



Swiss Church News

Summer 2018

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

Dear Reader,

Recently we had to say our last farewells to one of the 'grandes dames' of the Swiss Church who passed away at the age of ninety-five. Elena was part of the DNA of the church and she had an incredible institutional knowledge having been a member for ninety years. You can read a abbreviated version of Elena's eulogy on page 2. Her passing made me think how many people have come and gone since the beginning of the Swiss Church who have put their heart and soul into building our community, overcoming obstacles and tackling crises. Each generation faces its own challenges and what might have been the right recipe for the congregation decades or centuries ago might not work anymore today. We have different talents and gifts, or as Paul wrote more poetically in his letter to the community in Rome:

"For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us." (Romans 12:4-6)

Building a community and embracing change is a joint effort that needs the input and ideas of many people from all paths of life, each bringing their own stories and vision. Thanks to the efforts of dedicated individuals and groups the Swiss Church still flourishes and has an important place in the hearts of many, providing shelter and space for creativity, worship and friendship. Every Swiss Church News edition is an opportunity to get to know some of the people who carry our congregation with their knowledge and experience, and I hope you enjoy discovering some new faces in this issue.

In June it will be five years since I joined this wonderful congregation that has a very special place in my heart. It is a privilege to serve the Swiss Church as Minister and I appreciate the trust you put in me. We have

gone through a lot together, ups and downs. Looking back every experience was worth it and I have learnt an awful lot. Here is to many more years!

I am delighted to announce that Reverend Meret Engel from Romanshorn, Switzerland, will be on sabbatical at the Swiss Church from August until December, together with her husband Daniel Engeli. You can read more about Meret and Daniel on page 3.

The next two editions of the Swiss Church News will be co-edited by James Rasa, Daniel Engeli and Colin McIntyre. If you wish to include anything in the autumn or winter edition, please send an email to info@swisschurchlondon.org.uk.

This summer we will also see a new programme starting at the Swiss Church. The Art Committee, chaired by David Beck, the Head of Culture of the Swiss Embassy, upon the initiative of Curator Kirsty White and Venue Manager Nat Breitenstein, has decided to offer a summer residency to a Swiss artist to work at the church during three weeks in August. London is a hugely inspiring place and the Swiss Church is right at the centre of it. Therefore the gallery space will be transformed into a studio space where the chosen artist will be able to develop his or her work. Read more about the residency on page 3.

I wish you all a warm and happy summer with the people you love and care about!

Blessings,

Yours:

Rev. Carla Maurer

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Latest news

✚ New trustee, Company Secretary



**Nathalie Chalmers,
Company Secretary**

“I am passionate about sustainability- both from an environmental and a human perspective.

Holding three

nationalities (Swiss, British and Brazilian) and having explored a lot of the world from a young age, curiosity and concern about how the world works was instilled early on.

With a background in international relations and environmental science and policy, I am currently leading the global marine conservation communication strategy at a large environmental NGO: The Nature Conservancy. Before this, I joined the World Economic Forum and dedicated

my time to bringing sustainability issues to the forefront of key global agendas. Notably, I developed and built out the Forum's Circular Economy Initiative, and successfully instigated and drove its Ocean agenda. With an Executive Master's degree in leadership, I developed a keen interest in people and team development and enabled performance through balanced lifestyles.

I have experience in cross-sector partnership building, project strategy and management, C-suite level relationship management and building communication strategies that resonate across a variety of stakeholders. I am passionate about oceans and all they do for us, and enjoy spending time underwater.

I am keen to support and be engaged in the Swiss community in London, and hope my role as Company Secretary can help continue to develop the Swiss Church to its fullest potential.”

Eulogy: Elena Bertin 1922-2018

Elena was born in London on 18 September 1922 to French-speaking parents from the Piedmont. The family's Protestant Waldensian roots remained part of her identity throughout her life. Three years later, her brother Albert was born.

At the age of six, Elena joined the Swiss Church in London. Her mother went to the French-speaking Eglise Suisse with a Swiss friend and took along her two children. Elena and Albert have been members of the Swiss Church ever since. During her ninety-year membership Elena was involved in many aspects of the Swiss Church: the Sunday School, La Causerie, the Jeunesse Suisse; and not least the Conseil de Paroisse, which represented the views of the church members to the then all-male Consistoire.

Elena spent World War II in London. Bombs fell close to their home in Kentish town during the Blitz and the family had to seek shelter in Tottenham Court Road tube station.

After the war, Elena worked for the Citizens Advice Bureau and she discovered a passion for travelling. To be able to afford her travels, she started working Saturdays at Marks and Spencer where she met a group of loyal friends, especially her friend Joan who cared for her and stayed at her bedside until the very end.

On one of her travels to Egypt, she met Philip who would become her companion until his death

a few years ago. They shared a passion for opera. Among Elena's favourites were Puccini and Verdi.

Elena's father died in 1968. It fell to Elena to look after her mother until her death in 1986. Elena then moved from Kentish Town to Colindale, not far from her brother Albert.

Even as she became less mobile, Elena continued coming to church by car, which was made possible by her close friend Safi. Elena was like a grandmother to Safi's two boys and they became family.



Elena spent the last two years of her life at Birchwood Grange Care Home. She loved the weekly art classes and she had a group of loyal friends who cared for her in her last years, especially Joan, Margrit and Safi.

Elena was admitted to Northwick Park Hospital on the 3rd March with a chest infection where she died peacefully.

After her death, Albert said about his sister: “If the Archangel Gabriel is at the gates of heaven, I would like to believe that he has already opened them.”

We will remember Elena as a strong-minded, intelligent person, generous and full of life. Elena's absence will be felt for a long time to come.

If you would like to receive the full text of the eulogy, please contact info@swisschurchlondon.org.uk

From the Venue



**Nat
Breitenstein**

There has been much discussion recently about

‘who and what we are’ here at the Swiss Church. Whether brought on by Brexit or not, it seems timely. The questions come in the form of what brings us here, where did we come from, what do we want from our beautiful Church and from each other. How can we best commune with each other and build together.

So, I have to ask myself, what part does venue hire play in all this? For me, it is far more than just hiring out the building. Ensuring that the building is used to its best advantage—that it is safe and clean and respected—is of course important and an integral part of my job. However, it is also important to maintain awareness that all the venue's uses create some form of legacy, be that spiritual, communal or cultural. I'm a firm believer that a building's history can be not only be seen but also felt. And the Swiss Church feels good!

With this I want to reach out to all of you in our community, Swiss or not, and remind everyone that hiring the venue is open to all and no budget is too small (or big!) to consider. If you have an idea for a community gathering, cultural event, social get together etc. please remember that we are here and open to any proposal. If we can make it work, we will. Together we can keep building on making the Swiss Church open to all.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Contact me at: Venue@swisschurchlondon.org.uk

Art at the Swiss Church

✚ Art Programme

By Kirsty White

The next event in the Church's art programme curated by Kirsty White will be an evening of performances by Glasgow-based artist Romany Dear. Entitled, *'There is a duality in their feelings'*, the evening will consist of two performances: Dear's new work, *'Two fisted, many sided, tuna fem (2018)'*, and a new variation of her ongoing work *'Solo Yolo (2015-ongoing)'*. The performances continue the artist's ongoing research into movement, gender and communication and draw references from athletics, semiotics and improvisational speaking.

Romany Dear is a UK-born, Glasgow-based performer, teacher and learner who works with choreographic and body based practices across arts, education and community contexts. Over the past 5 years she has worked as an inclusive dance teacher with *'Con Cuerpos'* in Colombia and with *'Independance'* in Glasgow. Dear is one of the co-founders of Glasgow Open Dance School (G.O.D.S)—a not for profit organisation dedicated to the sharing and facilitating of free non-thematic

movement and dance practices, strongly working from the ethos of: Everybody is a dancer! Dear has recently exhibited and/or performed with *'Con Cuerpos'* in Colombia, at the Pearce Institute, Telfer Gallery and CCA in Glasgow, Siobhan Davies Studios, London and The Volksbühne in Berlin.

**Saturday 30th
June, 7pm
Admission free,
all welcome!**



Image credit: *'Solo Variations'* by Romany Dear, part of *'South of No North'*. Photo by Camilla Greenwell

The Swiss Church Art Committee are delighted to announce the inaugural August Artist Residency.

Throughout its history, the Swiss Church in London has looked to engage parishioners and cultural visitors in a dialogue between art and faith, and today runs a successful arts programme, which includes a year-round programme of performances funded by Arts Council England, as well as an annual exhibition curated by students of the MFA Curating programme at Goldsmiths, University of London. With the aim of further developing the programme the residency will be a new and exciting addition to this and will enable a Swiss artist to undertake a fully funded residency here from 6 - 26 August 2018 (3 weeks). The selected artist will be given 24-hour access to the Church's unique heritage-listed building, as well as a dedicated work space on the second floor of the building.

The aim of the residency is to foster connections and collaborations with Swiss artists. The residency is designed for self-led professional development, and experimentation,

and would suit an artist who works site-specifically, or whose practice engages with sound, light, theology, spirituality or community engagement. It offers artists a period of time to work in quiet and solitude, as well as the freedom to experiment in an accessible space that welcomes people from all paths of life and from all church traditions or none, regardless of age, race, gender or sexual orientation. We are a church that is willing to challenge itself, and is committed to supporting artists to make challenging, critically engaged work within a place of worship.

The Church is enriched by the experiences of the people that use it, and it is hoped that the research undertaken by the artist during their residency influences the future work and thinking of The Swiss Church in London.

For further information please contact:
art@swisschurchlondon.org.uk

Pentecost

A biblical story full of images

By Stephan Degen-Ballmer

In our church in Kilchberg you can find a small painted dove right at the top of the choir. It is a sign of the Holy Spirit and reminds us of Pentecost, the holiday we celebrated on the 20th of May this year. Most people who attend the services in our church don't know that there is such a dove. It is just too far away hidden up in the ceiling.

From my point of view this is somehow symptomatic. Pentecost is a Church holiday which is not as easy to understand as for example Christmas or Easter. The name Pentecost sounds quite strange in itself. The term comes originally from Greek and means simply the 50th day. In fact, Pentecost is celebrated on the seventh Sunday (49 days) after Easter and commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and other followers of Jesus Christ while they were in Jerusalem celebrating the Feast of Weeks, as described in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:1–31). Often Pentecost is also seen as the birth of the Church. The term “Pentecost” occurs not only in Acts 2:1, but also in Acts 20:16 and in 1 Corinthians 16:8. “Pentecost” indicates the Jewish Feast of the Weeks, which is celebrated 50 days after Pessach.

When we read the story of Pentecost in the Bible, we quickly recognize that this story is full of images and symbols: “When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (Acts 2:1–4)

A “sound like mighty rushing wind” and the “divided tongues as of fire” are both images for the Holy Spirit.

But what do these images mean? Wind, rushing or moving air, all these are symbols for the power of the Holy Spirit. At the very beginning of the Bible, in Genesis it says: “And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” (Gen 1:2). A bit later, when God creates the first human beings, the Scripture tells us in a very visual manner how God inspires the first human being: “then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.” (Gen 2:7) Another example is Psalm 104, for me one of the most beautiful texts. It says: “When you (God) send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground” (Psalm 104:30). These are descriptions of the Holy Spirit, which is called *ruach* in Hebrew, *pneuma* in Greek and

spiritus in Latin. All these terms describe the inconceivable, and yet effective in our lives. It is like the air, which surrounds us always and everywhere but is not visible. We feel air only in the wind, in our own breath. That is the effect of the Holy Spirit.



The other image of the Holy Spirit is fire. This image occurs in many places in the Bible. The most famous story certainly is that of Moses, who stands before a bush on fire that was not being consumed. Moses takes off his sandals and hears the call of the Lord to rescue his people from slavery in Egypt (Ex 3). Fire has also a cleaning effect and is related to the Holy Spirit.

In the Gospel of Luke, John the Baptist says: “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Luke 3:16).

And what about the dove? It doesn't appear in the account of Pentecost and yet it is a well-known symbol of the Holy Spirit. The dove also refers to the Holy Spirit in several places in the Bible. A dove shows Noah that the Flood has an end (Gen 8: 11). The dove appears when Jesus is baptized by John (Mark 1:10). In 1989, when I was a student in Basel, I had the chance to work as a steward at the ecumenical gathering of all churches in Europe. The logo of this gathering was a dove with flames of fire. It reminded everybody of the Holy Spirit. These days still resonate with me: although all these people spoke in their own language, there was a mutual understanding. All were one in Christ, shared their time, their thoughts and experiences as Christians. This for me was an experience of the Holy Spirit.

Parish trip to Exeter

Report by Claudia Strack,
Swiss teacher on sabbatical

Staying in London for a longer period of time has been a dream of mine for a long while. I like the vitality, the cultural diversity and the architectural variety of this city.

My stay exceeded all my expectations. Of course you know the city better than I do so I will spare you all the details of my fantastic touristic discoveries. Anyway the most important experience was meeting people. Londoners are polite, funny and friendly, straightforward and helpful. So I felt welcome and secure from the beginning.

Even better were the encounters with people from the Swiss Church. We share a lot! I have met people who left Switzerland decades ago in order to live in England as I exchanged my native Germany for Switzerland. Leaving your homeland is exciting and enriching but it's also sad at times to be away from your birth family. A certain longing or even homesickness always remains. For most of my fellow travellers to Exeter the opportunity to speak Swiss German, share adventures and memories are the main reasons why they participate in the yearly parish trip.

We had a lot of fun together on our trip and the food was good too. Just after our arrival we visited the exceptionally beautiful Exeter Cathedral. Some of us were even lucky enough to hear the organ after our guided tour!

On the second day we explored Killerton House and Gardens.



The gardens look like straight out of a Rosamunde Pilcher novel: the blossoming rhododendrons, the magnolias and the well trimmed lawn are so beautiful. Participants were also impressed with the Suffragette exhibition and we were wondering why women themselves were ever opposed to having the vote. Personally, I am extremely grateful for their struggle because all their achievements influence my life today in many ways. What would we be without gender equality!

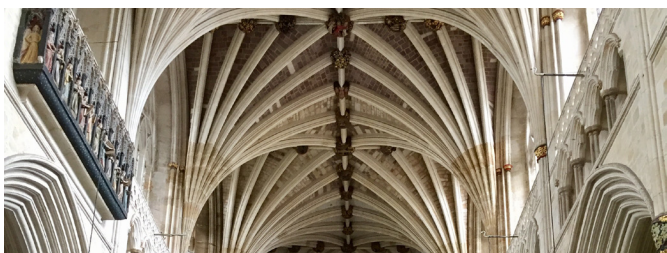
On the third day we took the train to Exmouth and took a boat trip along the gorgeous Jurassic Coast.

Also the train journey itself was a pleasure watching the beautiful springlike landscape and grazing sheep. On the other hand, I struggled at times with the typical English weather. One can't escape the rain and wind!

We have shared experiences together which created a real sense of togetherness. The journey started with a travel blessing with which I now say goodbye, wishing you that:

*God's loving kindness may guide you through your days,
present you with cheerful companionship, and shows you the beauties of
this glorious world and keep you from harm.*

Thank you for receiving me so heartily, for all the enlightening conversations and all the fun we shared. I hope to meet you all again soon.



From the Community

+ Success stories and Älper Makkaroni



By Josh Kelly

We have been able to celebrate a lot of good news during March and April regarding some of our regular breakfast guests. I am changing the names of our guests as they value their anonymity.

Michael worked over the Christmas and New Year period selling homeless calendars. He set a record for the amount of calendars sold by one vendor and although he hasn't made sufficient to get into housing, he has been able to move down to Brighton for a while for some well-earned R-and-R

David is a musician and film maker, who has been networking and applying for start-up grants and has been very successful. As a result of his hard work, he now has a rechargeable portable speaker and is able to earn money playing in cafes and busking. He was also awarded IT equipment which is enabling him to develop and promote short films.

Billy has got a part time job as an IT Trouble Shooter, has just moved into a flat and is now off the streets and self-sufficient for the first time in several years. He still pops in on a Tuesday

to give us an update and we have helped him through the process of setting up a bank account.

Sam has moved into a flat after 12yrs on the streets. Sam has always has a job but as a result was not eligible for housing support and was one of our employed but homeless breakfast guests. He was thrilled to be off the streets and fully independent again.

Jake appeared a few weeks ago, he was a regular breakfast guest years ago who is now happily housed in the South of England. He was in London, wanted to say hello and for us to catch up and to hear our latest Breakfast On The Steps news.

The role we have played and still play in supporting these members of the community is priceless, it is an important fixed point in the lives of many and it has filled me with happiness to hear these success stories on our steps.

We also have had two groups visit us from Switzerland. The first (a confirmation group of 50 from Bern) shared breakfast with us, chatted with our regular guests about their contrasting lives and then had a longer discussion session with Andy Palfreyman about his life both on and off the streets. Our second group came from Liestal and cooked a special Friday lunch of Älper Makkaroni for our wider community which was greatly appreciated.

Lastly I would like to say a big thank you to our sabbatical guests, Claudia Strack and Stephan Degen-Ballmer, for all their help supporting Breakfast On the Steps. It has been a pleasure working with you both.

+ Sabbaticals at the church



Rev. Meret Engel

Two angels will land at the Swiss Church in August: Reverend Meret Engel, and her husband Daniel Engeli who will be on a sabbatical until the end of December. They really do have two different, almost identical, surnames: Engel (which means angel), and Engeli (little angel).

Meret Engel is the Minister of the Reformed Church in Romanshorn-Salmsach in Switzerland, and has been serving the parish since 2008. Meret's interest in existential questions led her to becoming a Minister, and she loves accompanying people from all age groups on their life's journey. She has done further training in pastoral care. For Meret faith means finding traces of God in everyday life: in one's own, as well as the wider world. Therefore what is happening in the world, in politics, arts and society is closely connected with faith. In her free time, Meret loves to go mountain hiking and exploring new cities and countries.



Daniel Engeli

Meret will be your main contact for pastoral matters from 15 August until 31 December. Telephone or email the church office to get in touch with Meret.

Meret's husband Daniel Engeli will also be on a sabbatical at the Swiss Church. Daniel is a church musician and accompanies Sunday services at the Reformed Church of Romanshorn-Salmsach. He has been a passionate piano player since childhood and is now expanding his repertoire on the organ. Daniel's main profession is a high school teacher at the Cantonal School in Romanshorn. Daniel will be involved with the editing of the Swiss Church News, supporting Peter Yardley-Jones with the running of the organ recital series and welcoming visitor groups from Switzerland.

We look forward to having Meret and Daniel with us!

Events @ the Swiss Church

LEARNING ABOUT RELIGION - ISLAM

4th June, 7pm - 9pm

Reverend Stephan Degen-Ballmer from Switzerland will introduce Islam and its connection to Christianity. Everyone is invited to join. Includes dinner. Suggested donation £8. Contact sdegenballmer@bluewin.ch to sign up.

DANCE CLASSES WITH VERA THE DIVA

25 June, 10:30am

Every Tuesday evening; British museum, If you would like to join the Tuesday evening ballroom and latin dance classes at the Swiss Church, contact David Hume (dchume@btinternet.com) or check out the website www.verathediva.com

ORGAN RECITAL DONALD MACKENZIE

9th June, 5pm

With Donald MacKenzie, Odeon, Leicester Square

ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

17th June, 12:15pm

The AGM will take place after the Sunday Service. Refreshments will be served afterwards.

LIVE SCREENING FIFA WORLD CUP - SWISS GAMES

17,22 and 27 June, 6:30 pm

Watch the FIFA world cup Swiss group games live on our giant screen. Support our team and enjoy Swiss food and drinks.

WITH THE BIBLE THROUGH THE BRITISH MUSEUM

25th June, 10:30am

With Reverend Stephan Degen-Ballmer from Switzerland

LEARNING ABOUT RELIGION - THE CHRISTIAN CONFESSIONS

2nd July, 7pm - 9pm

In this evening class Reverend Stephan Degen-Ballmer from Switzerland will explain the different church confessions: Reformed, Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox... Everyone is invited to join. Includes dinner. Suggested donation £8. Contact sdegenballmer@bluewin.ch to sign up.

MUSIC FOR A SUMMER'S EVENING

19th July, 7pm - 8pm

With Jessica Broad (soprano) and Peter Yardley-Jones (piano)

SWISS NATIONAL DAY

1st August, 4pm - 9pm

Join us to celebrate Swiss National Day on the 1st of August at 79 Endell Street with the Swiss community and friends! More information on the Swiss Church webpage.

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website.

Announcements

Wedding

Trustee Peter Staeuber and Sheena Sumaria got married at the Swiss Church on 19 May. May their life as husband and wife be creative and adventurous!

Clare Edmonson and Brochan Watts got married at the Swiss Church on Easter Sunday, the 1st of April. May the light of the resurrection shine upon the happy newlyweds for many, many years to come!





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

"Whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 7:12)

"The best way to not feel hopeless is to get up and do something. Don't wait for good things to happen to you. If you go out and make some good things happen, you will fill the world with hope, you will fill yourself with hope." (Barack Obama, US President from 2009-2017)

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