



Swiss Church News

Spring 2020

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

Dear Reader,

Training as a church minister in the Protestant Church in Switzerland involves six years of theological training at university which I mostly spent in Bern. I have very fond memories of those years and the people I've met. Each one of them had their own reasons to study theology. Some came from a family of church ministers and followed their parents' professional path, others had a strong sense of justice and were drawn to changing the world; others were on a mission to convert as many 'unbelievers' as possible to Christian faith, others (like me) came to theology with the big questions of life and a longing for purpose. In retrospect for me it was a mixture of curiosity, coincidence and some pretty good student parties (only the department of geography could match our legendary parties) that led me to explore Christian faith more deeply. As an agnostic it took me a while to reconcile my curiosity with my hesitation to have anything to do with church and belief in God. The one thing I never imagined for myself was ordained ministry, but that's exactly the turn my life took.

During the second part of my training in a parish church, I went on long walks with the Minister who trained me, to discuss my experiences. I remember one of those walks particularly well when he said: "As an ordained minister you must be prepared that you will be like a white screen, since people will project all kind of things on you." Christians in general and religious leaders in particular, are often expected to hold up higher moral standards, and behave more reasonably, calmly and ethically. This can be frustrating, as it is basically impossible to live up to those expectations. Religious faith is a way to

live with the all too human side of our being, and to walk the path of being human humbly, knowing that that we are only a small part of something much bigger.

For this New Year and decade let us encounter each other without prejudice. Let us try and discover the universe that lies in each person we meet, the people that cross our path, and even more importantly, the people we think we know all too well. We never know what is going on behind the scenes and what heartache people suffer. Forgiveness and generosity are not just Christian principals. They are a healing power for the entire world.

I am excited to announce that 2020 will again bring a number of talented curators and artists to the Swiss Church. The Goldsmiths exhibition will take place from 2-7 March and with its exhibition 'In Nihilum' retelling in reverse the creation myth according to the Book of Genesis. We will also have two artists in residence at the Church this spring and summer. You can find more information on page 3.

I hope to see you soon again at 79 Endell Street.

Blessings,

Carla Maurer

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Latest News

From the Consistoire - by Peter Stäuber, President



Dear Readers,

Let me start off with the great news that we have a new

Consistoire member, Barbara Wachter, who is from Winterthur in Switzerland and has been living in London since 2017. She joined us late last year, and we're delighted to have her on board. Welcome, Barbara!

Now, it's time for a personal message from me. After almost four years as a Trustee, eighteen months as President, I have stepped down from my role at the Swiss Church. My wife and I are expecting a baby, which means we'll start a new period of our lives - and, if what everybody is telling us is true, it's going to be a busy one!

So, a few words of thanks are in order. It was a great pleasure to serve on the Consistoire and to work with so many fantastic people at the Swiss Church. I'd like to thank everybody on the Board of Trustees and the team for their great work and support, and the Congregation for their continued dedication to the Church. I look forward to seeing you all again soon at an event on Endell Street - after all, I won't be leaving London.

Many thanks to you all, and have a great start to spring - they say it's just around the corner.

Best wishes,
Peter

Barbara grew up in Langenthal, Switzerland and Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany. After completing her Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and International Relations at the University of Zurich, she moved to London in 2017 to read Conflict Studies at the London School of Economics. Today, Barbara is working as Communications Officer at a small London-based NGO.



in 2015. Since moving to London, Barbara has worked as a volunteer visitor for immigration detainees at the Colnbrook Immigration Detention Centre.

When Barbara first got to know the Swiss Church,

she was impressed by the beautiful building in the middle of Covent Garden, and by the valuable work the team carries out to tackle homelessness, the severity of which is increasing. Barbara decided to join the Consistoire to assist the local community and to stay in touch with Swiss living in London.

Barbara has always highly valued community service and volunteering. In Switzerland, she has been a scout leader for a decade, was vice president and violin player at a Youth orchestra in Basel and also held the mandate of Swiss UN Youth Delegate

FROM THE VENUE



Staring at this third attempt to send Carla 400 sensible words, I realise that Rupert (our caretaker) has left the manual for the new key box on my desk.

A key box, in case you don't know, is a small box that requires a code to open.

We put a key inside it, and anyone with the code will be able to access this it, and the rooms the key can open.

I can't tell you when exact-

ly we will need it, but when we do, we will be prepared.

Unpreparable is not a word. Did you know this? I didn't. I wanted to write "we will be prepared for the unpreparable!" and the red squiggly line popped under the word in an alarming manner. So. Nothing is "unpreparable".

Is that a good thought? We can be prepared for anything, from broken pipes to Martians landing. Hand me my Swiss Army Knife and a spare pair of socks, I'm prepared!

I was a girl guide, and a Girl Guide must (say it with me now) "Always Be Prepared" (extra points for those who are currently doing the girl guide salute).

My grandma was a Girl Guide. She passed away peacefully just before New Year at the age of 98. She had been prepared for her funeral since 1941, when she signed up to the synagogue's burial society. She was a meticulous planner, and would always set the table days in advance for any festival meals, or even just the weekly Shabbat (Friday night) meal. Despite this, the lead up to her funeral was a fiasco.

Being the holiday season, I was the only member of family in the country to authorise her burial, which eventually led to a bizarre phone conversation where I and a Rabbi had to apologise to each other. Him for snapping at me, and me for being hysterical because we had to delay the funeral by over a week, so that her sons could be there - whilst knowing that every hour she was not in her resting place dishonoured her memory. Grandma had not prepared for that, but, then again, she had always loved us unconditionally with an overflowing heart. Maybe that was her preparation for this ridiculousness.

Fire drills, emergency contacts, key boxes and extra loo roll. Nothing is unpreparable, so the rest is just trusting ourselves to be strong, when our preparations aren't enough.



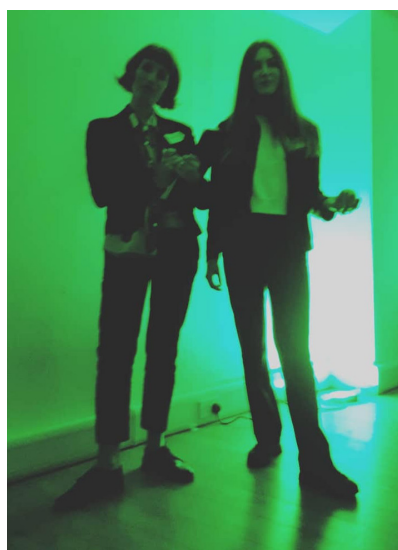
Goldsmiths exhibition 2020: In Nihilum – Into Nothing

Every year the Swiss Church arts committee invites students from the MFA Curating at Goldsmiths, University of London to submit a proposal for a site specific exhibition. Curator collective Aleksandra Shevchenko, Francisca Portugal and Pia Zeitzen were chosen to realise their project at the Swiss Church from 2-7 March.

In Nihilum is an exhibition and educational programme which reinvestigates Genesis creation myth in the contemporary context. The Swiss Church will become home to sculptures, performances and installations by six international emerging artists. By drawing a parallel between the creation of art and the creation of the world, In Nihilum explores whether the artist is the vessel through which God speaks.

In light of the present ecological crisis, In Nihilum moves the focus from creation to destruction. At the exhibition opening, the works of all six artists will stand united in the Church. Respectively embodying the accomplishments of each day of creation, each artwork will be removed, one by one, day by day, until we find ourselves in an empty space.

As God created the world ex nihilo [from nothing], the exhibition is created in nihilum [into nothing]. While the exhibition serves as a metaphor for today's mistreatment of nature and spirituality, In Nihilum still leaves hope: once the space is emptied of art, it returns to its original function as a Church, a symbolic place of faith and redemption. In Nihilum will be showing from the 3rd until 7th of March. Join us for the preview evening featuring an opening performance on 2 March from 6pm onwards. For our educational programme, including lectures and workshops please follow our social media channels on Facebook In Nihilum or Instagram (in_nihilum), where the timetable will be announced soon. Events will also be posted on the Swiss Church website.



Artists in Residence: Scenarios

- By Neena Percy and Lizzy Drury

We are delighted to opening the Swiss Church once more to two artists in residence from April to June. Neena Percy and Lizzy Drury will be organising workshops, talks and performances and present the outcomes of their creative process in June. The residency is kindly supported by the Gibbs Trust.

We are two artists who met on an MA Painting programme at the Royal College of Art. Since graduating in 2017, we found ourselves working together and dreaming of providing exhibition opportunities for other artists. Given the overhead costs of running a gallery space, we instead formed

a nomadic curatorial platform, curating exhibitions in various venues. We named our partnership Hot Desque, recognising the parallels between our practice and the changing nature of workspaces. From a former Bacchanalian-themed nightclub to a window frame factory in Woolwich, over the past 18 months we have had the pleasure of working in some challenging, odd and beautiful spaces, exhibiting over 40 different artists. Responding to each venue, we present artworks together to create a theatrical mise-en-scène to immerse the viewer in an encompassing exhibition experience.

We are very excited to begin our residency at the Swiss Church in London this Spring and look forward to working with the Church community. Titring our residency 'Scenarios', we will plan

a programme including a research-led talk, art and craft workshops, a performance night, and a pop-up exhibition. Inspired by the values of the Swiss Church, each event will explore and demonstrate how people can come together to create 'safe spaces' through art that allow for various processes of healing to begin.

Against the backdrop of global turbulence, the rise of hatred and divisions, we believe it is important to react with creativity, collectivity and positivity. We will be taking inspiration from the origin of the theatre term 'scenario': a written outline of the characters and events in a play which actors are invited to improvise around. Scenarios can also be seen as collages of actions, intentions, emotions and props. Scenarios are stories of change, bringing people together to creatively invent possible outcomes in response to one another. Each event during our residency will outline a possible scenario for re-framing or re-imagining how we can respond to the current climate through artworks and art-making, collective experience and reflection, and collaborative action. Working with the challenges of curating in a grade-listed, living, breathing church, and inspired by the spectacular theatres of the Covent Garden area, we will produce a theatrical set within which to host our programme.

We will open up our residency to invited artists to use the studio space with us to research and develop artworks that respond to such topics. We wish to represent artists' voices of different backgrounds and look forward to welcoming the nearby Notre Dame Refugee Centre's art group, as well as The Swiss Church community to the workshops and events, and into the studio throughout our residency.





Lent 2020

To fast or not to fast

Lent is the Christian practice of fasting, leading up to Easter Sunday. As Easter falls on a different date every year, so does the period of Lent. This year the first day of Lent is the 26th of February (known as Ash Wednesday) and it will end on the 9th of April. The last week of Lent is Holy Week, starting with Palm Sunday, the day of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem when he was greeted with palm branches by his followers.

In Switzerland a variety of traditions and customs are associated with Lent, one of them being 'Fasnacht' (carnival). Fasnacht is well known for its 'Guggemusig' (brass bands in colourful costumes). Although the week before or after Ash Wednesday (depending on the region) is known as the main Fasnacht season, Guggemusig are already parading towns and cities well before that. Fasnacht officially starts on 11 November at 11:11 am and finishes on Ash Wednesday.

One of the most stunning customs is the Morgestraich in Basle, which takes place the week after Ash Wednesday. I attended the Morgestraich once. Although the getting up at 3am in the morning to be at the main square in time is pretty hard, it is worth every bit of it. 'Cliquen' (music groups) with colourful lanterns up to three meters high on their heads, make their way down the lanes with drums and piccolo flutes, to the completely darkened centre of town. After this spectacle, it is traditional to go for a drink and a 'Basler Mehlsuppe' (flour soup) to a local bar or restaurant which are open throughout the night.

Fasnacht is not a British tradition. Here the Lenten season starts with Pancake Day, or Shrove Tuesday (from the word 'shrive' which means to absolve, and hints at the practice of confession or self-examination). Shrove Tuesday is the day before Ash Wednesday when eggs and fats are used up before embarking on the Lenten fast. Making pancakes is the perfect way to do this!

The Lenten period of fasting was originally only 40 hours long, the number of hours that Jesus was in the grave ahead of his resurrection, but in the 6th Century AD this time span was extended to 40 days. Only one meal would be eaten every day. Although fasting is not observed as strictly anymore nowadays, we still mostly think of Lent as a time of abstinence. Most people give up certain foods, drinks or drugs, most commonly sugar, alcohol, cigarettes, meat or certain luxury goods. Modern secular traditions of fasting include dry January or Veganuary. All such acts of discipline have their place in fasting, but they give a one-sided view of Lent. Lent should primarily be about taking something on and going the extra mile, deepen our faith and understanding of human existence. Lent is a time to make more room for the unfathomable, to make space for God and our relationship with the Eternal.

Fasting in the sense of abstinence, is a good practice if it serves the aim of spiritual development and deeper faith. We have probably all had the experience of eating healthier and abstaining from alcohol, even better in combination with increased physical exercise, that makes us feel better both mentally and physically. We are calmer, more patient, more willing to give and we can think more clearly. Yet fasting taken too far can also have the opposite effect. Starving ourselves and imposing a strict regime can make us grumpy, short-tempered and not very sociable. Swiss reformer Huldrych Zwingli was sceptical of fasting. He wasn't opposed to it, but he said that fasting in the sense of abstinence should always be a free decision and never forced on anyone. "If fasting helps to deepen your faith, then fast", Zwingli said: "Who can make room for God without fasting should not fast."

Zwingli's approach to fasting is also the reason why Lent hasn't the same significance in the reformed church as in other churches or religions, where fasting is sometimes very strictly observed. Most religions have

a tradition of fasting. In Islam Ramadan lasts one month, a time of fasting, prayer, reflection and community. The Anglican and Roman-Catholic Church also put more emphasis on Lent. Jews observe a day of fasting on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. The Roman Catholic Church actively encourage their Catholics to fast and abstain during Lent, abstaining from meat on certain days and limiting food to one full meal a day according to early Christian traditions.

Personally, I see the benefits of fasting both in the sense of abstaining from something, but also in the sense of committing to something. I have abstained from alcohol, meat and social media, all of which have helped me to make room for other people, for myself and for God. I have also tried to write down every evening what I am grateful for, or have added a food item to the collection basket of my local food bank. These are all things that we should do much more often and all year around. Lent can help us to become more aware and perhaps to change or establish a new behaviour.

This year I decided to go on a two day silent retreat during Lent. I have always felt that in silence, I can order my thoughts, deepen my understanding of human existence and of God. It helps me to see what is important, and how I can make a difference in the world. We can do anything, but we can't do everything. Lent can help us to make the right choices and not being intimidated by the many possibilities, but rather focus on what God calls us to do. In silence and prayer, we can hear that voice and develop the courage to act.

I wish you an insightful and peaceful Lenten season and a happy Easter!

If you would like to share your Lenten experience and talk about your resolutions, don't hesitate to contact me, or share it with us @swisschurchlondon

The story of Easter for children



After dinner Jesus goes to the garden to pray. He knows something is going to happen.

They dress him in a purple robe and a crown of thorns. Jesus carries a cross up the hill.



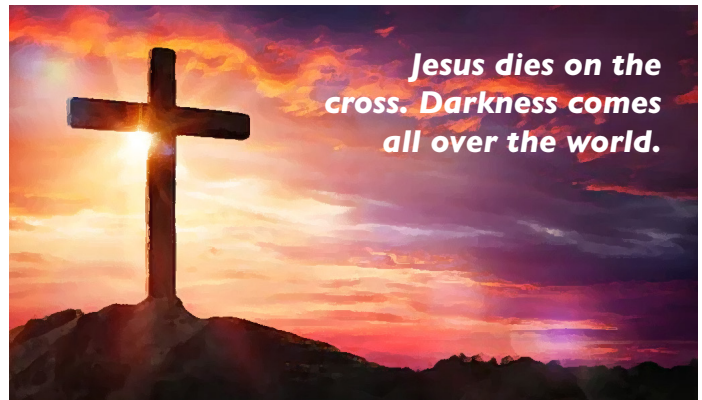
Jesus' body is laid in a tomb. A big stone is rolled against the door.



An angel appears and says: "He is risen!"
Draw your own angel!



Some men come to take Jesus away.



Jesus dies on the cross. Darkness comes all over the world.



The next morning, Mary and some other women come to the tomb and find that the stone has rolled away. It is empty! Where is Jesus?

From the Community

A day out at the gallery

About 33,000 Swiss citizens live in the UK, and I am always amazed to discover the various ways in which fellow Swiss contribute to the life in our host country. On Swiss National Day 2019 I met Christine Ramphal through our common friend



Christoph Burgdorfer (who established the online platform Swiss Quality UK and recently moved to Hong Kong – He will be much missed!). Christine is a Director of Francesca Galloway Gallery in Mayfair, which specialises in Indian miniature paintings and Islamic and European textiles, a world probably unknown to most of us. Christine has an incredible knowledge of this specialised field and she agreed to open up the tucked-away gallery to a group from the Swiss Church. One Thursday in January twelve of us met in Dover Street for

an insight into the world of Indian and Islamic art. Indian artists produced an incredible amount of drawings and objects for the British living in India, and for the East India Company. These beautiful paintings deserve much more recognition. One of the paintings depicted Sati, the shocking historic ritual of widow-burning. Many drawings depict the fauna and flora of India, as well as religious motives. The exhibition 'Forgotten Masters: Indian Painting for the East India Company' at the Wallace Collection shows more of these treasures that we were lucky to see at the Francesca Galloway gallery.

After the gallery visit we went to have lunch together at a local pub.



What became of...

Philipp and Johanna von Orelli, pastor of the Swiss Church 1986 - 1994



It now has been more than 25 years since we left London in January 1994 after eight very special years that marked our lives for ever. Our children were then 3 and 5 years of age. Now we are very happy grandparents of a nine month-old boy!

But let's look back. Before leaving London, someone sent us a prophetic picture showing us on a funny footpath, leading across a small river over stepping stones. We didn't have a clue what this could mean.

The lorry loaded with our belongings first brought us from Womersley Road to Laufenburg in the Black Forest. where we had a year's training on the job in a counselling centre working with Christian leaders going through personal crisis

situations – interesting in hind-sight, as we would come across some of these in the years to come... After that year we were called to lead a small free church congregation in Herisau where we lived for 14 years and where our kids had a great place to grow up in a nice environment.

Unfortunately, our goals didn't quite match the ones of the congregation, so we had to leave them and find another appointment which I found as a counsellor in a psychiatric clinic. After another two years the regulations got stiffer, since I didn't have the right papers, I had to take the next step: Almost immediately I was called as a replacement pastor into a parish church in Thurgau for one year. Funnily this pattern of brief episodes in various pastorates and counselling jobs went on for as long as 15 years. We both can tell that this

wasn't all that funny as the (more than 20) appointments didn't always follow on all that swiftly. Yet, I realised how valuable the manifold ministries were, and corresponded to what I liked doing and was able to give.

Besides, we were able to enjoy a good family life and often were part of the ministry staff in Christian conferences in Switzerland.

Johanna was involved in a counselling ministry for years also teaching young counsellors, besides doing some school teaching in a private tutoring institute.

The last stepping stone, as it were (before retirement) consisted of seven years in a small parish Ellikon an der Thur, which then merged with Altikon and Thalheim/ZH. There, together with Johanna and a team, we focussed on children's ministry with 'messy church' and kids' weeks.

We still look back with gratitude to our teaching years in London with you all, and your patience with us, and the faith nourishing contacts with the Anglican renewal!

Yours,

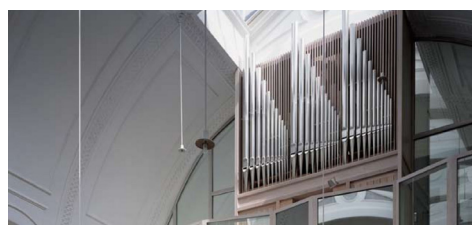
Philipp and Johanna von Orelli

Events @ the Swiss Church

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

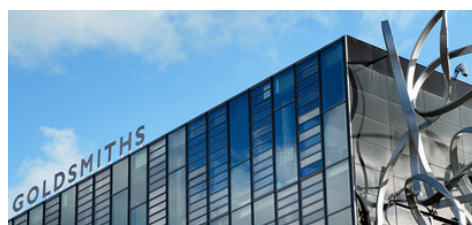
2 February, 16 February, 1 March (led by Marianne Fisher-Hertig), 15 March, 5 April, 12 April (Easter Sunday), 19 April (Baptism service), 3 May, 17 May

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



Organ recital with Peter Stevens, 1 February, 5pm

Peter Stevens is Assistant Master of Music at Westminster Cathedral. He was educated at Chetham's School of Music, subsequently holding organ scholarships at Manchester Cathedral, St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, and King's College, Cambridge. In 2013 he became Director of the Schola Cantorum of the Edington Festival. Admission free – retiring collection



Goldsmiths Exhibition 'In Nihilum', 2-7 March

A reinvestigation of the creation myth according to the Book of Genesis. Curated by Aleksandra Shevchenko, Francisca Portugal, and Pia Zeitzen. Performance dates tbc.



Andy's Catwalk, Saturday 15 February, 3pm

Swiss Church warden Andy Palfreyman has dreamt of putting on a catwalk show ever since getting back on his feet after 30 years of homelessness. Firstly to share how important fashion was to his well-being during the dark times but also to shine a light on London's current homelessness crisis. GOLDIE (www.goldiemag.co.uk) is excited to be working with Andy to make his dream a reality. Andy's Catwalk takes place during London Fashion Week at the Swiss Church. Goldie magazine are curating high end looks sourced from London's charity shops and asking guests to buy the outfits which will then be donated to street homeless people. They are also asking LFW 2020 designers to donate pieces from past collections for us to auction and every penny raised goes to the homeless community in London.



Easter service, 12 April, 11am

Celebrate Easter at the Swiss Church! A service for young and old, with choir music. Followed by Easter lunch.



Sunday service at Fraumünster Church, Zurich, 26 April, 10am, led by Rev Carla Maurer



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

Join us for food and fellowship. If you would like to volunteer, get in touch with Emily Rose on info@swisschurchlondon.org.uk



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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.

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“Let love be authentic; abhor what is evil, cling to that which is good; reciprocate each other’s affection; outshine one another in showing honour. Do not drag behind in showing enthusiasm, but be fervent in spirit and serve God. Exult in hope, be long-suffering in affliction and be steadfast in prayer. Give generously to the needs of the saints; offer hospitality to strangers.”

(Romans 12:9-13)

“If physical fasting is not accompanied by mental fasting it is bound to end in hypocrisy and disaster.”

(Mahatma Gandhi, Indian lawyer and political ethicist, 1869-1948)

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