



# Swiss Church News

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

Spring 2017



## Editorial

Dear reader,

When I was about fifteen years old, my parents took me and my sisters to Bayeux in Northern France. Medieval history was my passion, and I have a very vivid memory of our visit of the Tapestry of Bayeux. I was fascinated by the not so comical comic strip from the 11th Century depicting the Battle of Hastings. My parents and my two sisters ended up waiting for me for nearly one hour.

My mother-in-law lives in the lovely little coastal town of Hastings, and so when Hastings celebrated the 950th anniversary of the famous battle last year, I joined in with some of the festivities. Sitting on the sun terrace and overlooking the harbour, I said: "We should buy tickets for the 1000th anniversary of the battle! I will be 86, that should be feasible?"

This year, another historic event that can only dream of such advanced age is in the focus of our attention. Five-hundred years ago, the Augustinian monk Martin Luther published 95 theses criticising the mal-practices of the Church. This message struck a chord with many and the reformation movement changed church and society profoundly.

All over the globe and particularly in Europe, events to mark the 500 years of the reformation have been launched. We are delighted to be part of the London wide project "Still Reforming – Reformation on London's Doorsteps" which will bring together twelve church congregations, among them many migrant churches, inviting each other to learn about the heritage of the reformation in London. At the Swiss Church, we are very much looking forward to welcome Professor Rebecca Giselbrecht from the University of Zurich on the 11th of March.

The Focus page contains an article by Rev Catherine McMillan, the Ambassador of the Reformation Year of the Swiss Protestant Churches on The history of the Reformation and a personal journey by Niccolò Aliano.

During this reformation year we will also run a monthly evening class titled "*I (don't) believe in God, but...*" Many of us struggle with faith and with the biblical message which often seems to contradict scientific knowledge. We are missing basic biblical knowledge to form our own opinions as the reformers encouraged us to do. The classes will take place on Mondays

15 May, 26 June, 17 July, 25 September, 23 October from 7-9pm and are an opportunity to learn, discuss and find our own words for what we believe. This course will not necessarily give answers to all our questions. Rather it will be an opportunity to learn to better communicate and reflect our many questions. More details will be announced shortly on our webpage or contact the church for more information.

In June last year you were invited to participate in a consultation on the extension of the wedding license at the Swiss Church for same-sex couples. We have received a lot of feedback, mainly positive, but also some critical voices. The members of the Consistoire and I would like to thank everyone for sharing their opinion with us. The Consistoire understands that this is an issue on which many of our members disagree in good faith. Against this backdrop, the Consistoire decided to continue the ongoing dialogue and to keep the current policy in place, in accordance with the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches: every couple with ties to our Church or the Swiss community is welcome to receive a religious wedding blessing ceremony at the Swiss Church provided that the marriage has been registered

with the local authorities beforehand.

Furthermore, I am delighted to announce that we have raised £8854.06 at the Christmas Fair, and we would like to thank once more all our sponsors and the donors and the many volunteers who made the event happen.

I hope you like the new improved face of the Swiss Church News which is the work of our new editor James Rasa.

I wish you a critical mind and an open heart for this new year!

Yours,

Editorial.....	p1
Latest News.....	p2
Greetings from Switzerland.....	p3
Focus: Reformation 500.....	p4 - 5
Announcements.....	p6
Events.....	p7

# Latest news

## + New intern



**Till Streit**  
“With my 18 years of age I have come across a

lot of different experiences. But the Swiss Church in London definitely had an impact on me. I have not known any Swiss churches outside of Switzerland and was quite impressed how big and active it was right in the centre of London. I really enjoyed its cultural and social engagement. For school I have to accomplish a 3 weeks internship and

when I visited the church with the confirmation class of Laufenburg last year, Carla offered me a place. I will start my work on the 20th of February and will stay until the 10th of March. I am looking forward to the upcoming arts exhibition as well as working for the community.

I also hope to improve my English since I am currently preparing for the Cambridge Advanced Exam.

I am currently attending High School in Switzerland with main courses in music. I play the violin and the viola and

started taking Russian classes this year. I am generally interested in arts, literature and religion. As almost everybody my age I am a big fan of Harry Potter and Game of Thrones.

I am looking forward to work for the church and to meet new people!”

*If you are interested in an internship please contact  
Carla Maurer.*

## + New Trustees

We are delighted to introduce to you two new trustees who have recently joined the team!



**Alexandre Tissot**  
“I am originally from Geneva, Switzerland, my professional background is in Management in International Finance. I also am extensively

involved as a Director in Impact Philanthropy and Charities and on a Global Basis and am involved with various charitable projects worldwide.

I am active in the Swiss Community in my capacity as an elected Delegate of the ‘Organisation of Swiss Abroad’ (OSA) representing the interests of the Swiss in the UK at the Federal and Parliamentary level in Switzerland. As a member of OSA, I also serve as Vice-President of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK / FOSSUK with responsibility over fundraising and events, in close co-operation with the Swiss Embassy in London. We further launched the annual ‘Swiss President’s Dinner’ attended by the leadership of Swiss Clubs, Associations and the Swiss Embassy in London. The focus is to come together as one community with shared interests and concerns. My decision to join the Swiss Church, frankly, was a natural move from my work in the Swiss Community. I am delighted to have been considered to assume responsibility over ‘Fundraising’, that I fully have accepted, and do hope to start making an important contribution.”



**Jon Driscoll**  
“I am a filmmaker and designer of projections for theatre, having designed many notable west end plays and musicals over the past twenty years. I hope

to be able to offer my technical knowledge to the Consistoire for future events and performances held in the hall.

I enjoy attending the Swiss Church services with my wife Helen and our baby daughter Lucy. My connection to the church is my great grandfather. He was a Swiss chocolatier and a member of the member of the Société de Secours Mutuel des Suisses. I really enjoy being part in the church community and spending time in the calm surroundings of the church.

I have recently curated an evening of film presented at the church. The church hall has a wonderful atmosphere for vintage cinema. It was great fun to see an audience laughing along to a silent movie with a live pianist. I aspire to help sustaining the Swiss Church for future generations and to insure that work can continue to help the homeless community.”

## Breakfast on the steps

Emma Aylett and her team started volunteering at Breakfast on the Steps in autumn 2016 and we already can’t imagine doing this without.



*“Farrell Associates are a Financial Service recruitment company based in Covent Garden. We operate in a very competitive, fast paced market so we made*

*the decision very early on to prioritise our corporate social responsibility for 2 reasons; 1. To give our team a different perspective from the day to day world they work in and 2. To help those in our community that need help.*

*Our desire was to work with charities working with the homeless and long term unemployed. In the search to find the right charity partners we came across the ‘Breakfast on the Steps’ programme overseen by Lilian Jost. The programme was simple but had a huge impact which is what initially got us interested. Over the past few months we have been able to experience first-hand the importance of the programme to those who attend. We have been able to build relationships with people who have fallen on hard times and celebrate with them when their circumstances have changed for the better.*

*We are incredibly excited and honoured to be able to serve with Swiss Church to help restore pride and dignity to the people that society sometimes forgets.”*



# Greetings from Switzerland



*Rev. Stephan Pfenninger Schait*

In this section we want to give people who are associated with the Swiss Church a voice. Many of these people live in Switzerland. Reverend Stephan Pfenninger is a person that most of us will not know, and yet he is closer than we think. Stephan is the new Minister of the Airport Chaplaincy in Zurich Airport, a place that many of us frequently pass when returning to our home country, be it for happy events like holidays or family gatherings or sad occasions like the visiting of sick relatives or a funeral. Stephan and his team are there to lend passers-by an open ear.

*“My father was a pilot with Swissair and as a student of theology I naturally took a job at the airport where I was working at the check-in desks. To be able to work as Minister in an airport environment is a dream coming true. We meet people from all cultures and religions at the Airport Chaplaincy. Some of them want to light a candle before departure, or just need a moment of quiet and prayer. Others come for a chat and a cup of coffee or to share their sorrows. We see passengers as well as airport workers, CEO’s and homeless people using the airport as their temporary home through our door. The most important aspect of our work is to have time in an environment that never sleeps and where everybody is busy and rushed. Time has become a rare gift in our society, and this is felt particularly at the airport. I also coordinate the care team that*



Airport Chapel, Gatwick

*provides assistance in case of a disaster. If you are travelling through Zurich on a distressing occasion, for example in case of the loss of a loved one, you and your family might need a moment of privacy when meeting or before traveling onwards. We shall be happy to provide assistance and the*

*space you need. Or just come and say hello on your next trip and have a cup of coffee!”*

*You can contact Stephan and his team on +44 43 816 57 57 or just drop in behind the desks of Check-In 2.”*

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website.

**The next edition will be  
available from the 20th of  
April 2017**

## + Around the world

This is a time of political turmoil and anxiety. Lilian Jost wanted to know what people are actually looking forward to:

- There is going to be a mission to Saturn this year – a spacecraft named Cassini is going to fly into the planet’s atmosphere.

- Phil Collins is going to perform at the Royal Albert Hall.

- The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh are going to celebrate their platinum wedding anniversary.

- Hamilton the musical is coming to London.

- There are going to be multiple Jane Austen exhibitions as this year marks 200 years since the author’s death.

“The World Athletic Championships in London.”  
“Birthdays and holidays.”

“Breakfast on the Steps I suppose.”

“Bringing my heart closer to God.”

“Summer and hot weather.”

“Interesting conversations with interesting people.”

“The 100 year anniversary of the Russian revolution.”

We hope that you find lots of reasons, big or small, to be happy this year, and many a beautiful day to look forward to. And soon it will be Easter, the happiest day of the year in the Christian calendar!

# Focus: Reformation 500

## Relevant Reformation



This year we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation

– a spiritual, intellectual and political earthquake that shook the foundations of Europe, led to new churches and new forms of government all over the world and still affects the way we think and what we value today.

On October 31st, 1517, the day before All Saints' Day, a professor-monk in Wittenberg, Germany attached a paper with 95 theses to the door of the church. Thanks to the newly invented printing press, those new ideas spread like wildfire. What was so revolutionary about them? Up until then, the Roman Catholic Church had monopolized all aspects of life, decided what was true and false, and determined what would happen to you after you died. Church officials were generally corrupt and took advantage of their power to enrich themselves. In order to raise money to build St. Peter's Dome in Rome, Pope Leo X started the business of selling letters of indulgence. For money you could have your sins forgiven and shorten your time in Purgatory before entering Heaven. Martin Luther saw through it. While reading the Book of Romans he came across Paul's claim that we are not saved by our works, but by faith in Jesus Christ. We have direct access to God's grace, just by believing. What a relief! But not for the Pope, who threatened

to excommunicate Luther for ruining his fear-of-Hellfire based business. While in hiding Luther translated the New Testament into the language of the people. The combination of Bible translation and printing press was dynamite. Commoners and Lords alike felt empowered to break away from the authority of the Church as it was.

At the same time Ulrich Zwingli, an intelligent and musical country boy from the Swiss Alps, who had received a Humanist education from Europe's best scholars and become a priest and military chaplain, came to similar conclusions. But Zwingli was also concerned for social justice. He witnessed the senseless butchery of Swiss mercenary soldiers on both sides of a war and realized how the system was making the rich richer and the poor poorer. He began speaking out against the mercenary system, the selling of indulgences and the business with relics and pilgrimages that was placing such a heavy tax burden on the people. For just that reason he was called to Zürich to preach in the Great Minster. He started explaining the Bible in Swiss German, and was good at applying it to the corruptions of his day. The republican city-state of Zürich encouraged him, pleased with the idea of more independence from Pope and Bishop. During Lent some of his friends ate sausage, breaking the Church's rules on fasting. That episode really got things rolling. Zürich's Council reformed the Church,

doing away with celibacy, relics, statues and paintings, the mass and everything that wasn't scriptural. They got so carried away that even music during the service was ditched. Only the Bible reading, prayers and the sermon were important.

Some in Zürich went even further. They refused to take an oath, bear arms or have their infants baptized, because it contradicted their reading of scripture. The Anabaptists were persecuted. Luther was having problems, too. When peasants in their newfound self-confidence insisted on tax cuts and more rights, he encouraged the Lords not to give in, but to use force. Luther also ranted against Jews and even against Zwingli, who respected Luther and his work. They met in Marburg to try and come to an agreement on doctrine. Luther couldn't accept Zwingli's modern concept of Christ being present with us "only" in Spirit and not physically, when we celebrate the Lord's Supper. That's why the Lutherans and the Reformed went their separate ways.

John Calvin was a generation younger than Zwingli. He came as a refugee to Geneva, since the Protestants were being so mercilessly persecuted in France. He developed a new Presbyterian form of church government that could survive without the help of the state. During the reign of "Bloody Mary" in England, many "Marian exiles" were in Geneva. So the teachings of Calvin were brought back to

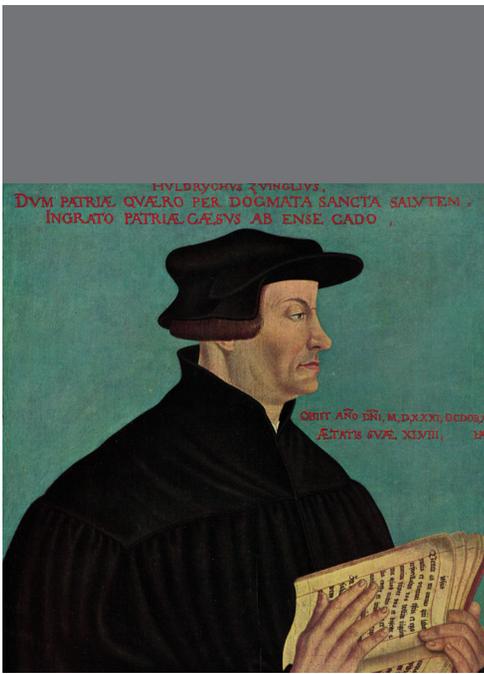
Rev. Catherine McMillan was born in Scotland, grew up in the USA, and studied Theology in Germany and France. She serves a church in Dübendorf, Switzerland and is Reformation Ambassador of the Reformed Church of Canton Zürich. She is married to Peter Haueis, has four grown children and speaks on public television once a month.

Rev Catherine McMillan will be preaching at the Swiss Church on the 1st of October at the Sunday service.

England under Elizabethan rule. But in the end the Anglican form of service that had begun under Henry VIII and had remained close to Catholicism won out in England. Calvinists wanted bottom-up self-government in the congregations – no top-down bishops. In order to practice their faith freely, they had to migrate to Holland and maybe then on to the New World. The Pilgrims, who landed in Plymouth Bay in 1620, signed the first social contract in history.

Democratic governments with their separation of powers, checks and balances and guarantee of religious freedom owe a lot to the Reformation, especially the one in Switzerland. Who would have thought these principles would become so jeopardized in our day? This anniversary has arrived just in time.





## ✚ My reformation journey, by Niccolò Aliano



This is a very exciting moment to be studying the history of the Reformation.

After living in buzzing London for four years, I decided to take a leap into the wild and move this past September to St. Andrews, in Scotland, to do a master's degree in Reformation Studies. Appropriately enough, we celebrate at the same time the five-hundredth anniversary of the symbolic beginning of the Protestant Reformation. This is clearly a stimulating time!

The year 2017, however, also carries deeper significance for me. My religious journey has been tumultuous. My family is half-Swiss and half-Italian by nationality and Roman Catholic by denomination. This “default” faith, however, has never been satisfying for me. I was born in 1993 and raised in Catholic Italy, but have never considered myself to be Catholic. My teenage agnosticism was certainly fueled by distrust in an institution which I perceived as too hierarchical, outdated, and uncompromising. A desire to explore my Swiss background led me then to the Swiss Church. This was a most beautiful development: I discovered that God can be appreciated in innumerable different ways, and found my place in the body of Christ, the Church. I'm very

grateful that those I've met have taught me that Church is being part of a community whose members share different opinions, backgrounds, and ways of life yet nourish one other spiritually. Most importantly, I understood that religion does not shun critical thinking. Faith challenges our minds to revisit what we take for granted.

In July 2015 Carla suggested that I take a leading role in the Swiss Church's own preparations for the 2017 Reformation anniversary. Getting to know ministers from many denominations who collaborated on Still Reforming was an eye-opening experience: even if our traditions, points of view, or methods are different, we all share in the Gospel message of love, peace, and generosity.

2017 is as much about the past as about the present and the future, and hopefully a moment of momentum-building for ecumenism. Learning about the differences among our denominations will make us appreciate more our place in today's world and teach how we can work together to promote the Christian message, enriching at the same time our very own identity. I am certain that without this project my spiritual journey would have taken different turns. Even if I am now considering to train for ministry in the Church of England, I could not have

come to this decision without the experience at the Swiss Church. In my own spiritual path I have tried to follow what we wanted to accomplish with Still Reforming—cherishing our past, respecting our differences, and holding our hands together in disseminating the good news of Jesus. This is certainly hard work in our unsettled twenty-first century, where selfishness, hatred, and narrowness polarize our politics, divide our society, and threaten our planet. Yet as Christians, of whatever shape or colour, we have a responsibility to try.

Niccolò Aliano was born and raised in Florence, Italy. His father's family is from southern Italy while his mother's side comes from Neuchâtel but now lives near Lugano. Niccolò went to university in London and was an active member of the Swiss Church while there. Since September he has been living in St. Andrews, Scotland, to study reformation history.



Pick up a copy of this booklet at the Swiss Church or get it sent to you. (suggested donation of £1)

# Announcements

## + Birth



We are delighted to announce the birth of Max Noah Smith, son of Anina Smith and her husband Ricky. Max was born on 30 November 2016. We wish Anina and Ricky all the best for their life as a family.



Former treasurer Gregory Allegro and Melanie also had a little baby boy, Maxime Zachary, who was born on 6 October 2016. Our very best wishes for their future and much happiness!

## + Baptism

Lisa Herder, born in 1993, was baptised at the Swiss Church on 22 January 2017.

Lucy May Duba daughter of Madleine Duba and Homero Gonzalez was baptised in the Jordan River in Israel in 2016 and received a blessing surrounded by the Swiss Church congregation on 5 February 2017.

*“God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.” (2 Corinthians 9:8)*

## + Obituary

Janine Monique Edgar passed away on 16 December 2016 aged 74. Janine had close links to the Swiss Benevolent Society. Her funeral was led by Rev Carla Maurer on 30 December 2016.

The Frauenverein mourns the loss of their long standing member Maria Gibbs. She was an active member and helped organizing many events at the Swiss Church.

Christopher Lyster, husband of Margrit Lyster, passed away on 28 December 2016 aged 91. Our thoughts are with Margrit and her daughters in this difficult time.

*“Do not fear; for I am with you; surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10)*

## + Vorfreude, By Lili Jost

A small word with big impact

Is it spring already? As I am writing this it is still January, and a fairly cold one too. There was even some sort of snow last week – or at least I think that is what the wet grey flakes are called in London.

I hope 2017 brings us a warm, peaceful spring. In retrospective, spring 2016 seems like the calm before the storm. Summer and autumn brought us big political changes, in Europe, in America and elsewhere. Many people could not wait for the year to be over.

This year is not going to be an easy one either. France, Germany and the Netherlands, amongst many other countries all over the world, have big elections coming up. If I am being honest, I have to admit that those upcoming elections do make me feel a bit uneasy. But I

# Events @ the Swiss Church

## ✚ Forthcoming events



### Goldsmith Exhibition

**2-17 March**

Every year the Swiss Church in collaboration with the Goldsmith College invites first year students from the MFA Curating programme to submit proposals for a curatorial project.

The winner project is then exhibited for two weeks at the beginning of March. This year's winner is Curator Marian Stindt, born in Bochum in 1991. She will show 'Hierophanies' by artist Patrick Hough. The centre piece of the exhibition is a 3D animation depicting an artefact from the ancient ruins of Palmyra in Syria that was destroyed by so called Islamic State militants in 2015. The art work is a critical examination of iconoclasm in the past and present and reflects the destruction of religious art during the reformation.

Private viewing: Thursday, 2 March, 18:00-21:00pm

Public exhibition: 3-17 March, every Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 18:00-21:00pm

All our readers are warmly welcome to attend the private viewing on 2 March!

With this programme the Swiss Church seeks to give young curators an opportunity to exhibit in a central London location.



### Monday Lunchtime Recitals

**13-27 March, 10-24 April, 8-22 May, 1pm**

The Royal Opera House

In 2017, the Royal Opera's Jette Parker Young Artists give a series of exciting Monday lunchtime recitals at 1pm at the Swiss Church. For each recital, the Swiss Church is giving away five free tickets.

Email: [venue@swisschurchlondon.org.uk](mailto:venue@swisschurchlondon.org.uk)



### Reformation 500

**Saturday, 11th March, 1-6pm**

"Leave Christians a free choice"

To mark the 500 years of the reformation, join us for Prof. Rebecca Giselsbrecht's talk 'The Swiss Reformation, its men, and its women' (University of Zurich). We will serve sausages (during lent!) which was Zurich reformer Ulrich Zwingli's way to kick off the reformation.

François Voeffray, Head of the Political and Legal Affairs Section at the Embassy of Switzerland to the UK, will attend the event.



### Easter Service

**Sunday, 16th April, 11am**

Led by Rev. Carla Maurer and visitor group from Rapperswil-Jona

We will welcome our sister congregation from Rapperswil-Jona with Rev. Cyril Schmitt to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the hope that life is stronger than death and love stronger than hate.

Followed by lunch.



### Organ Recital

**Saturday, 22nd April, 5pm**

Born in 1990, Thomas Ospital began his musical studies at the Conservatoire Maurice Ravel in Bayonne, France. From 2008 until 2015, he was a student at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris.

The conservatoire awarded him first-place prizes in organ, improvisation, harmony, counterpoint and fugue. He is currently the titular organist at Saint-Eustache in Paris.

am an optimist at heart, and I do not like to worry too much. So instead of thinking of this year's spring as a teaser for the problems to come, I think of it as Vorfrende. Vorfrende is one of my favourite German words, and every time I explain it to an English speaking

person I almost beg them to include it in their everyday vocabulary. It means "joyful anticipation", just in a much more poetic way (in case you were wondering, some of my other favourite words include Schadenfreude, Fernweh, and, my all time favourite, Ohrwurm).

It is a wonderful word. I could not live a happy life without a bit of Vorfrende. I need something to look forward to, to be excited about, something to count the days down to. So this year I am going to view spring as a season full of Vorfrende.



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*(Romans 11:6)*

*“If it is by grace,  
it is no longer on the basis of works,  
otherwise grace would  
no longer be grace.”*

*“The faith of the church  
must be tried by God’s word,  
and not God’s word by the church;  
neither yet my faith.”*

(Lady Jane Grey, English Noblewoman of  
Protestant faith, born 1537, executed 1554)

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