**The Swiss Church in London**

**Commemoration service, 22 November 2020**

I thought of you today, but that is nothing new.

I thought about you yesterday and days before that too.

I think of you in silence, I often speak your name.

All I have are memories and a picture in a frame.

Your memory is a keepsake, with which I’ll never part.

God has you in his keeping. I have you in my heart.

**A commemoration service in four elements.**

**THE AIR – D’LUFT – L’AIR – L’ARIA**

**By Reverend Priscilla Schwendimann (Zurich)**

Please take a seat and sit upright, place your hands on your legs. Close your eyes an try to stay in an upright position. Now take a deep breath. Breathe in – breathe out. Feel the air that goes into your lungs. Feel, how it moves your body. Breathe in – breathe out. Focus on which part of your body it moves. Do you feel anything?

There are not many things that we do all of our life, every second of it, while not even noticing it. Well, at least most of the time – just like breathing air: we breath in, we breath out.

In 1 Kings 19 we read the story about Elijah: While Elijah is upset with God, God does something very special. He is actually willing to reveal himself to Elija. Elija is commanded to stand on a mountain and hide in a cave, God promises to reveal himself. And so it happens: first Elijah hears is a big storm, Mountains are being torn and an earthquake happens, but God was not in there. Then after the earthquake there is a huge fire, but God was not in the fire. At last there is a sound of a soft whisper, a quiet breeze you could hardly notice and there is God.

Breathe in- breathe out. How you are doing today? Perhaps it’s one of these perfect days. Or you’re mourning a lost one or you are in the flow of the everyday life. Whatever you are doing – there is always something you do at the same time. That is: you are breathing. You breathe in and you breathe out.

And with God it is about the same it just happened to be that God is a bit like that. Most of the time, he does not show in a great fanfare up with a big tom-tom but rather in an unexpected quiet whispers or breeze. In a calm movement of the air. And God is there. Sometimes I think of God as being air. He is always there, but unseen. And if we expect to experience God than we expect something huge like a big storm will throw us out of our feet! But we will experience that God does hardly reveal himself like this – maybe He gives us these mountain tops sometimes – but certainly not all the time.

Rather – God is in the everyday notion: when we are willing just to be like Elijah to be open for anything and we find. That God will meet us in the most unexpected and everyday life, just like us breathing every day.

Let’s go back to the beginning. Imaging while you breathe: God gives patience with every breath, love, perseverance or just joy! He gives whatever you need! Just imagine, as you inhale that God is filling you with the air that you inhale: with patience, love, forgiveness, perseverance or just joy – with whatever you need.

Please seat upright again. So take an upright seat again. Put your hands on your legs and breath in – breath out. Breath in – breath out.

God is here – in everyday life, just like breathing air.

**L’EAU – L’ACQUA – THE WATER – S’WASSER**

**By Reverend Scotty Williams (St.Gallen)**

BIBLE PASSAGE

On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness. - Zechariah 13:1

REFLECTION

As we all know water is the most essential element, and without it there would be no life and nothing could survive on earth. In fact, I find it is like the grace that we have received from God, for without it there would be no life and everything would fall apart.

Grace is the favor or the approval that God gives us each day. It is His green light to universe to never cease and carry on. Through grace God constantly tells us to “Keep on living and not give up”, and He tells us this because of love and not because of what we’ve done. As Martin Luther always preached, grace is a precious gift which none of us can ever earn, and there is nothing that we can say or do to make ourselves deserve it more or lose it. Just like the love of God, nothing can ever sperate us from His grace, and it is always with echoing through the universe to keep on living and not give up

Indeed, without the gift of grace the world we know would fall apart, and because we cannot earn it or lose it, there is only one thing that we can do with it. Like the waters that cover the earth, we must take it grace and drink deep from it. We must cherish and enjoy it with a grateful heart and with praises to its wonderful Giver. Furthermore, like the water around us, we must not take grace for granted, and we should do our best from day to day to use it rightly and use it well.

We must use the grace of God by loving others as He loves us.

We must use the grace of God by forgiving others as He forgives us.

We must use the grace of God by serving others as Christ served us.

We must use the grace of God, by sharing the Gospel that that has been shared with.

In addition to “Christ has died, Christ risen, and Christ will come again”, the Gospel is that God tells us with each new day to keep on living and not give up. We are constantly encouraged by our Creator to experience life, and this doesn’t hinge on the many ways we all fall short as human being. In this time where the news is filled with stories of our imperfections, and the story of a virus called COVID-19 that has changed our lives forever, we can find a bit of joy and rest in God’s approval. We can rest in His gift that encourages us forward and leads to place far better than where we are.

You see, like a road sign, grace points a destination; a place that, as is said in Black-American Church, is beyond the Jordan river and the vale of tears. There, with all the saints before us, we will be free from powers of sin and death forever. Free in a Promised Land of endless life from the One who made the mighty seas.

O to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

PRAYER

Almighty, eternal, and merciful God, Who made all things and sustains all things. We thank You for Your gift of grace which flows in abundance to us each day. Lord may we drink deep from it and never cease to cherish this precious gift and may we all be fountains of grace for a world that is thirsting for freedom and life. In Your Gracious name we pray. Amen.

**IL FUOCO – THE FIRE – S’FÜÜR – LE FEU**

**By Theologian Katrin Frey (UK/Switzerland)**

Please place a candle and some matches in front of you and light the candle as you are listening to this. I advise you to make an effort to find matches, as the act of lighting matches is more powerful than a lighter.

PSALM READING

We finish our years like a sigh.

(10)​ ​The days of our lives are seventy years;

And if by reason of strength they are eighty years,

Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow;

For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

(12)​ ​So teach us to number our days,

That we may gain a heart of wisdom. (Ps 90 9b.10.12)

The composer of this Psalm 90 wishes for GOD to help give meaning to her life, to show her how to make her days count. Many of us have been struggling to find a​ ny sense or purpose these past months. Too many have lost their jobs, even their livelihoods and homes due to this global pandemic. Too many are suffering from anxiety, depression and loneliness.

I for one just want it to end. I want it all to go away, as I am tired of this so-called “new normal”. Of course, “normal” life is usually not “normal” at all. But at least I know, what I can hope for, I know what I might wake up to.

Moses dies on the eve of entering the chosen land. He never sees what he walked towards these past 40 years in the desert. None of us sees what we are walking towards, even if we are walking 80, 90, or 100 years. It is and will always be darkness. For in half-light we live and for light and clarity we yearn. This is what makes the loss of loved ones so frightening: the n​ ot-knowing​ part. The where-​are-​ they-now?-​ part. The ​are-they-without-pain-now?-​ part.

Candles and lightbulbs are signs of hope, warmth and knowledge. Things are seen, texts can be read, rooms are heated by it. ​Christ the anointed is the light and the hope and the way, his resurrection enlightened the darkness of death. ​Christ the resurrected has overcome death and returned from it. He is in fact the only one, who knows what we all yearn for: Clarity of the unknown.

Amen

**D’ÄRDE – LA TERRE – LA TERRA – THE EARTH**

**By Reverend Carla Maurer (The Swiss Church in London)**

God said: “Let the earth put forth vegetation; plants yielding seeds, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it. And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

And God created humankind, in her image, in the image of God he created them, male and female she created them. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, all in their multitude.

The earth – a tiny little planet full of miracles, wonder and beauty in the endless vastness of the universe.

We are guests on this earth, made in God’s image, compassionate, loving and creative beings full of life, here one moment, gone the next. Our pilgrimage on earth lasts but a short time. It is a miracle that we are, and it is painful when our loved ones are no longer. Life on earth. Source of love. Memories forever imprinted in our hearts.

Gracious God, be our companion and source of comfort as we try to make sense and try to come to terms with the unpredictability of life on earth. We are vulnerable. Protect us and hold us close, now and beyond.

The earth – the ground we stand on, patient, nourishing earth.

We thank you God for providing for us, for the richness of your Creation, all that we are and all that we are given. All that is and was and is yet to come.

I invite you to stand up, wherever you are, in your living room, garden or kitchen, and ground down through your feet. Close your eyes. Feel your feet stand firmly on the ground. This is you in this world. Imagine roots growing from your feet into the ground. This is your place on earth. You are beautiful the way you are, with a broken or joyful heart, with tears in your eyes or a smile on your lips. We all stand on this earth together.

May God hold you in the palm of his hands.

Amen

**COMMEMORATION**

Let us be silent and remember the loved ones we have lost.

We remember…

Daniel Fausel

Joan Hewitt

Albert Bertin

Eric Escoffay

Elsi Constable

Joyce Armstrong

Liliane Bell

Martin Loveday

Monique Hottinger and Ursula Hupfer

Marcel Collins and Nelly Fiorini Meierhofer

Bessie Walker-Smith, Clarence Howard, Alvin Lee Smith and Irene Strong

Roger Kitsis

Joseph Suter

Erika Born

Silvio Terroni

Ruth Luka

Margrit Reynolds

Edith Crack

Meieli Webb

Eric and Nick Alexandrou

Naseer Sabir

Raphael and Gabriel Daguet

God says: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. You will find rest for your souls.” 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.”

„Que le Seigneur te bénisse et te garde! Que le Seigneur fasse briller sur toi son visage, qu’il se penche vers toi! Que le Seigneur tourne vers toi son visage, qu’il t’apporte la paix!”

“Gott segne dich und behüte dich; Gott lasse sein Angesicht leuchten über dir und sei dir gnädig; Gott hebe sein Angesicht über dich und gebe dir Frieden.“