



Swiss Church News

Winter 2019

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

Dear Readers,

The past few months have been fascinating and I have thoroughly enjoyed the many stimulating ventures and encounters at the Swiss Church. August ended with a glorious week, which we were honoured to spend with a pilgrimage group from Zurich, led by Reverend Michael Schaar. We walked from Limehouse to Angel along Regent's Canal, and on the way stopped at St Paul's Old Ford Church in Mile End. We also walked along a part of the North London Parkland Walk and went on a guided tour of Highgate West Cemetery where we heard some incredible London stories and learnt about the history and significance of the great cemeteries scattered around London. No trip to England is complete without Fish'n'Chips and so we took our guests from Switzerland to The Grapes, a traditional pub in Limehouse which is mentioned in one of Charles Dickens' novels. Michael has already discussed bringing the two groups together again to walk the Thames path in summer 2021. You will hear more about this in due course.

It was also a great pleasure to have Swiss primary teacher Maja Wachter in our team for the duration of her sabbatical. You can read more about Maja's experience on page 6. We wished Maja could have stayed longer. It was inspiring to have her fresh view on how we do things at the Church, and to have such positive feedback on the work we do. In the midst of our daily routine it is easy to forget how incredibly well our small community has recovered from the daunting challenges in recent years. We stood up, shook off the dust, and here we are: prospering, growing and creating space for people from all paths of life to be Church together in 21st century.

There is currently a great need for open and safe community spaces. Many people are starting to feel the impact of global changes and political instability in their day-to-day life. This can be unsettling and cause anxiety. Religious communities traditionally are not only places of worship but also meeting points for people from all paths of life. However,

religious communities also have a history of taking advantage of the most vulnerable groups to further their own objectives and principles. They have a history of excluding or brainwashing critical minded spirits who don't express their faith in a certain way or follow certain doctrines. A Church fit for the 21st century is a Church that serenely stands by its Christian faith whilst leaving space for doubts, questions and creative expressions. We can all learn from each other and shape the significance of religious community in openness and freedom. I hope that we can be and become such a community.

There is much to look forward to in the New Year. I would like to mention the workshop *Make it Work!* that I have been planning in collaboration with a team from the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women. Up to 12 women aged 18-35 from different European countries will travel to Moldova from 7-11 October 2020, where we will learn from local community projects, working in challenging social and economic circumstances, how to start grassroot initiatives. We will meet inspiring project leaders and find ways to translate these experiences for our own communities and context. Find out how to apply for this exciting opportunity: www.efecw.net/news/make-it-work.html

I wish you a blessed Christmas and a peaceful festive season!

Rev Carla Maurer

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Latest News

✚ From the Consistoire - by Peter Stäuber, President



Dear Readers,
'Consistoire' is not a very common word - even Swiss people are at times mystified by it. Often when I tell people about the Swiss Church and my role in it, they want to know more: What is the Consistoire, and what exactly is it that we do? As many readers of this Newsletter might be similarly curious,

this might be a good place to give an answer.

As the supervisory body of the Church, we usually meet every two months to take stock of what's been happening over the preceding period, and to discuss questions relating to the governance and day-to-day running of the church. This can be anything from fundraising strategies to the suitability of new hiring clients - or deciding how much money to spend on a new dishwasher.

A particular focus at the moment is our effort to keep our building in a good state of repair, and to work on improving the space for use by the Church community as well as our hirers. We decide on priorities for improvement works and compare the various offers we've received. As such, we're supporting the tireless work of our brilliant team that deals with these issues on a daily basis.

The experience and knowledge of our fantastic Consistoire members in various fields is invaluable in this endeavour - and of course we're always happy for new people with all sorts of skill-sets to join us. If you're interested in the work we do and consider joining us, let us know!

Best wishes,
Peter

✚ The VEGSIL AGM 2019 - A report by Co-President Erika and Chris Dyke

The VEGSIL is the 'Verein Ehemaliger Glieder der Schweizer Kirche in London', or society of former members of the Swiss Church in London. The VEGSIL annual assembly takes usually place in August in one of our partner churches in Switzerland.



The AGM of the society was held in Zürich on Sunday the 25th August. Such a gorgeous day with the sun shining brightly to mark the last week of high summer. We were guests of the Fraumünster Kirche in Zürich and joined in with about 50 locals for their Sunday morning worship. Carla joined in a team service with the local minister Niklaus Peter. One of our members read the lesson and we all did our best with the singing, including "All Things Bright and Beautiful".



The AGM is a chance to meet old friends over a lunch with cakes and coffee to follow but we do decide things too. After a description from Carla on the year's events in the church in London there was a peek into the future. Basically things seem to be going well. The finances are being sorted out and the church remains a busy venue for both cultural and pastoral events. Marianne Fisher-Hertig was also there with husband Geoff to back up the report and give an insight into the activities of the Mother's Group (Gradually becoming a Grandmother's Group!)

The members voted to give their customary donation to the church in London which based on the downward spiral of the pound was worth even more by the end of the meeting! Joint Presidents Erika and Chris gave their rundown on their activities in the last year which has comprised getting out of Valais to meet members at social events. We have decided to move next year's meeting one week earlier in August with the probable venue in Basel. Also over

the next year Erika and Chris will be trying to visit some of the churches which have been most generous in supporting their colleagues in London, to say thanks and give an update.

Afterwards we were all treated to a guided tour of the Fraumünster Kirche. This was an excellent opportunity to see the impressive Chagall Fenster. It was fascinating to see the background to such an old established church. Who would have thought it started in a field near the lake!



Besides the local events Erika and Chris will be taking part in the musical Zorro in Visp, Valais from the 31st Jan- 8th Feb 2020 We can offer accommodation locally if you are brave enough to cross the mountains to sample the fresh mountain air of Valais. Get in touch!

The Vegsil meeting 2020 will take place at Tituskirche, Basel on the 23rd August.

'Behold, The Invisible!'

An exhibition by Artist in Residence Hamed Maiye



A collaborative installation and performance exploring the parallels between surrealism, iconography and reality. Drawing from spiritual identity, personal experience and dream, we are invited to enter a portal of reflection. Marking the end of his Swiss Church residency, Hamed Maiye invites guests into a personal and alternate realm.

Dates: 21 and 22 November. Details will be confirmed soon, please check the Swiss Church webpage.

Changes in the Arts Committee

The Arts Committee is going through a period of change. We are sad to have to say goodbye to two longstanding members, David Beck and Annelore Schneider.

David Beck, Head of Culture at the Swiss Embassy, has decided to step down as Chair of the Committee. David's input in the past years is invaluable for the furthering of the Swiss Church as a cultural space. His contribution has raised the reputation of the Church as an art space in its own right. David has worked with various artists and curators to give them the support they needed to put on shows of high quality at the Swiss Church. We will miss his expertise and his positive energy in our team!



Annelore Schneider, artist and art teacher from Neuchatel, was a member of the Arts Committee for nearly seven years. She has made a huge contribution in the selection processes for the Goldsmiths collaboration and the artists residencies and organised unforgettable film nights showing short films from Swiss and international artists. We wish her all the very best for the new professional opportunities!

We are lucky to welcome Daniella Rossi as a new member of the Arts Committee, and Fatuma Osman as an advisor.

Daniella Rossi is a Fine Arts professional who works with emerging artists to develop their careers. She has spent over a decade in the art world between New York and London. She recently curated Andy Palfreyman's exhibition 'Looking Down' which was a great success.

Fatuma Osman works at the Swiss Embassy in the department of Cultural Affairs and is the Company Secretary of the Swiss Cultural Fund. A Goldsmiths graduate herself, she will join the Arts Committee as an advisor in the selection process of the Goldsmiths collaboration.

Looking Back

The artistic highlight of autumn so far was without doubt the exhibition 'Looking Down' by artist photographer Andy Palfreyman. Fifteen beautiful and sometimes provoking but always meaningful photographs were exhibited on low plinths showing London's pavement and hidden corners through the eyes of a homeless person. The collaboration with curator Daniella Rossi and PR professional Shelley Bennett contributed to the great success of the exhibition. We even made it onto the Robert Elms show on Radio London!



Andy Palfreyman's photographs can be purchased for £70 at the Swiss Church office.

Please contact Emily Rose (venue@swisschurchlondon.org.uk) if you would like to purchase one of the photographs. You can see them online: www.andypalfreyman.com



“It’s so peaceful and quiet around the Lake Sempach”

Report from an intergenerational meeting, by Carla Maurer

Every year in October, Reverend Hans Weber from Sempach in Switzerland comes to visit the Swiss Church with his confirmation class. This is a yearly fixture in our calendar that we always look forward to. Hans and I met during the Minister training in 2012 and have kept in touch ever since. The Reformed Church of Sempach and Sursee is one of our main partner churches in Switzerland. The confirmation students come from different villages and towns around the lake. This year their visit fell on Yom Kippur so we took this opportunity to learn more about the most important Jewish festival and to think about reconciliation and forgiveness which are also key values in the Christian faith. Lettings Administrator Emily Rose Simons describes on the following page how she spends Yom Kippur with her family.

Susanne Singh accompanied the midday service on the piano and some the confirmation students wrote their own prayers. After the service we were treated to a delicious risotto cooked by our Swiss visitors, and the ladies from the Mothers Group brought cakes too! I spoke to Rev Hans, members of the Swiss Church Mothers Group and some of the confirmation students:



Matthieu, Elena and Leila (14): “It’s so peaceful and quiet around Lake Sempach. There is hardly any traffic. It can be really hectic here in London and all the people on the tube are quite overwhelming! Yesterday we were stuck in traffic when we went on the hop-on hop-off bus, because of an accident and the demonstration by the climate activists. We really like the typically London things such as the red phone box, black cabs and red buses.”



Nina (20), Mara (17): “We went to a bookshop yesterday and were surprised by the selection of books. The majority were about business and money and what we’ve done wrong in this world. The books have titles such as *How to make money work* or *How to make money with least effort* or they are about start-ups and team leadership. In Switzerland the selection of books are much more about wellbeing and travelling and generally more positive rather than focussing on what’s going wrong.”

Rev Hans Weber: “The main reason we come to London every year is the Swiss Church. Without this connection we wouldn’t come here. The talk with Andy who was street homeless for many years leaves its marks, and the young people can see how a church can effectively do good work in its context. In Sempach I also organise an encounter with a prisoner as part of the programme. Then their encounter with the Mothers Group of the Swiss Church is a great way to experience a lively community and hear the stories of

people who emigrated from Switzerland. The Swiss Church is an island of peace in the midst of this hectic London week.”

Margrit (Mothers Group): “I feel so old surrounded by these young people! Our group was founded when we were young mothers in the 1960ies and 1970ies. We still meet regularly although we are now grandmothers and great-grandmothers. I remember my first flight to London over fifty years ago was with a propeller-driven aeroplane.”

Vreni (Mothers Group): “I think it’s really inspiring to meet young people from Switzerland. They can give us something and I hope we can give them something in return too. My motto is I want to see the world in perfect harmony and I hope this can become true for the next generation.”

Lotti (Mothers Group): “It’s great that they can travel to London so young! Travelling has changed a lot in recent years.”



Matthieu, Elena and Leila (14):

“The Swiss Church is a beautiful room, light flooded, and we like that there are no pews. It makes you feel welcome. We thought it was very good that we spoke about Yom Kippur in the church service today and that we think about other religions as well. It’s also great that Catholic and Reformed Christians worship together. It must be important for the Swiss in London to have this meeting place. They must miss their fondue!”

“Sit, read, sleep and... talk” - Yom Kippur with the Simons family, by Emily Rose Simons

Yom Kippur is the Day of Atonement for Jewish people. The day of recounting your sins, the day of taking stock of your life; the day that you remember that your entire life is framed by the inevitability of death, that the Lord chooses the length of your life, but does not choose the quality of your choices. We take stock of our sins. We think how we can improve.

We spend all day in synagogue, fasting and beating our chests. We hear the shofar (the rams horn) blow, and it is over for another year.

I'm going to be honest. My family don't spend all day in synagogue. The religious part of my extended family does, but my parents and I are not in that section. For me, Yom Kippur has always been a strange day. We light the Yartzeit candle (the candle for remembrance that burns for an entire day), which in recent years has been accompanied by a second candle that remembers my grandfather who passed away at the holiest point of Yom Kippur. We don't switch on the television. We don't eat meals. My family sits, reads, sleep and.. talk. My father somehow manages to get all of us to synagogue by the final part.

It's a strange day, and to request a day off work so I can sit with my family in awkward silence sounds like madness – but it's a day of reflection and is important.

It's also a strange day because it's not that normal for Judaism to think about sin. Usually Judaism is about mitzvot (good deeds). Mitzvot (plural of mitzvah) include: lighting candles on the Sabbath, saying morning prayers, seeing your grandma, giving to charity, getting married, having children, getting drunk on certain Jewish festivals and baking challah. At university, a group of religious boys jokingly kept a tally of their mitzvot as a competition.

But then as soon as we finish the honey cake from Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) we spend a week counting down to Yom Kippur and recounting our sins. It's an odd and vulnerable time. Especially for English Jews, for whom thinking of ourselves as humans with emotions is naturally avoided. When I was a child, I phoned up all my friends to say sorry for anything bad I might have done. My parents thought this was a bit much.

The end of Yom Kippur is the strangest part. No longer at home, sleeping, reading or chatting with my mum. Stuck in the overflow of the overflow ladies' gallery in the overflow service of Woodside Park synagogue, listening to the male

choir ascend and ascend in key changes, I feel the weight of my family, my community, of 5000 years of history, of the universe, of a deity I'm not entirely sure exists and, with that weight, I look at myself and my life and my choices and.. and.

I'm going to be honest with you again. It is Erev Yom Kippur right now, I am in the church and I am typing this article. Let's go through my sins at this moment, one of the most holy moments of the year: I am typing on a key board, I am creating something, I am working, I am using electricity. Soon I will go to playwriting class, because my family agrees that this is more important than me spending this evening with them. And when it is not a holy day, I wear trousers, I wear short sleeves, I drink non-kosher wine, I have relationships that would make most of Leviticus blush and I ate pork (the most unkosher food) at my friend's house in Serbia because it is more important for me to honour and accept her family's hospitality than it is to keep myself clean from sin, because if I am to look at my life through sin, I will be blinded.

In the time I have been at the church I have self-evaluated on a regular basis, and I have come to the conclusion that 'A': being perfect at my job is intrinsically impossible (I believe I have mentioned this before), 'B': the positives things I do (usually) outweigh my mistakes and 'C': I am prepared to resolve my mistakes in the best way. I am grateful to be part of a team that is hugely supportive (and forgiving).

However, in the time I have been on this earth, my self-evaluations aren't always as rational. I hope that tomorrow, as the shofar sounds, I will remember that a) the perfect life is intrinsically impossible, 'B': the positives things I do (usually)

outweigh my mistakes and c) I am prepared to resolve my mistakes in the best way. This is wishful thinking. Life is much more impossible. Positive actions in life aren't as easy to quantify as income from hirings or testing the fire alarm. It is not as easy to resolve mistakes made in relationships.

On Yom Kippur we remember that life is framed by the inevitability of death but, on earth, people are remembered for their mitzvot; For their smile, their charity, their children, their love, their kindness. No one is shadowing another living being with a note pad marking down their mistakes and sins. No one. As soon as that shofar blows tomorrow I resolve myself to see life through my mitzvot, through the positive actions no matter how small; to understand that life is impossible, so one has to count the good because mistakes will happen, and I to promise to repair any damage caused. Maybe Yom Kippur is simply part this last part, resolving the mistakes, the part 'C' of the self-evaluation.



From the Community

A sabbatical at the Swiss Church

My name is Maja Wachter. I'm a primary school teacher in Winterthur. I spent a sabbatical at the Swiss Church from 19 August to 6 October. I'll remember the wonderful, unforgettable time I had for ever! From the beginning I was warmly welcomed by the team and got an insight into the varied work that is done day by day at the Swiss Church. A successful start was accompanying the pilgrim group from Zurich, along Regent's Canal. I got to know the hidden places of this big city.

A completely new experience for me was the weekly "Breakfast on the Steps". The contact with homeless people enabled me to walk through the streets of London with a different view. Meeting Andy also made me feel confident. We visited the British Museum together and finished the beautiful afternoon with scones and coffee. How wonderful it was to see Andy's successful exhibition "Looking Down"! He is a true artist!

I appreciated the friendliness of the Frauenverein, and the Mother's Group. At one of their meetings I introduced them to the Swiss painter Felix Vallotton, whose exhibition at the

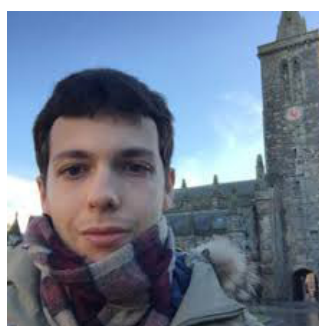


Royal Academy we later visited, and admired.

At this point I would like to express a special thanks to Carla. She took me to various meetings and discussions, gave me a lot of freedom to discover London, and impressed me with her tireless commitment to the church and her profound sermons. Time flew by. Happy and grateful, I look back on a unique experience. On my way home, I took with me a piece of serenity and openness from the many dear people I met. Thanks a lot all of you!

What became of...

Niccolò Aliano



After leaving London in August 2016 to pursue a masters in Reformation Studies in St. Andrews, I liked Scotland so much that

I decided to remain there. I began a PhD at the University of Edinburgh which—unsurprisingly—is proving both challenging and rewarding. I am researching James Ussher, an early seventeenth-century Irish archbishop who lived in England for many years, and the relationship between his religion and theology on the one hand and his friendships on the other—an interesting mix of intellectual, social, and theological history! Doing a PhD is not only reading and writing, though. I regularly need to

travel to attend and occasionally present papers at conferences (the next is in late November in Cambridge, wish me luck!) as well as do scavenger hunts for sources in archives.

Research is not my only preoccupation, however. You might remember that when I left London I was discerning the possibility of ordained ministry. This has become very concrete after years of reflection, prayer, and many interviews. In May this year I finally completed the long discernment process and can begin studies to be ordained a priest in the Scottish Episcopal Church (SEC). The "Pisky" Church is Scotland's member of the worldwide Anglican Communion, and though we may sometimes look similar to the Church of England, we are independent and thoroughly Scottish! Thanks to a new training mode, I will not have to go to theological college, but will work three days a week in a Pisky congregation and study independently the other days. The details of my training plans are still to be determined, though, because I have decided to continue with my PhD full-time for at least another year before beginning ministry education.

Beside studies and plans for the future,

life in Edinburgh is great. I am glad to have found a spiritual home in the small congregation of St. Vincent's Chapel in Stockbridge, where I have been blessed and supported by a fascinating, welcoming, and eclectic mix of people. At St. Vincent's I help with services almost every Sunday, and on occasion officiate at Evensong. I have also made lots of new friends in the University, both from Scotland and the rest of the world, and we especially enjoy having meals together. Indeed, we had a great fondue last Friday! I am in London fairly regularly, not only for research but also to visit old friends, including at the Swiss Church. I look back with fondness to the time spent with you all, and I am very grateful for your inspiration and warm friendships which continue even today. It is always an immense pleasure to stop by to say hello and, occasionally, to preach! I very much look forward to being back with you in early December.

In the mean time, lots of love to everybody in Endell Street,

Niccolò

Niccolò will lead the service on Sunday, 1st December.

Events @ the Swiss Church

Church services: every first and third Sunday of the month, 11am

3 November, 17 November, 1 December, 15 December (5pm), 5 January, 19 January, 2 February, 16 February

Followed by lunch or refreshments.
Communion and choir every first Sunday of the month.
Everyone is invited to join our Sunday services.

Commemoration service, 17 November, 11am

We will remember those who have recently passed away and the people we miss in our lives, and light candles in their memory. You can give the names you would like to be read out to the Minister ahead of the service.

Samichlaus und Räbeliechtliumzug, 8 December, 2pm

Children can craft their own presents and carve their own Rabe for the traditional turnip tradition. The Samichlaus (Father Christmas) will also make a visit and listen to the children's Sprüchli. Please sign up with carla.maurer@swisschurchlondon.org.uk

Christmas Carol Service, 15 December, 5pm

English, German and French Christmas carols with choir. Followed by mulled wine and mince pies.

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

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

Exhibition 'Behold, the Invisible!'

By Hamed Maiye
Performances and installations on 21 and 22 November. Details tbc.

Concerts

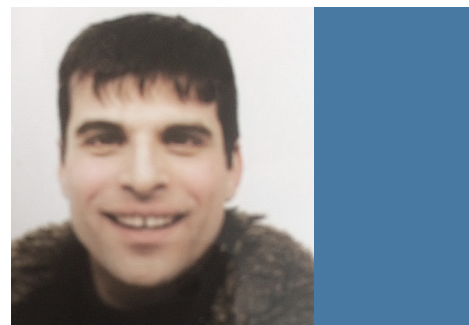
- 2 November, 5pm: Organ recital with Katelyn Emerson
- 2 December, 7pm: Windsor Castle School
- 14 December, 7pm: High Holborn Chamber Choir (Note: change of date!)
- 15 December, 5pm: Christmas Carols
- 1 February, 5pm: Organ recital with Peter Stevens

Announcements



Baptism

Astrid Verena Hefstone, daughter of Verena Hefti and Dean Johnstone, was baptised on 6 October. Lena Trudy Helen Gray, daughter of Sonja and Pieter Gray, was baptised on 20 October. We are pleased to welcome Astrid and Lena as new members of the worldwide Christian community! May God bless and protect you.



Tribute

Roger Nicolas Kitsis (born 1961), the son of Maria Kitsis, former President of the Frauenverein, passed away on 13 August. An accident took him away far too early. Roger loved life and had many friends. With his various talents he helped people out where he could. He had a heart for people in need and was actively involved with charitable work for the homeless and mental health issues. Roger leaves a big empty space in the life of the people who loved him. He is missed every day.

Our thought and prayers are particularly with Maria and Andrew and with Roger's wife Isabella in this time of immense pain.

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Editors
Carla Maurer, Colin McIntyre & James Rasa
020 7836 1418
info@swisschurchlondon.org.uk

Website
www.swisschurchlondon.org.uk
You can download the latest Swiss Church News on our website.

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

Mr Georges Keller
Kirchweg 7, 8196 Wil
+41 79 759 21 93
kellerg@sunrise.ch

Presidents Erika and Chris Dyke
erikadyke007@gmail.com
chris@macrolevel.co.uk

"Think of Yom Kippur as a lookout on the top of a mountain that you have been climbing all year. See your days and their moments spread out before you. Be willing to look now at this big picture of your life. Your ultimate goals. Your beliefs. See each person in your life as part of that picture. What lesson have they taught you even if you had to learn it through pain? What message is God sending you by putting this person in your life?"

(Sara Debbie Gutfreund, writer and counsellor)

**"Come now, let us settle the matter,"
says the Lord.**

**"Though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;**

**though they are red as crimson,
they shall be like wool."**

(Isaiah 1:18)

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The Swiss Church in London
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Contacts
Minister
Rev. Carla Maurer
020 8350 4916
079 6853 0380
carla.maurer@swisschurchlondon.org.uk

President of the Consistoire
Mr Peter Stäuber
Peter.staeuber@gmail.com

Organist
Peter Yardley-Jones
pyj@swisschurchlondon.org.uk

**Swiss Church in London,
79 Endell Street
London WC2H 9DY
Tel: 020 7836 1418**

info@swisschurchlondon.org.uk
www.swisschurchlondon.org.uk
Twitter: @SwissChurchLond &
@SwissRevLondon

Carla Maurer's blog:
swissvicarlondon.blogspot.co.uk