

## **The Swiss Church in London**

**Audio service, 5 July 2020**

**Reverend Carla Maurer and Reverend Gerry Stanton**

“Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory,  
for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness.” (Psalm  
115:1-2)

“Nicht uns, o Gott, nicht uns,  
sondern deinem Namen gib Ehre,  
um deiner Gnade und Treue willen!”

„Non pas à nous, Eternel, non pas à nous,  
mais à ton nom donne gloire,  
à cause de ta bonté, à cause de ta vérité!”

### **Welcome**

Welcome to this audio service from the Swiss Church in London! I am Reverend Carla Maurer, and I have the pleasure today to particularly welcome the Reverend Gerry Stanton from Union Church in Crouch End. It is a pleasure also to welcome members from the Union Church congregation listening in today. Although we are apart and worshipping individually in our living rooms, we are connected through the Holy Spirit, as disciples of Christ, and God is with each one of us.

Gerry and I will talk about the sisters Mary and Martha today, who reacted very differently when Jesus came to their house. One of them got frantically busy, the other sat to Jesus' feet listening to his every word, and their opposite reactions were not without conflict.

There are parallels between this story from the Gospel of Luke, and our reactions to the lockdown, and Gerry and I will look back and think how we reacted to the unusual circumstances.

In this service you will also be invited to share communion. If you wish to participate, please have a bit of bread or a cracker and a glass of wine, juice or water ready.

You will find the words for the hymns and for the communion prayer on the Swiss Church webpage.

I would like to thank Peter, Marianne, Colin and Niccolo for participating in today's audio service. Marianne will now lead us in prayer.

### **Prayer (Marianne)**

Father, our Lord and everything

We thank you are steadfast, the same yesterday, today and tomorrow, whatever is happening in the world, you are the Alpha and Omega. We worship you and praise your name. We do miss not meeting at church, yet recognise this is for our protection and wellbeing. This does not stop us having this longing to be in and with our community. We ask you comfort us and fill that longing in us. Fill us with your presence.

We pray we can focus on you during this service and not get distracted by things around us, whatever they are. Still our hearts. We want to sit at your feet, spend time with you and learn more, get to know you better and feel closer to you. May Carla's and Reverend

Gerry's words guide us and enlighten us. Through their knowledge and teaching we pray we leave this service different to the way we started it; full of hope and confidence in you.

We pray in your precious name.

Amen

**Reading based on Psalms 133 and 134 (Leslie F. Brandt)**

Oh God, how precious it is for us  
and how pleasing it must be to you  
when your children and servants learn  
how to live and work together in unity!

It is in the measure that we do this  
that we begin to resemble You  
and to carry out more effectively Your purposes  
in our disjointed and discordant world.  
Come, let us bless His name together,  
rejoice in His loving concern for us,  
declare His worth to all creatures,  
and walk in obedience to His will.

The same God made heaven and earth  
and all of us who dwell here.  
Let us worship and serve Him together.

Amen

## **Reading Luke 10:38-42**

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

### **Dialogue sermon (Rev Gerry Stanton and Rev Carla Maurer)**

Dear parishoners, Dear listeners

When Jesus visited the house of sisters Mary and Martha, Mary sat by Jesus' feet and listened. Martha however was distracted by all the preparations that had to be done. Martha was annoyed by Mary's reaction and asked Jesus to tell her off for not helping.

The story of Mary and Martha, the sisters who reacted to differently to Jesus' coming, is well known and often discussed in Bible groups. Are you more like Mary, contemplating, listening? Or more like Martha, busy preparing things? Are you a bit of both? Do you even have the choice, or do you feel forced into acting in a certain way?

Gerry and I decided to talk about the story of Martha and Mary because we experienced the lockdown as a real-life Mary-Martha

test. Suddenly, our churches were closed, the contact with our congregation no longer possible, and we sat there, in our vicarages, wondering what next.

We saw how churches around the world kicked into action, we observed how we kicked into action too, trying new things, sometimes wondering whether we were doing the right thing, wondering what God calls us to do now, at times confused, tired, exhausted for no seeming reason.

So, Gerry, Martha or Mary?

*Reverend Carla Maurer and Reverend Gerry Stanton met at Union Church to record a conversation. The following is a summary of their conversation.*

*Gerry thinks that the answer a Minister should give is Mary, contemplative, praying, receiving Jesus' every word. The reality however is often different. There are many practical things that need to be done, and especially at the beginning of the lockdown, there was a need for management. There are also many things that we think we should be doing, or that other people think we should be doing. Often as Ministers we are between the two, and the coronavirus has highlighted that.*

*Some churches and Ministers are really busy and have all the zoom and facebook activities going on. Part of us is thinking, we should be doing that as a church, Gerry says, but then he realises that many members of his congregation don't have access to the technology.*

*Both Carla and Gerry had that feeling when the lockdown started that they had to do something. At the beginning there were practical things to do, like communicating the lockdown, consider what to do with members of staff, make sure congregation members receive calls and support from friends and family.*

*The whole routine of life was thrown out for everyone. Gerry says that he likes to think of himself as someone who doesn't particularly like routine, but then he realised how important a certain routine is.*

*Perhaps kicking into action has something to do with finding a new routine, instead of taking the days as they are in all their emptiness and not knowing which is perhaps very unusual and difficult to go with. Martha's way of doing things and creating work for yourself is perhaps the easier way, Carla suggests. Modern life is geared up around that, Gerry thinks, and for better or for worse, churches reflect that.*

*Gerry says that every time he hears this story preached, the conclusion is generally: be more like Mary, don't be like Martha. However, Martha is preparing the food, making sure Jesus still eats and drinks. If all of us would be sitting around contemplating nothing would ever get done.*

*Gerry says that he definitely had more time during the lockdown to pray more, but there still are things to be done. Now that we are told that we can reopen churches, it isn't actually as straight forward as we think. We feel there is a tendency to be wanting to be busy again. But is it the right thing? If we reopen badly or at the wrong time, we are putting people at risk.*

*It's important to find out what people want and what the congregations feel comfortable with. On the one hand people want to come back, want to worship in their church and see their friends again, but there is a risk attached to it. It's about finding the right balance. Both churches, Union Church and the Swiss Church, might be a few weeks or even longer before they feel they can safely reopen.*

*Carla remembers that a few weeks ago when dentists could open again, she wondered why only a certain percentage of them open again. After all, didn't they have 3 months to think about it? But now that churches are in this position, she perfectly understands. You know the opening is coming, but you don't know how it will feel. When we went into the lockdown, after the initial busy weeks, there came that time when we had to embrace those empty days in a different way. Carla decided quite early not to go into overdrive, do a few things, do them well, and try not to get too impressed by all the things other churches do. Social media can put that pressure on us. We could do midday prayers every day, zoom meetings and so much more. But it's actually a very precious time to look after our own spiritual needs and development as Ministers, too. Do the things you can do well for your congregation and also appreciate this precious time.*

*Gerry says that as Ministers we are very privileged generally. We are not worried about paying our mortgages, not worried about being furloughed, and most of us will have jobs to go back to. As Ministers, if we are not close to God, we are not serving our congregations properly. This time in lockdown has given us that chance to grow closer to God, to be more Mary than usual! Contemplation is there to prepare us for action. Something needs to come out of contemplation.*

*Carla feels it's more difficult to come out of the lockdown than going in. Of course, it was a huge shake up for many people's life, but it was very clear: stay home, don't go out. But now it's difficult to know what's going to happen, if a second wave is going to come, how close we can be to people, who we should see, finding out what we are ready for. Also, how long is it going to last? Will there be another lockdown? Both Gerry and Carla feel more anxious coming out of it. The thought of going to a pub is somehow daunting. It's also not very nice to think that if we do go out, we are going to avoid one another. This avoiding people in the streets or giving people a funny look if they don't wear a face mask changed the climate between us. This is what we are facing now.*

*Gerry's words to our two congregations: "God saw all this coming, not caused it, but saw all this coming, and is with us throughout and will be with us on the other side. There are great opportunities for us to serve our neighbour and love our neighbour and reopen to that. There are great opportunities as well for us when we are not in the buildings. There is always hope, and we are in great place, Union Church and Swiss Church to be able to help people."*

Amen

### **Prayers of Intercession (Niccolo)**

As Mary sought the Word, so we pray for all those who seek and spread the Word. We remember the universal Church and all her members and ministers; all who strive to promote the truth in all domains; all teachers; and all who remind us that we do not live by bread alone.

Kyrie eleison.

As Martha worked incessantly, so we pray for all who work without ceasing. We recognize the endeavours of those who fight for peace and dignity for everyone in the world; leaders of all nations; scientists and medical staff; farmers, harvest pickers, and food producers; cleaners, haulers, and carers.

Kyrie eleison.

We pray for all who are troubled and feel far from both Martha and Mary. We remember all who are affected by loneliness, homelessness, unemployment, abuse, persecution, starvation, war, and illness of any kind. We think especially of Gerry's father and family, and all those whom we name now.

Amen

## **Communion**

### *Invitation*

I would like everyone listening at home or reading this service to join in with the sharing of communion. If you don't have any red wine or grape juice in the house, take some water or any kind of juice. Take a piece of bread, a cracker or some cake and put it next to your glass or mug. We will bless the wine and bread together and we will share communion as a sign that the grace of God becomes alive through us.

As I speak the words that Jesus has spoken to his disciples when they shared the meal, you may hold up your glass to give thanks, break the bread and hold the palms of your hands over the wine and bread for the blessing as you see me doing at church.

Heureux les invités au repas du seigneur! En partageant le vin et le pain nous nous souvenons que nous sommes une communauté fondé sur la foi que l'amour et l'espoir grandissent si on les partage.

Wir sind alle eingeladen an Gottes Tisch, Frauen und Männer, Jung und Alt, Reich und Arm, Leichtherzige und Schwermütige. Brot und Wein bringen uns in Berührung mit dem, was unaussprechbar ist und mit dem heilsamen Wirken der göttlichen Gnade.

### *Prayer*

God of life, who loves and embraces us in mercy and acceptance,  
We recognise those places in our lives where we have been hurt and rejected.

*ALL: And we offer them to you.*

We recognise those times when we have hurt and rejected others.

*ALL: And we offer them to you.*

And we recognise the ways that we have failed to believe in your forgiving power.

*ALL: Help us to live in the strength that comes from your never ending love.*

*Amen*

In a moment of silence, let us think of times when we have been hurt and of times when we have hurt others.

*Words of Institution (in German)*

In der Nacht als Jesus verraten wurde, sass er mit seinen Freunden und teilte mit ihnen das Mahl. Er nahm das Brot, dankte dafür, brach es, gab es seinen Jünger und Jüngerinnen und sprach: Nehmt! Esst! Das bin ich für euch gegeben.

Dann nahm er den Kelch, dankte, gab ihn seinen Jünger und Jüngerinnen und sprach: Nehmt! Trinkt alle daraus! Das ist das Zeichen für den neuen Bund mit Gott.

Das tut zu meinem Gedächtnis sooft ihr zusammen seid.

### *Blessing*

Gott, segne diese deine Gaben Brot und Wein, Früchte deiner Erde und unserer Arbeit, die uns tragen von Generation zu Generation.

Que le saint esprit soit present maintenant que nous partageons le vin et le pain. Par cette communion tu renouvelles nos forces.

If you live with other people you may now share a sign of peace.  
Peace be with you!

### **The Lord's Prayer (which you may pray in your own language)**

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.  
Amen.

## **Blessing**

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

Gott segne und behüte Dich; Gott lasse sein Angesicht scheinen über dir und sei dir gnädig; Gott hebe ihr Angesicht über dich und gebe dir den Frieden.

Que l'Eternel te bénisse et te garde! Que l'Eternel fasse briller son visage sur toi et t'accorde sa grâce! Que l'Eternel se tourne vers toi et te donne la paix!

Amen

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