

THE SWISS CHURCH IN LONDON

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

held on Sunday 1 June 2014 at the Swiss Church, 79 Endell Street, London WC2 9DY

Present (as per signed register)

Rose-Marie Breitenstein (Vice-President/Company Secretary/Chair), Suzanne Egloff, Geoff Fisher, Cécile Mistry, Johannes Reich (Consistoire Members); Rev. Carla Maurer (Minister), Anina Smith (Office Administrator), Matthew Stone (Community Worker).

Helene Alexandrou, Elsbeth Baldeo, Wilfred Baldeo, Rebecca Benesch, Albert Bertin, Elena Bertin, Edith Crack, Stanley de Noronha, Gabriella Douglas-Kitsis, Marianne Fisher-Hertig, Ursula Jost, Maria Kitsis, Fernande Kunz, Margrit Lyster, Marie-Louise Matthews, Colin Stuart McIntyre, Vreni Parker, Margrit Rahman, Heidi Rego, Emel Rochat, Trudi Smith, Ursula Talary, Susanne Tse, Yvon Tse, Yvonne Williams, Frank Witham, Peter Yardley-Jones, Hedy Zdankowicz.

Philip Maillardet (Vice-President) minutes.

Apologies

Gregory Allegro & Antoni von Planta (Consistoire members); Andrew Bertschinger, Pamela Bertschinger, Margrit Ledermann Prestofelippo, Ruth Luka, Françoise Mistovski, Susanne Singh.

1. WELCOME

Rose-Marie Breitenstein, Vice-President, opened the Annual General Meeting at 12.15 p.m. She welcomed the members and friends and gave apologies. *Rev. Carla Maurer* said a prayer.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST AGM

The minutes of the AGM held at the Swiss Church in London (SCL) on 16th June 2013 were unanimously accepted. Proposer: *Marianne Fisher-Hertig*; seconded by *Suzanne Egloff*.

3. TRUSTEES' REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2013

Rose-Marie Breitenstein, Vice-President, followed by Minister *Rev. Carla Maurer*, presented a summary of the Trustees' Report.

The year 2013 marked the beginning of a new era in the history of the Swiss Church in London. It was triggered by the decision of the SEK that we will have to become financially independent from them in the near future. The Consistoire was faced with a number of challenges.

First of all, the Swiss Church was without a minister for almost six months. We were unable to advertise the vacancy left by *Rev. Nathalie Dürmüller* who had left at the end of December 2012, until we knew the exact terms of the support we were going to get from the SEK.

The second major concern of the Consistoire was the production of the Business Concept Plan which we were required to submit to the Commission of the Swiss Churches Abroad in order to secure further funding for the years 2015 to 2017 inclusive.

For further details, please refer to Section 6.1 below, and to the document 'Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2013' available on the SCL website.

Yvon Tse, standing in for the Treasurer, *Grégory Allégro*, presented the statement of financial activities. Yvon alerted us to the lack of comparatives for the SEK funding and staff costs (Minister and Youth Worker), as these figures were not disclosed in previous years. A surplus of

£8,000 had been achieved on the back of growth in lettings income and savings from staff costs, as the Minister was in place for only half of the year and the Youth Worker for only 7 months. The surplus would have been even higher were it not for ad-hoc items of expenditure such as the provision of £13,000 for the repairs of the boundary wall at the Manse which has become unsafe and in need of urgent repairs. Most of the sources of income including donations are pretty much consistent with expectations but static apart from the income from lettings which is growing at the rate of a third annually over the past 3 years. Overall the 2013 Accounts is showing a very solid set of figures. There are still challenging and uncertain times ahead with the loss of the funding from the SEK in 2018. However there are plans to explore the various ways of achieving the necessary additional funding such as Grants for the sustainability of the Swiss Church in its existing form. To monitor the developments and achievements at every stage of the investments, a tool has been developed (the Dashboard) with the help of the consultants, so that alarm bells will ring as soon as things are not going according to plans. Yvon also made an appeal for people to gift aid their donations if they are taxpayers.

Edith Crack raised a question on the building fund, Ursula Talary on the salaries (Minister and Youth and Parish worker were paid partly by SEK direct).

On the proposal of *Geoff Fisher*, seconded by *Ursula Jost*, the Trustees Report and Financial Statements for the Year ended 31 December 2013 were unanimously accepted.

4. ELECTION OF CONSISTOIRE MEMBERS/TRUSTEES

4.1 Resignation The AGM received the resignations of *Rose-Marie Breitenstein*, who had served on the Consistoire and as Company Secretary since 2004, and as Vice-President since July 2005; also of *David Mollin* who had served on the Consistoire from 2010 to 17 March 2014; and of *Michael van Haarlem*, who had served on the Consistoire as Treasurer from September 2008 to 6 August 2013.

4.2 Elections *Johannes Reich* who was co-opted to the Consistoire on 27 November 2013, and *Grégory Yann Allégro* co-opted on 22 January 2014. Both were elected by unanimous vote on the proposal of *Cécile Mistry*, seconded by *Margrit Lyster*.

4.3 Re-elections In accordance with the provisions of Art 41 of the Constitution, *Philip Maillardet* and *Antoni von Planta* retiring by rotation were re-elected by unanimous vote on the proposal of *Elsbeth Baldeo*, seconded by *Suzanne Egloff*.

Rose-Marie made an appeal for new members of the Consistoire.

5. RE-APPOINTMENT OF REPORTING ACCOUNTANTS

The firm of *Moracle*, chartered certified accountants & registered auditors was re-appointed by unanimous vote to hold office until the conclusion of the next Annual General Meeting, and the Consistoire was authorised to determine their remuneration. Proposer *Geoff Fisher*, seconded by *Fernande Kunz*.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Update on Business Concept Plan

Rose-Marie began by giving the background to the Business Concept Plan (BCP). This is the plan which has been submitted to the Commission of Swiss Churches Abroad (CHKiA) in order to receive funding from the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches (SEK) for the years 2015 to 2017 inclusive.

Suzanne Egloff, who has been leading the sub-committee working on the BCP, gave an update. A meeting to review the particulars of the Business Concept Plan open to all members had been held on 16 March. A copy of the BCP was available on request. Each SEK submission deadline was achieved and greeted with positive feedback from the Commission of Swiss Churches Abroad. Upon final submission we received acceptance of the plan and further funding up to 2018 is expected as promised. The increased income over the next five years is expected to be generated from: new income from grant making trusts and other donors for discrete project activity; improvements in lettings income; and more regular fundraising events. The renewed mission builds on what we already have: it is about more church – as an open church, more members of the congregation, more community work amongst Swiss and local Covent Garden residents, more cultural activities and the presence of God and the Holy Spirit across all our work. As the SEK reduces funding, the goal to achieve financial sustainability and independence for 2018, is driven by our revitalized mission. This mission underpins our new financial annual objectives over the next 5 years – this goal is well underway and we are on target.

Rev. Carla Maurer and *Matt Stone*, who have been implementing the BCP, gave a summary of the progress so far. The twin BCP objectives of reaching out to the local community and the wider Swiss community, are being met through various regular and one-off events. For example, 'Breakfast on the Steps', 'Holy Soup' and the 'Crime Prevention Police Community Drop In', are weekly events that are already operating. There are regular attendees at these events, but new people are also attracted each week. On average there are between 30 and 50 people in the local community served each week through these events. To reach out to the wider Swiss Community, the SCL is working with The City Swiss Club and St Moritz in showing the Swiss World Cup Matches, improvements are being made to the cultural programme and the SCL continues to work with AuPairs and other Swiss groups in the city.

Carla then answered several questions from the floor. *Margrit Lyster* commented on *Matt Stone's* proposed new activities, reminding him also to consider the Swiss Community in his activities, in accordance with the charitable status of the Swiss Church. *Carla* responded by saying that our Swiss community will be strengthened through initiatives such as forging links with specific parishes in Switzerland.

6.2 Vote of thanks *Rose-Marie* thanked the Consistoire and the members of the sub-committees for giving up their time to attend meetings, carry out various tasks and responsibilities.

Special thanks and appreciation of their work were expressed to:

- *Rev. Carla Maurer* not only for her pastoral care but also for guiding us through a transitional period to a new future.
- Our past staff: *Nicole Jakobowitz* and *Nicole Bischof*, and new staff: *Matt Stone* and *Anina Smith*.
- Our organist, *Peter Yardley-Jones*, for the beautiful organ music, for his great involvement, advice and help in many matters. A man of many talents, even competing with Sir Simon Rattle in conducting the St. John Passion at Easter.
- *Cécile Mistry* and her catering team for the delicious meals and their generosity.
- *Vreni Parker* for providing the flowers at the services.
- The Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches (SEK-FEPS) for their financial support and assistance in the selection process of the Minister.
- *Margrit Ledermann Prestofelippo* for her valuable advice and support as the representative of the Swiss Embassy. We are sorry to see her leave very soon.
- the many volunteers for giving us their time and help, our donors for their generosity, and all of the church members and friends for their support.

In parting *Rose-Marie* expressed the hope that the Swiss Church will always have an important place in the Swiss Community, not only as a spiritual home, but also a place to meet and to take part in

various activities, at the same time opening the doors to welcome the community of our host country. It had given *Rose-Marie* much satisfaction to serve on the Consistoire; enabling her to learn new skills and gain new experiences. Her commitment during the ten years had been to the best of her knowledge and abilities.

Philip Maillardet then gave a warm tribute to *Rose-Marie Breitenstein*, thanking her for all that she had done for the Swiss Church during her ten years as a member of the Consistoire. He thanked *Rose-Marie* for chairing the AGM – her last official duty. It was a significant day in the life of the Swiss Church. *Rose-Marie's* considerable business and administrative expertise helped us through a period of great change for the Swiss Church. For the last ten years she had been Vice-President, Company Secretary, and secretary to the Consistoire. In addition to the demanding renovation project, she also dealt with the Charity Commission, Companies House, health and safety, and insurance; and her meticulous Consistoire minutes will be a lasting legacy. Fully involved with all aspects of church life, from Sunday services to concerts, she always made everyone feel welcome. *Rose-Marie* was also a major donor for the building project as well as the organ pipe appeal. There was also the unseen work, such as her handling of the manse (vicarage) underpinning work and the lengthy insurance claim. *Philip* said how much he had enjoyed working with *Rose-Marie* as Co-Vice-President, and valued her friendship. We were all grateful to *Rose-Marie* for ten years of dedicated service and generosity to the Swiss Church. She would be greatly missed on the Consistoire, and we wished her all success and happiness in her future activities, and looked forward to still seeing her in church.

Rose-Marie then closed the AGM at 1.30 p.m.