischer Kirchenbund) will come to an end. The Swiss Church would like to thank the FSPC/SEK and especially the Commission for Churches Abroad (CHKiA) for their commitment and support in the past decades.

Over the past years, we were able to build new relationships with churches in Switzerland to create ever closer links with our sister churches. We have established a vivid exchange with many church congregations back home. Every year we welcome a number of confirmation and parish groups here at the Swiss Church for joint projects ranging from learning about homelessness to meditation and pilgrimage in the city.

The Swiss Church also regularly welcomes interns as well as Ministers, primary teachers and church musicians on sabbaticals.



Last year, we have also received an increasing number of financial contributions from Switzerland for which we are incredibly grateful. We would like to thank the following churches for their support: Tablat-St.Gallen, Wil (SG), Gesamtkirchgemeinde Thun, Burg Stein am Rhein, Ermatingen, Fraumünster, Gundeldingen-Bruderholz, Kirchberg (Rombach), Ottenbach, Hettlingen, Kuesnacht, Laufenburg, Utzenstorf, Straubenzell, Kilchberg, Lauterbrunnen, Zürich Aussersihl, Fehraltorf, Rapperswil-Jona, Sursee, Friedenskirche Bern, Evangelischer Stadtverband Zürich, Landeskirche Aargau, Landeskirche St.Gallen and Landeskirche Bern-Jura-Solothurn.

We are looking forward to many more encounters here in London or in Switzerland!

The Swiss Church



This is our story

When I went to primary school, religious education was part of my school curriculum. As my hometown of St.Gallen was an ecumenically mixed city, there were separate classes for Protestants and Roman-Catholics. Children with no or other religious background (which weren't very many at the time) could either choose to join one of the classes or to be suspended. I loved the stories of Joseph and his brothers, Abraham's and Sarah's nomadic life, the dramatic escape from Egypt and the miracles performed by Jesus. My RE teacher was a kind and creative woman who loved teaching, and I remember tasting oriental food (I loved lentils as a child!), drawing, singing and staging theatre plays. I got to know the bible in a playful way.

As I grew older, I distanced myself from church. Religion was no longer a part of my identity and I was very critical of any institution that pretended to sell the truth. Whereas my critical spirit remains a part of me today, I rediscovered the depth of biblical literature that once inspired me as a child. Religious knowledge is indispensable to understand our own culture and the religion and culture of others. Whether we believe in God or not, religion is part of our cultural narrative. In order to understand the narrative of others and the importance it has, it is vital that we also understand our own – and this is especially important in a time of cultural diversification. It worries me that religious education slowly disappears from our school curriculum and this knowledge is getting lost. Today rather than thinking about narratives, we love to think about visions. Every church, every school, every company nowadays develops a vision paper and a strategy for the future. As vicars we are conditioned from the early stages of our training to think about visions. Of course there is nothing wrong with visionary thinking. The world needs people who think in new and creative ways, yet our future is also rooted in past experiences which will influence the way we do or interpret things. We need to acknowledge our story in order to be able to build the future.

Ever since I started working at the Swiss Church I was picking my brain how we could develop a vision for our diverse church in these rapidly changing times. There are so many different groups and people using the Swiss Church for various purposes, from Fashion labels to our Sunday congregation, from the homeless community to the Swiss community, dance classes and artist, all of them having their very own history with the Swiss Church. How can this all come together in one vision, I kept wondering? Until in November last year when I went to a training course in Switzerland with the intriguing title 'Storytelling'. I came home with the following core message: stop obsessing about vision and instead start talking about your story.

Our narrative is the collection of our stories with the Swiss Church and of our many different experiences we have with church and religion. Every congregation member, every guest, every visitor has a different story to tell and this makes us who we are. Some of our stories date back over eighty years, some are only a few days or weeks old. Some stories become part of the repertoire of our active narrative, other stories however remain untold, yet they are just as much part of our story. We can construct our narrative together by listening to the many stories, told and untold. They shape the identity of our church. Or as French philosopher Paul Ricoeur said: "The narrative constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or her narrative identity, in constructing that of the story told. It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character."

The history of Christianity goes back over 2'000 years – an incredible history! We are part of this ever-changing narrative which has been and will be influenced by massive social, political and cultural changes. There will be new people and groups creating their own stories with the Swiss Church and becoming part of our identity. Isn't this a great vision: to learn and listen to all the different stories – to become owners of our narrative – and let everyone become a part of it.



What is your story?

“The Swiss Church is a great community that nourishes me spiritually and makes me feel part of the church worldwide. I have rediscovered my Swiss background and had the chance to explore it in this multicultural and diverse setting.”

- Niccolò, Theology Student

“The Swiss Church played a huge role in my decision to study Theology and someday become a minister. It taught me what church can be if its members and friends are dedicated and creative. As a university student buried under a pile of academic texts I benefit daily from all the practical lessons I have learnt during my time at the Swiss Church, as they help me to put everything I am studying into perspective.”

- Lili, Theology Student

“The Swiss church is one of those places where the world around quiets down and it is easy to be at peace. I find it extremely important to have such places in a city. I Especially like the sense of community and cherish the friendships I have made along the way!”

James, Editor in Chief

“I believe some of the questions we ask ourselves in art are actually very close to those people ask when they come to church. How can we understand life? What are the valuable moments in our experiences and encounters? Coming to the Swiss Church with these questions allowed us to find a multitude of entry points to amazing individual realities.”

- Sara, artist

“Having been raised in an oppressive religious environment, I was surprised to hear that for people here at the Swiss Church religion was about having questions rather than definite answers. It made me question my own lack of faith. It's very philosophical.”

- Tyler, artist

“I have very fond memories from the 1960ies when the ‘jeunes romands’ and au pairs used to meet regularly at the Swiss Church. Fifty years on, there is still a strong bond between us even though things have changed a lot.”

- Fernande, Swiss Church congregation

“I was not looking for work in a Church but neither was it accidental that I've ended up here. I had been looking for change, to engage in something that had meaning and where I might be of help where it was needed. I wonder whether I found the Swiss Church or it found me!”

- Nat, Venue Manager

“As a family, we loved that our three boys were able to grow with the church, how welcome they were and how naturally they were integrated into the services. We were also delighted to be able to contribute to church life and the community by helping out in the kitchen and co-organising family events. We greatly miss everyone now that we have had to move...”

Rebekka, Swiss diplomat



Goldsmiths Exhibition

The Art Committee are delighted to announce this year's art exhibition in collaboration with Goldsmiths University of London. From eight applications that have been submitted, the Committee have chosen the following project:

Allusion to a Body no Longer Present, by artists Tyler Eash and Sara Rodriguez Curated by Camille Brechignac and George Watson.

The accretion of the work centres around an ongoing series of conversational interviews, conducted between the artists and various members of the Swiss Church community. These involve questions of legacy, impermanence and faith – what it might mean to be 'no longer present'. The community's

words, phrases, ideas weave together the fabric for a large scale performance that also incorporates sound and movement. In addition to the newly-commissioned artwork, the second-floor room has been re-imagined as 'The Conversation Room'. This space, curated to be 'cosy' and welcoming provides a neutral environment to discuss the work together, to reflect on the performances, or simply drink coffee.

1 - 16 March

Opening night: Thursday, 1 March, 16:00-20:00

For more informations and opening hours, visit the webpage: swisschurchlondon.org.uk/culture/goldsmiths-partnership

From the Community

Hello from the Breakfast On the Steps team!

A lot has happened since I started in September 2017. I have learned a lot about the local and national homelessness situation and have met and worked with some great people.

I'd like to send a big thank you to Farrell Associates for volunteering at Breakfast On the Steps every Tuesday morning and also to our hairdresser, the cooks and other volunteers. Without you all we couldn't make it work!

This year we ran a Breakfast on Boxing Day with the support of David and Gabi from the Swiss Embassy. The Embassy staff gifted warm clothes and cash funds which we will be using to buy shoes for our regular breakfast guests. We were also gifted chocolates, cakes, hand warmers and other goodies from the SCL team. *Merci à tous pour votre générosité / Danke Ihnen allen für Ihre freundliche Großzügigkeit / Grazie a tutti per la vostra gentile generosità.*

If you would like to help I have come across an excellent new way that anyone can be involved in tackling homelessness via smart phone apps!

Next Meal App

(see link below or visit the app store on your phone)

This great app shows you where the nearest Next Free Meal is available. If you see someone in need, just type in the post code and the app will direct you to where the Next Free Meal is available and you can then direct the person. No cash needed.

Streetlink App

If you see someone sleeping rough, homeless or in need you can send an alert to Streetlink via their updated app. Streetlink

have a charity data base which tracks and directs homeless people to support with medication, shelter, food and counselling. This independent charity may even have the phone numbers of family members or friends looking for their homeless loved ones. Often people who are new to sleeping rough are unaware of what is available to support them. Streetlink will send someone to talk

to the person and assess their needs. This could save a life and again costs nothing but a few minutes of your time. Finally remember that Breakfast On the Steps is free to everyone, so if you fancy popping down one morning we would love to see you.

Best wishes,
Josh and the team.



Watch Sheena Sumaria's film on Andy Palfreyman's 30 years of homelessness: <https://vimeo.com/242112620>

Events @ the Swiss Church

Fondue Fundraising Night

Thursday, 8 February, 7pm

Book your ticket now on Eventbrite or on the Swiss Church homepage.

Art Exhibition Mary Branson 'A Conversation with my Mother'

23 - 24 February, 10am-9pm

Opening night: Thursday, 22 February, 6-9pm.

Goldsmiths Art Exhibition 'Allusion to a Body no Longer Present'

1 - 16 March

Opening night: Thursday, 1 March, 4-9pm

Artists: Tyler Eash and Sara Rodriguez

Curated by Camille Brechignac and George Watson - More information and opening times on page 6.

Easter Sunday Service

Sunday, 1 April, 11am

Everyone is welcome to join us for Easter Sunday service, followed by Easter lunch.

Organ Recital

Saturday, 7 April, 5pm

Alexander Hamilton, Trinity College, Cambridge.

Parish Trip to Exeter

24 - 26 April

There are still places available. If you are interested, contact Carla: carla.maurer@swisschurchlondon.org.uk.

Meditation:

'Offline - Connected with the world'

17 - 21 May

With Reverend Monika Widmer from Basel (Switzerland). - Sign up by 4 March. Contact Carla for more information.

Organ Recital

Saturday, 9 June, 5pm

Donald MacKenzie, Odeon, Leicester Square

Annual General Meeting

Sunday, 17 June, 12:15

FIFA World Championship

17,22,27 June, 7pm

Screening Swiss games

Imprint

Publisher

The Swiss Church in London
79 Endell Street
London WC2H 9DY

A company limited by Guarantee registered in England & Wales, no: 4454591.
A registered Charity no: 1094992.

Editors

Carla Maurer & James Rasa
020 7836 1418
info@swisschurchlondon.org.uk

Website

www.swisschurchlondon.org.uk
You can download the latest Swiss Church News on our website.

Announcements

Birthday

Edith Crack has celebrated her 98th birthday on 31 December 2017. Happy birthday and many blessings!

Birthday

Organist and Director of Music Peter Yardley-Jones turned 30 on 5 February. All the very best, Peter! We are so lucky to have you at the Swiss Church and hope for many more years of collaboration and wonderful music.

Birth

Alessandra and Thomas Cenci have welcomed their first son, Tristan Thomas Cenci, who was born on 7 January 2018 in the morning. We wish Tom and Alessandra all the best for their family life and look forward to meet Tristan!





Swiss Church in London
Eglise Suisse de Londres
Schweizerkirche in London
Chiesa Svizzera a Londra
Baselgia Svizra a Londra

Hebrews 10:24-25

Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

“Narrative has been part of human consciousness for a long time. And if it has played a part in all those thousands of years, it will know a trick or two. It will be wise. It will be mischievous. It will be helpful. It will be generous.”

(Jim Crace, English writer, born 1946)

HSBC, 117 Great Portland Street, London, W1W 6QJ
Sortcode: 40-03-15 Account Number: 61410512

Post Finance: The Swiss Church in London
Account Number: 80-37960-9

**Swiss Church in London, 79 Endell Street
London WC2H 9DY**
Tel: 020 7836 1418, info@swisschurchlondon.org.uk
www.swisschurchlondon.org.uk
Twitter: @SwissChurchLond & @SwissRevLondon
Carla Maurer's blog <http://swissvicarlondon.blogspot.co.uk>
Registered charity No. 1094992

We welcome donations by standing order. If you are a UK taxpayer, please fill in a gift aid declaration form.