



Swiss Church News

Summer 2019

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

Dear Reader,

Some people are truly inspiring. In fact, the world is full of inspirational stories and people, and in this edition I would like to introduce you to a person who has touched me with her tireless engagement for the poorest in her community. I met my friend Asea Railean through my work with the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women (EFECW). Asea is from Moldova, the poorest country in Europe, and it is also the country in Eastern Europe most affected by trafficking in human beings which mainly affects young women. Many women also come as care worker to Western Europe to support their families back home. Asea is the director of a charity that tackles poverty related issues. You can read more about Moldova and "Asea's charitable work and how you can support her, on pages 4 and 5. A Pound goes a long way in Moldova and with your contribution big or small, Asea's work can flourish and prevent people from sinking further into poverty or exploitation.

Together with my friends from the EFECW and with Asea I am planning a seminar in Moldova in October 2020. The seminar 'Make it work!' is aimed at women up to the age of 40. We will visit Asea's projects in Soroca and get inspiration to develop our own community projects. If you are interested in this seminar do get in touch with me. More details will be announced later this year.

Who are the people that inspire you? In times when the news we hear is mostly bad we should take some time out to turn our focus on the people who change things for the better. A lot of good things happen in our communities, neighbourhoods and others can be a source of inspiration for our own actions.

In this edition I would like to introduce a new column that you will find on page 6. The column "What became of..." will feature members of our congregation who have moved away. My predecessor Reverend Nathalie Dürmüller will kick off the new series and you can read what

she is up to now. Nathalie was the first woman Minister at the Swiss Church and a pioneer in this role. I am personally grateful to her for paving the way.

There have been several changes in our team. If you call the Swiss Church office you will most likely speak to Emily Rose Simons. She is the Office and Lettings Administrator and will make sure that events are running smoothly in our holy halls. Having grown up in a Jewish community, Emily Rose has a great sense for community building. New beginnings usually come with endings, and I am sad that Venue Manager Nat Breitenstein decided to leave her position. She has done a tremendous job getting our church building fit for purpose. Nat has also increased the income through hirings significantly, and it is thanks to her that we are financially in a good position. Curator and Arts Committee member Kirsty White will also leave her volunteer role at the Swiss Church to take on a fulltime position in Colchester.

From mid-May onwards there will be another new face in the office. Heidi Hohenweg will cover for Finance Administrator Anina Smith who will be on maternity leave from mid-June. We wish Anina, Ricky and Max all the very best for their growing family! Furthermore, theology students from Zurich Lisa de Andrade and Anna Lerch were on internship at the Swiss Church in April and take home many impressions from church life in the metropolis.

I wish you all a beautiful summer spiced with sources of inspiration and creativity

Yours,

Rev Carla Maurer

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Latest news

✚ From the Consistoire



**by Peter Stäuber
- President**

Dear reader,

At the beginning of April, the Consistoire and the team of the Swiss Church met up for a whole day to discuss our vision and strategy for the future. It was a very interesting and fruitful day, and I realised once more how dedicated the team and trustees are to our Church. I'm looking forward to continuing to develop the conversation in the coming months and years.

Over the past few months, there have been quite a few changes in both the team and Consistoire. Nat Breitenstein, who has been our Venue Manager for close to three years, has moved on to a different job. I would like

to express my thanks in the name of the whole Consistoire for the fantastic job that she's done – her expert and relentless work has made a huge difference to the Church.

I'd like to welcome Colin McIntyre as a new trustee. I'm very much looking forward to working with Colin, who has for a long time been an enthusiastic member of the Church and has had many jobs in the office over the years. It's great that he will contribute his experience to the Consistoire from now on.

And finally, there have been two appointments in the office. I'd like to warmly welcome Emily Rose Simons, our new Office and Lettings Administrator, and Rupert Ackroyd, our new Caretaker, to the Church. I'm very much looking forward to working with all of you!

peter.staeuber@swisschurchlondon.org.uk

FROM THE VENUE



**By Emily Rose Simons
- Office and Lettings
Administrator**

When the actors gave me a card and a rose, I became a little choked up, for it is not normal for actors to give a gift to the composer.

When the actors gave the director and the

playwright certificates of the stars named after them, I wept like a baby. We all did. The producer, the stage manager, the lighting designer, the costume designer, even the publicist. Then we looked at the set. That beautiful set. And took it down bit by bit until the only trace of the world we had built was in the love and respect we have for each other. For beneath everything; the playwrights words, performed by actors on pieces of furniture, painted floors, a treehouse, a roof, under fairy lights that reflected stars; swirled around by my voice mimicking lost souls, children and fairies – beneath everything, there was room. It was bare.

It was painted black. It was quirky in its layout. It was... a space. Just a space and nothing more. What we did was fill that space with stuff: pieces of wood, recorded sounds, lights, a sofa, human bodies, cheap coffee and Juuls. What we filled that space with was only stuff. Nothing more. But in the creation, in the decisions we made, in the commitment we kept to, the late nights I sat staring at sound files whilst production crew members were toiling in the theatre until morning, through the hard work and compassion we had for each other we became a community. A close, family community. We created a piece of art that we loved deeply, and so we loved each other. Community is not built. Community is something that happens when you build something with other people. Whether it's coming together to provide breakfast for people, realising you've been meeting once a month for decades or looking at a beautiful historic building that you are a part of as much as the plaques on the wall. Community is when you look at that thing you made together and feel a sense of collective awe So, hello! My name is Emily Rose Simons. I'm looking after your space. I hope to help you fill it with stuff. I hope to help you will fill it with stuff together. I hope you to help you continue to fill your hearts with each other and a collective sense of awe.

*If you are interested in hiring the Swiss Church for an event please contact:
Venue@swisschurchlondon.org.uk*



Tribute to Anna-Maria 'Meieli' Webb (1930-2019)

The news that our mother is still fondly remembered by so many of the congregation at the Swiss Church is a tremendous comfort to us all at this sad time for her family.

Meieli instilled a very strong Swiss affinity not only in her own children, but in her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The Swiss Church played a big part in her children's upbringing as we all attended regular service and social functions in the 1960ies and 1970ies.

Each year the entire family would travel from London to Switzerland for six weeks. One of our strongest memories is with our Grossvati, we used to climb mountains like the Niesen, Stockhorn and the Neiderhorn which overlook the beautiful Lake Thun. She will be forever in my thoughts.

David Khaihra (Meieli's son)



Tribute to Ursula Talary (1939-2018)

Ursulina Talary (née Spahr) was born on 7 May 1939 in Zürich. She met and married George Talary, from Mauritius, soon after moving to England. They had three children, George, Mark and Christina.

Ursula's association with the Swiss Church in London began in 1973. She served on the Consistoire for 25 years, from 1985 until 2009. In addition she was Vice-president of the Consistoire, assisting Edith Crack, for 12 years, from 1989 to 2000. One of her many responsibilities was managing the hiring out of the Church. This was a demanding task for a volunteer, as it involved travelling from her home in South London to meet potential hirers at Endell Street. She was a member of the Mothers Group, and hosted House Group meetings led by Philip Von Orelli at her home in Cator Road. She was also a Trustee of the Swiss Benevolent Society for many years, finally retiring in 2015.

I have many happy memories of Ursula; at Consistoire meetings, at Sunday services, and at House Group meetings; and we both shared a fondness for the 'old' Swiss Church building. On 31 October, Ursula passed away in her sleep. It was a great shock to everyone. Just a week before, we had spoken on the phone. Ursula contributed so much to the life of the Swiss Church, and had many friends there. She will be greatly missed. - Philip Maillardet

Art Programme news

by Kirsty White

I start this column with the sad news that it will be my last. While it has been my pleasure to serve on the Church's arts committee for the last two-and-a-half years, and to implement my own programme of contemporary visual art, my time at the Church is sadly coming to an end. I am moving on to a new position as Programme Manager—Exhibitions and Events at Firstsite, a contemporary art gallery in Colchester.

The new role will give me the opportunity to work with more established artists, a team dedicated to contemporary art and three purpose built gallery spaces. Most importantly however, it will give me a full-time, permanent, paid position. Like many of you at the Church, I donated my time to the art programme, a service I was willing to contribute, but one that was not always easy in an expensive city like London.

That being said, my role at the Church was highly beneficial for the experience it gave me, affording me the chance to work with eight amazing artists on seven new site-specific commissions (some of which are pictured here). Not only did I learn about what it meant to put art in a place of worship, but I also learnt more about myself as a curator, and where I want to go in the future.

I want to thank everyone I worked with at the Church for their generous support, especially David Beck, chairman of the art committee for

his sage advice and unwavering encouragement; Nat Breitenstein for her tolerance and ability to schedule almost anything; Annelore Schneider; Ariane Brillard and Jon Driscoll from the Art Committee; Colin McIntyre for all of his chats and Carla Maurer for giving me this opportunity in the first place. I am sure whoever comes in to curate in the future will do a brilliant job, and I look forward to seeing how they use the space and respond to the very specific context that is the Swiss Church in London!

All the best for the future!
Kirsty xx

Ariane Brillard has also decided to leave the Art Committee. We are very grateful for Ariane's amazing support over the years, most specifically for her idea to collaborate with the Goldsmiths curating programme which has been running for nearly 10 years now and has been a great success. We will miss Ariane's valuable input! The Art Committee

Credits:

Image 1: Edwin Pickstone, *Biblioclasm*, The Swiss Church in London, 2017. Photo by Katja Verheul

Image 2: Leonor Serrano Rivas, *The Castles of Crossed Destinies*, 2017. Photo by Christian Lübbert

Image 3: Romany Dear, *Variations on Solo Yolo (we still have many lives left to dance)*, 2015 (ongoing). Photo by Camilla Greenwell



Street Heritage

by Rachel Reid

We're living in a city where the numbers of people without shelter and the criminalization of homelessness is increasing, with public discourse circling the most callous narratives around who "deserves" our charity. "Street Heritage" is an art project that seeks to refocus minds on individual experiences of homelessness, and the incredible resilience of those who make and remake their homes in our streets.

The idea is to install blue heritage plaques in places that long term homeless have made into a home, to invite passers-by to look again at the city and people around them. The work was inspired by Andy Palfreyman, who some of you may know through his volunteering with the Swiss Church, and a photography exhibition he did at the Swiss Church a couple of years ago. The plaques are a way of encouraging others to reframe homelessness, and home making. Andy and I visited several locations where he's lived, but his first night homeless was under a stairwell next to the Southbank Skate Park. Little did he realise at the time that he'd spent the next 30 years on the streets, so that stairwell, where he lived for around a year, is an important place for him. I placed a blue plaque above the

stairwell, with Andy's name, the year he spent living there, and a few words of explanation. The plaque guides passers-by to a website, www.streetheritage.org, where you can hear Andy talking about his first night on the Southbank, and how his life has changed since.

The work questions the assumptions underlying the heritage plaque tradition. Although the blue plaques scheme invites public nominations, the criteria are for people who achieve "eminence" within a narrow range of professional fields. While I welcome any celebration of remarkable contributions to society, I'd love to see a wider conception of who and what we admire.

Unfortunately, the first plaque was removed soon after it was put up, but I'll be continuing this work in collaboration with Andy.

Andy's photographic work is on his website:

www.andypalfreyman.com

Rachel Reid is an artist and activist, you can see more of her work here: www.rachelreidsculpture.com

“The ideas come from my heart”

– An interview with charity director Asea Railean

Asea Railean is the director of the charity Soarta in the town of Soroca, Moldova. She is also a member of the coordinating committee of the European Forum of European Christian Women. Carla Maurer asked Asea about life in Moldova and the work of her charity...

Moldova is a country that many people would find difficult to locate on a map. Tell us more about it!

Sandwiched between Romania and Ukraine, Moldova is a country of outstanding beauty with its green highlands, beautiful villages and tranquil lakes. I want you to know the Moldova that I've grown to love - the country of fruits and vegetables; the country of wine and underground wine cellars; but also very hard working, hospitable and good-hearted people.

With its 2.5 million inhabitants Moldova is the smallest country in Europe, and also the poorest. It emerged as an independent republic following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The economy relies heavily on agriculture.

Moldovans respect foreigners, but the traveller to Moldova should follow the popular proverb which says: 'Hey stranger, be polite and behave normally'.

What are the biggest challenges in politics and society in Moldova?

Moldova has faced a lot of difficulties in its history. We had a war in 1990 following the declaration of independence of the Trans-Dniester region which has never been recognized and the region has remained in a state of limbo ever since.

Moldova is the poorest country in Europe. Child poverty is one of the most important problems.

The country is sadly known as one of the major sources of human trafficking in Europe, with 79% of the victims being trafficked for sexual exploitation purposes. The justice system is highly corrupt, the educational system outdated and good medical care unaffordable for most people.

Alcoholism is a problem, especially in rural areas, and elderly people struggle to survive on their low state pension.

The European Parliament recently defined Moldova as eroding democratic standards. Earlier in 2018 year, the European Commission froze a 100 million euro macro-financial aid package for Moldova at its first tranche.



How is life in Moldova?

Unless you happen to belong to a restricted elite (academics, politicians, foreign diplomats and top civil servants) or hold a job in a good industry (finance and IT) life in Moldova is very difficult, especially for old people who live in the countryside. You have to have a crop field or livestock, otherwise you cannot survive. The situation is a bit better in the capital Chisinau. So, people see no future here. Those who can, leave the country. Many children remain in Moldova without anyone to take care of them, as their parents try to make money abroad. Also the numbers of orphaned children are growing. I have been helping old people, and their life in winter is scary. It is common that elderly people to only eat potatoes and bread for two weeks in order to afford the heating costs in winter. Some people beg for money or sell pot flowers to make ends meet. Even worse, some people hide and wait to die from hunger.

“People hide and wait to die from hunger...”

Tell us more about yourself and the charity work you do to help people in your region...

In 2002, on the recommendation of an Orthodox priest, I founded the charity association Soarta that aims to help people in need. We want to bring change through valuing people and create positive community experiences. Social inclusion in rural areas, promoting human rights, development of civic participation and increasing local initiatives are at the core of Soarta. We have developed several programs to help the elderly, children, young people and women, namely to offer medical care and hot meals at home, day-care centers, programmes for orphaned children or children whose parents live abroad and prevent school drop-out. We also try to integrate young women in society and help them to open their own business to lower the risk of human trafficking.

Where did you get the ideas from for your charity work and who inspires you?

The ideas come from my heart, but also from the needs of people. You cannot remain indifferent to the suffering of people! As an example, we started aiding the elderly with basic humanitarian aid by providing warm lunches and social laundry. We now also provide home-based medical care, we run a day care centre with a volunteer team of over 65. We have an eye clinic and distribute coal and wool to elderly people in winter. All these ideas came from the needs of the elderly, from the discussions with them - but also from the exchange of experience I had personally abroad. To raise money for our projects, we started to grow strawberries in greenhouses. This pays for our care work.

The people I care for are my source of inspiration. I often want to give up as we struggle with financial support for our projects. But then I see the smile on their lips, people's gratitude - and then I cannot really stop there. Of course, inspiration also comes from my Christian faith to help my neighbor and those who suffer. And last but not least, inspiration comes from the people around me: my family, my relatives, my friends, my donors and sponsors - who encourage me, trust me and help me - everyone does the best they can! It is the most important role of a Christian in society: to love one another as we love God. Our love for God and for our neighbor and the inherent dignity of every human being demands that we take responsibility for the people around us.

Asea, thank you very much the interview!



MAKE A DONATION

The Swiss Church will collect donations and transfer 100% of the collected money directly to Soarta. If you would like to support Asea's work, please send your donation to the Swiss Church bank account by 15 July with the narrative: 'Soroca'.

£3 pays for one day of meals for an elderly person.
£75 pays for one month of meals for an elderly person.
£100 pays for one month of medical care for an elderly at home.
£150 pays for a child to go to school for a month (including food, clothing, footwear, school recollections, etc.)
£3000-5000 helps a woman to start a home business.
£10 000 pays for a greenhouse, where we can grow strawberries and raise money for our projects.

Account: 61410512
Sortcode: 40-03-15
IBAN: GB58MIDL40031561410512



From the Community

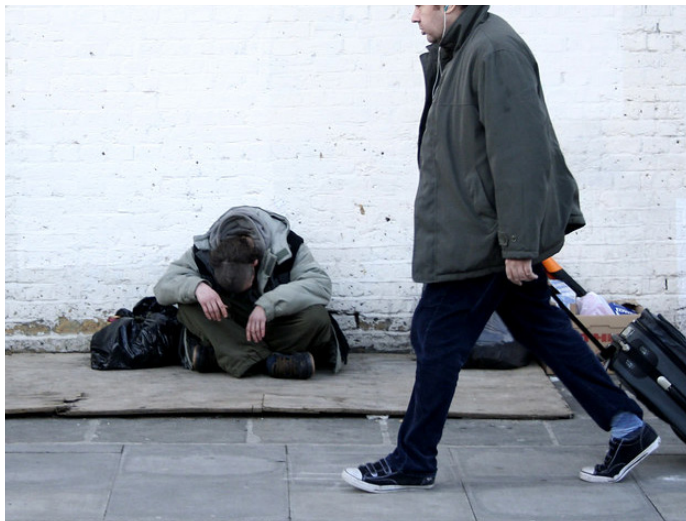
“It’s easy to ignore them”

- By Luca Boetschi, Intern

When I arrived in London I quickly realized I was not in Switzerland anymore. I was surprised by how many homeless people I saw. Even on the way from the underground station to my Airbnb I saw several homeless people. Some were in tents, some sitting on benches and others lying on the floor. Coming from Basel in Switzerland where the homeless rate is very low, I am used to the homeless people living in one area while in London you can find them everywhere. This makes it easy to get used to them and to ignore them, which is certainly a bad habit. I was in London for two weeks and got to know the city from a different view.

During my stay I worked in the Swiss church as an intern and helped mostly in the office. I also helped with the Goldsmiths’ exhibition and the Breakfast on the Steps. This is a charity breakfast for the homeless which is held once a week. I got to know many homeless people, all of them very polite and willing to talk. I also got to know Andy, who used to be homeless and used to come to the Breakfast on the Steps. He showed me the city from a different perspective. He showed me where the homeless live and some places where they can get food or shelter. It was very impactful to see how a homeless person lives, what he has to go through every day and how people interact with him.

In my opinion it is very important to not ignore homelessness just because other problems have come up. In a city where rough sleepers are everywhere it is crucial to not give up on the problem but to find a way to help solve it.



What became of...

Nathalie Dürmüller

Minister at the Swiss Church in London 2010-2013



So many things have changed since I left the Swiss Church in London over six years ago! What changed the most is that I’m now a mother of two wonderful girls: Leonie (4) and Pauline (soon turning 2) and that Robert and I got married in May 2014. We feel so blessed to have a family. Although like

many parents of toddlers we have now hardly any time left for things that we used to enjoy in London...

Right now I’m working as a Minister once again in the Parish of Zurich in the area of Höngg, Wipkingen West and Oberengstringen which is really close to where we live. I thoroughly enjoy working here and being part of a big team of seven Ministers and many social workers and other staff. This job is unfortunately only temporary as the church in the Canton of Zurich has to reduce significantly the amount of Ministers. My professional future is therefore still undecided.

When I returned from the UK it was challenging at first to find my way back into Swiss life. I worked as a temporary Minister at Stadtkirche Aarau and set up our little Fairtrade jewellery business at the same time. My contract in Aarau ended just before Leonie’s birth. As I couldn’t imagine being a fulltime stay-at-home mum I took the opportunity to complete a training course in Media and Communications at a well known journalist school in Lucerne. After that I had the opportunity to work with the communications team at the CBM (Christian Blind Mission). As my heart always beats for people in need this opportunity felt like a gift from heaven. I also started to write articles for a church newspaper to practice my writing skills, which has always been a passion of mine. Finally I felt it was time to go back to Ministry and when Pauline was old enough to attend a nursery I found the ministry I’m leading now. I recently also got the opportunity to speak on Swiss National TV in a show called “Wort zum Sonntag” where Ministers or chaplains give a short talk about current affairs from a Christian perspective. Rather than a short sermon it is a comment and reaches an audience of about 350’000 viewers. You can find the talks online! (www.srf.ch)

I often think back to my time at the Swiss Church with a warm feeling in my heart. It was a truly special time for me and has significantly influenced my way of working and thinking. I’m truly grateful for everything that I have learnt from you and alongside you. Hopefully I can visit again soon!

Events @ the Swiss Church

Church services: every first and third Sunday of the month, 11am
5 May, 19 May, 2 June, 16 June, 7 July, 21 July

Followed by lunch or refreshments.
Communion every first Sunday of the month.

Everyone is invited to join our Sunday services, no matter what faith tradition (or none) you come from. There are no church services in August.

Whit Sunday, 9 June, 11am

No service at the Swiss Church! We are invited to join St Columba's Church of Scotland, Pont Street, Knightsbridge

Every Tuesday, 8-10am: Breakfast on the Steps

Join us for food and fellowship. If you would like to volunteer, get in touch with Josh (josh.kelly@swisschurchlondon.org.uk)

Concerts

12 May, 7:30pm Alberto Giurioli
Piano Concert (£16.50, or £19.80 on eventbrite)

16 May, 7pm Gondwana Children's Concert (free)

10 August, 5pm David Von Behren
Organ Concert (free)

Parish visits from Switzerland

Kilchberg-Rünenberg-Zeglingen, 30 May, 4pm

Reverend Stephan Degen-Ballmer with parish group

Parish group Furttal, 31 May, 10am

Reverend Nadja Boeck with youth group - you are most welcome to join the group visits!

Swiss National Day, 1 August

Programme to be confirmed. Please consult the Swiss Church webpage. We are still looking for volunteers who are able and willing to organise the event. Contact Carla if you would like to help.

Sermon at Fraumünster, Zurich, 25 August, 10am

Carla is once again invited to preach at the Fraumünster church in the heart of Zurich. The service will be led by Rev Niklaus Peter. Followed by coffee and tea and a short presentation about the Swiss Church.

27-30 August, London City Pilgrimage

Discover London by foot with Rev Michael Schaar from the Zurich pilgrimage centre and Rev Carla Maurer. It would be wonderful to have some members of the Swiss Church congregation join the group from Zurich to tell them about life in London and build new friendships. You can join for selected dates or the whole programme. More details will be on the webpage soon, or contact Carla.

Our Sunday Services are held at the Swiss Church in Endell Street at 11am. They are held on the first and third Sunday of the month (unless otherwise stated). The sermons are in English and the liturgy and hymns are German and French. A meal is served after the services. The Swiss Church is rooted in the Reformed tradition but people from all denominations are welcome.

Announcements

Obituary

Margaret Reynolds, member of the Swiss Church congregation, has passed away in the morning of Friday 5 April. She suffered a stroke at the beginning of the year. We will miss Margaret's calm and reassuring presence tremendously. Our thoughts are with her son Chris and his family in this difficult time. There will be a memorial service at the Swiss Church. For details please contact Carla.

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Frauenverein

Every first Tuesday of the month.
Mrs Cecile Mistry 07778 508 405

La Causerie

Every second Tuesday of the month.
Mrs Lisa Hall-Zeller, 020 8894 2114

Mothers' Group

Every second Wednesday of the month.

Vegsil


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VEGSIL annual meeting

The annual meeting of the 'Verein Ehemaliger Glieder der Schweizerkirche in London' will take place at the Fraumünster church in Zurich, Switzerland on 25 August following the local service.



"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world."

*(Anne Frank, 1929-1945,
victim of the Holocaust)*

"Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Live peaceably with all. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

(Rom 12:9-21)

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