

Swiss Church News

Autumn/Winter 2022/23

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



Image by Ella Mettler

Dear Readers,

There are things in life that I find so

immensely boring and are out of my skill zone that I simply decide to ignore them in the hope that if I don't pay them any attention they will go away one day. One such thing is the filing of electronic documents of which I produce a lot, for instance sermons, prayer sheets, articles, artist agreements, meeting notes and project proposals. Sticking to structures is not exactly my forté, so things can get a bit chaotic. There are so many online platforms where to save data nowadays, let alone physical files! Different people use different tools like Google or Dropbox, which doesn't make things easier. With the Swiss Church growing and professionalising, and with the challenges of working from home during the pandemic, things became so complex that I thought if I'd just closed my eyes and took a "nach mir die Sintflut - après moi le déluge" approach, the problem would go away. But it didn't go away. Instead Heidi and Andreas came along.

Heidi worked with the church during the pandemic as Project Manager and did an extensive study on our data management system with a range of recommendations. This paved the

way for Andreas who implemented the recommendations with admirable patience and insistence. And voilà, we now have everything saved on one platform, in a relatively structured system of folders and subfolders with restricted access for different team members, Consistoire members and key volunteers.

Why do I write about this? Because data management turned out to be so much more than an annoyingly painful must-do admin process that, I must admit, I cursed at times. It turned out to be one of the best lessons in empowerment I've ever had. Empowerment means people having power and control over their own ideas and projects within the community and getting the support they need that is right for them. This is one of my core principles as a Minister and as a human. Sharing information and access to ideas in a structured way is paramount! It also means that everyone's ideas and projects will be saved for future generations and that the church, no matter what, will be able to build on them. It might seem obvious, but for me the process of well thought through data management system really was a revelation. Now everyone working for the church, be it in a professional or a volunteer capacity, gets signed up to the folders relevant to them and can access, add

and amend information when they need to.

What would Jesus say about data management? This is of course a far-fetched question and a 21st Century projection! But in the end, it's all about shared power and leadership, which was one of Jesus' trademarks. Sharing for Jesus was not only about food, housing and clothes, but also about power and ideas. The hoarding of ideas in an inaccessible place is not what Jesus would have done. He knew if he wanted his ideas to spread and change the world, he had to empower every single one of his disciples to take ownership. In a way that's what data management is all about.

As the weather gets cooler, I wish you peace and comforting structures in this unsettling world.

Many blessings, Rev Carla Maurer

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From the Consistoire



I write this column at the end of July surrounded by photos from Swiss National Day in London, which was held at the

German School in Richmond on 17 July. Thanks to the incredible organisational skills and new vision of Andreas Feller-Ryf and his team, the day was a huge success. In recent years the Swiss Church in London organised the celebrations. This year we sponsored some of the children's events, and Ryan Moshwe from the Swiss Church office team entertained children and adults as Spiderman. We are committed to working with Andreas and his new team in the coming years, to build on the success of Swiss National Day in London.

The Consistoire itself is also undergoing renewal. We are pleased to welcome Emma Brown as our new Treasurer, and thank our former Treasurer Marco Mambelli for his work and dedication over the last four years. Marco has been incredibly committed, and despite

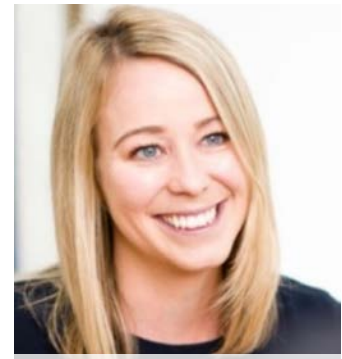
of work taking him to various locations around the world since the beginning of the pandemic, he never gave up on the Swiss Church until a new treasurer could be found. To operate a successful Swiss Church in London we need to have trustees with a wide range of skills. Social media skills, business skills (especially in compliance and governance), and facilities management, are just a few of skills that we are looking for. Please consider lending us your knowledge and enthusiasm. Send an email to colin.mcintyre@swisschurchlondon.org.uk if you'd like to learn more.

In the coming year we are planning major maintenance work to the church, such as painting the exterior and the hall of the Swiss Church, and refurbishing the toilets. It's a big job painting our Grade 2-listed Church, and the work will cost around £20,000. Over the next five years we will need to spend at least £100,000 on redecoration and improvements to the church building. So, we are asking for your donations. You can give online, send us a cheque, or set up regular

payments. The more people from the Swiss community who can help, the easier it will be for us to meet our target. For details on how to donate, please visit swisschurchlondon.org.uk/donations.

Wishing you a peaceful autumn and winter seasons!

Yours,
Colin McIntyre, Trustee



Emma Brown, New Treasurer

It's all about the money!

A word from the Finance Officer



We have recently been approached by members of the congregation concerning gift aid claims on Sunday donations and

individual donations. You may have noticed that the little white gift aid bags are no longer distributed at the Sunday service. This is because of the Gift Aid Small Donation Scheme introduced by the government a few years back. Under this scheme, the church can claim gift aid on up to £2'000 a year

from Sunday donations (except for £50 notes). If you are not a UK taxpayer (which may also apply to some pensioners) it is worth considering making your donations to the church on a Sunday, as we are then able to include your donation under this scheme and receive an additional 20% gift aid. If you are a UK taxpayer and make individual donations via bank transfer or cheque, please make sure you provide us with a Gift Aid Declaration Form so we can claim gift aid. I am more than happy to answer any questions via email finance@swisschurchlondon.org.uk or phone 020 7836 1418. Please note that although I do work two days a week, I am mainly based at home and in the office just twice a month. It can therefore take up to 4 weeks to cash cheques, thank you for your understanding.

I would also like to make you aware of a change regarding our thank you letters. Regular donors paying monthly via standing order will receive a thank you card once a year. For all other donations from £100 upwards a thank you card will be sent monthly via email or post. If you would like to track your donation in the meantime or if you wish to receive a confirmation for a donation under £100, please do let me know.

The Swiss Church is immensely grateful for all your generous donations, thank you very much!

Best wishes,
Anina Smith, Finance Officer



Members of the Art Committee enjoying dinner together

Beyond words...

By Carla Maurer

Art Committee co-chairs Mary Branson and Julie Hoyle with their committed team of volunteers have hit the ground running since taking over the role in 2020. The arts programme at the Swiss Church is taking a new turn and our reputation as an art church is now spreading across London. There is definitely an expectation in the air that we are invited to live up to! What a wonderful challenge as a church.

Back in May we organised the first ever alumni artist networking evening with over 20 former exhibition and residential artists attending. For many early career artists and curators, their collaboration with the Swiss Church meant a huge step in their careers and helped them find their unique style and the confidence to go on and work with other institutions.

For the church congregation, sharing our beautiful building with artists and fostering the dialogue between

the sacred and secular is a unique opportunity to broaden our horizon and rediscover faith in a diverse society. Every artistic transformation of the church is a humbling and inspiring experience, transcending the unspeakable truth of life in a new way each time. Every piece of art sheds new light on the reality of the Divine in ways that words cannot tell. The arts are a continuation of the sermons that happen on a Sunday, finding symbols and images beyond words.

We are delighted to welcome artist in residence Cora Cuthbert to share the building with us from August until October. Cora will work together with her grandmother and with the church congregation to research the role of faith in migrants' experience. To find out more about Cora's work visit: corasehgalcuthbert.com

For more information about upcoming exhibitions please visit: swisschurchlondon.org.uk/art/ current-forthcoming

Ballet Gala

Art Committee members Ruth Gordon and Lukas Angelini are organising a Ballet Fundraising Gala once again in favour of the Swiss Church's arts programme. At the centre of the programme will be an artwork by former Swiss Benevolent Society officer Petra Kehr-Cocks. The arts programme supports early career artists and curators and fosters the dialogue between the sacred and the secular.

Date: Saturday, 1 October, 3pm

A Floral Dreamscape

"Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams." (Tennyson)

In this production the sight of a flower-filled vase induces a romantic dream for a young woman, which seems very real to her. However, upon waking she must confront reality.

Music by: Johann Strauss, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Manuel de Falla, Franz von Suppe and Antonin Dvorak. Performed by three musicians; soprano, clarinet and piano.

Danced by a solo couple and two chorus plus two gymnasts.

Check the Swiss Church webpage for ticket information nearer the date.



Upcoming exhibition Sanctuary

Artist duo Ali Clarke and Gary Scholes are working towards their 'Sanctuary' exhibition taking place in October. The exhibition examines the notion of 'home' and what it means to different people, with a particular focus on the Covent Garden and Swiss Church community. As part of their research, they have met with members of the congregation to find out what being part of the Swiss Church means to them. They were fascinated to hear

the individual stories of members and hope to weave these responses into one of the art pieces.

'Entering the Swiss Church, we were struck by the elegant architecture and atmospheric light but above all the warmth and welcoming nature of the members' – Ali and Gary

They plan to introduce free-standing sculptures into the space that represent different aspects of these themes. The artists are inspired by the surrounding architecture and the local history and will include elements of this in the work. The architectural features such as windows, lettering and textures taken from their research, represent the human experience of inhabiting different dwellings. For the viewer, these structures will be both familiar and surprising.

From a council flat to a market stall, a building site to a theatre, we all find our sanctuary in a home of our making.

'Sanctuary' exhibition, 27 – 30 October 2022.

Proud to be me!

Celebrating Pride at the church

June is Pride month, and 2 July saw the 50th Pride parade in London celebrating the LGBT+ community, and diversity and self-affirmation of all people. At the Swiss Church, we marked Pride with a special service on 3 July, led by trustee Katrin Frey, who is also a theologian from Basel, and Carla Maurer, and together with Peter Yardley-Jones and the High Holborn Chamber Choir.

We talked about labels: the labels we are proud of, and the labels assigned to us by others that we struggle to identify with. Everyone got involved in the discussion! We realised how important it is to have ownership over our identity, and that being put in an unwanted corner can be frustrating, degrading and infuriating. Ask people in your life how they like to describe themselves, and what they don't want to be called. And of course, ask yourself this question, too!

"I've always wanted to celebrate a Pride service and do a dialogue sermon. To do both in one go was great! I loved how engaged the congregation was in the interactive part and I really feel like our question about labels we like and which we dislike resonated well." (Katrin Frey)



Seeing eye to eye

Excerpt from the dialogue sermon with Katrin Frey and Carla Maurer

In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:26-28)

Carla: Jesus suggests that through him, there will be no difference between us anymore. Our religious identity will become obsolete; it won't matter whether we are woman or man; and

Jesus also says that slaves and slave owners will be equals. With all due respect, Jesus sits in an ivory tower! I'm not sure if his utopia is desirable. Today, individual identity including religion and gender is more important than ever, especially in the Western world, and inequality between people who serve others and their exploiters is just as stark as 2000 years ago.

Katrin: I agree it seems too good to be true. A utopia, wishful thinking. But you know what? I like being a believer! Belief of any kind can change us. I believe it does not matter how much you earn, where you are from, or whether you are married. At the same time, I want to be taken seriously and not be judged by my piercings, my hair

A prayer for Pride Sunday

By Rev Carla Maurer

Creator God

Thank you for being a safe place for me.

When the issues of this life become too much to bear, I can run to you and you will help me. You remind me that I don't have to fight life's battles alone.

Teach me that it's perfectly fine to retreat to your safety, and reassure me every day of my life that no one can take your safe place away from me.

You are my hiding place, and under your wings I can always find refuge.

I am made in your image, born unique and beautiful in your eyes. Teach me to be proud of who I am and to face life's challenges with my head held high.

Amen

colour or my language skills. I believe if we see beyond anything that defines us, we can talk more openly about what really moves us within. Labels assigned to us can be very restrictive. As Christians we are invited to see eye to eye as fellow human beings.

Carla: I get you. There are labels assigned to me that I find difficult or I don't identify with. But then, there are also labels I chose for myself that I want to be acknowledged for, that I am proud of. Labels are not only a bad thing, as long as we have ownership over them. But what you say is very true, we are first and foremost humans, and everything else is secondary.



Breakfast on the Steps Behind the scenes

Interviews by Simon Streit

Breakfast on the Steps (BoS) has become a famous weekly fixture at the Swiss Church. The church without it is almost unthinkable. Volunteers and guests praise its reliable, healthy and friendly service and the peaceful atmosphere. Every person who comes through the doors on a Tuesday morning plays a part in the BoS success stories. We interviewed one volunteer and one guest.

Hannah (Volunteer)

Hello Hannah, why are you volunteering for the Breakfast on the Steps?

I've known Carla for a long time, and I work just around the corner, so it felt quite convenient to start working here. My main motivation is to give some time back to people in need.

What are your favorite moments here?

The atmosphere here is very peaceful, and that feels rewarding. The people who come for breakfast are mostly really thankful, and that gives you the feeling that you are doing something great.

Are there any links between your personality and the work you do here?

I would say that I'm very good with people and that's definitely a must when working here. I would also say that I'm quite cheerful which helps to create a great atmosphere for our guests.

What can you tell me about yourself?

I'm really bad at talking about myself. I've lived in London practically my entire life and I used to work as a yoga instructor and now I work as a model agent.

Last but not least, what are the benefits from working here?



The feeling of giving something back and the cheerful faces you see here are really motivating. I learnt a lot from people affected by homelessness that I wouldn't learn outside these walls. The only thing that I'm not good at is preparing things in the early morning!

David (regular guest)

Hello David, nice to meet you. Do you come here regularly?

Yes, I've visited the Breakfast on the Steps for many years now.

Why do you come here?

There's hardly a better way to start your day than with eggs and toast!

What are your favorite moments here?

Personally, I love the atmosphere. It's really cheerful and caring. The people who work here are lovely, and it's just a nice way to start your day.

For how many years have you lived on the streets now?

I've been living on the streets ever since late 2013.

Can you share some of your experiences?

Sadly, it's become increasingly harder ever since the corona pandemic. Many social services closed during the lockdown and never reopened. People on the streets are treated with less sympathy and respect. In general, the judgment you get from some people is one of the hardest things when living on the streets. That's why it's so nice to see that the Swiss Church still offers this breakfast, and that you've actually even extended your buffet. To be able to eat, and stay here in this peaceful environment really does mean a lot. I really hope the situation on the streets is going to get better now with the return of normal life.

Watch David on YouTube talking about homelessness during the pandemic:
[youtube.com/watch?v=D669qcb7GGI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D669qcb7GGI)

Big Give Christmas challenge fundraiser for Breakfast on the Steps!

**Tuesday 29th November to
Tuesday 6th December 2022**

**Save the date and donate! Every
pound will be matched!**

The things we take for granted



There are hundreds, if not thousands, of little things that we take for granted every single day: shop opening times, decent road conditions, full stocked chemists, functioning phone lines and a decent postal system - just to mention a few. We caught a little glimpse of what it means to navigate life without these things during the pandemic. Yet most of us have already forgotten. We are back to our usual sense of entitlement, complaining when our grocery shop is exceptionally shut for the day, or if our take-away coffee is not prepared fast enough.

There are other less material things that we take for granted. Some ways of life or values are so ingrained in us that we tend to forget that the reality can be very different. We rarely get a chance for a reality check as we tend to live life in a bubble of like-minded people, in a society with basic shared values, even though we may disagree on some topics.

In August, I had the chance to have a reality check myself as I attended the General Assembly of the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women (EFECW) in Strasbourg. I have been active as a volunteer and leader of the Forum on and off over the past 12 years, and have more recently been in charge of increasing the participation of young women. Eighty women aged 17-85, from 23 European countries came together for 4 days to discuss various topics such as peace building, interreligious dialogue and violence against women. It was a particular honour to welcome delegations from Ukraine, Belarus and Armenia at the Assembly. Due to war and economic sanctions in these countries, travelling is anything but straightforward with

airports shut, and for some of the women, stricter visa procedures. Yet participants made incredible journeys to unite with their sisters in the EFECW. However, women from more affluent and stable democratic countries in Europe were underrepresented, or not present at all. The Swiss branch of the Forum even had to close down all together last year due to a lack of interest.

Why is this?

In countries like the UK and Switzerland we are taught from a young age, to make our voices heard and to form our own opinion. At school, we learn to stand in front of a class to talk about issues we are passionate about. We are encouraged to debate. We hear of different political opinions and are encouraged to form our own. We learn to disagree, and to accept different views of things. We learn to challenge our leaders, rather than blindly accepting their views. Girls and boys, men and women have equal opportunities, although in practical terms there are still many gaps to close. This is the foundation of a healthy democracy, that we take for granted, because it becomes ingrained in us from our earliest days. But many women in Europe and worldwide live in a different reality, even today. They experience from very young, that their voice counts less, that their destiny is restricted to certain areas, that leadership is for men, and that sons are favoured over daughters. They are oppressed in the patriarchal structures of their churches and societies. A safe space for women on a European level is an opportunity to speak up, to share views and debate different viewpoints and to build up self-worth and confidence.

For women who experience patriarchal oppression on a daily basis, in all fields of life, and who are restricted in their individual choices and visibility, the necessity for sisterhood and safe spaces is evident. Where inequality is less visible, and women have space to excel and thrive according to their abilities, the necessity to frequent such spaces is less important. We tend to forget what our mothers and grandmothers fought so hard for. We lack the awareness that many women in today's Europe, and of course worldwide, cannot take for granted the same democratic rights and individual choices.

However, women's choices are crumbling everywhere, and many of us are beginning to feel it. The abortion ban in the US was certainly a wake up call. The economic war we find ourselves in, will hit women harder, as on average their incomes and pensions are lower. The pandemic has increased domestic violence against women across the globe. Conservative and patriarchal structures are pushing back and gaining ground, as they always do in global crises.

We can't take anything for granted in life, and we can't face life's storms alone. In the coming years, we will need each other more than ever. Resilience grows in solidarity. Let us create safe spaces for everyone, and use those safe spaces for ourselves. We never know what tomorrow has in store.

If you would like to learn more about the EFECW, visit: www.efecw.net

Events @ the Swiss Church

Sunday Services

4 September, 11am

18 September, 11am, Penance Day
(Eidgenössischer Buss- und
Betttag /Jeûne Fédéral)

2/16 October, 6 November, 11am

20 November, 4pm, Commemoration
service

4 December, 11am, Family Christmas
gathering with Samichlaus

18 December, 5pm, Christmas Carol
service

*NOTE! 8/22 January, 11am (2nd and 4th Sunday,
instead of 1st and 3rd)*

5/19 February, 5/19 March, 2/16 April, 11am



Breakfast On The Steps

**Community breakfast for people
affected by homelessness**

Every Tuesday, 7:30-9:30am

Exhibitions:

Carol Wyss

The Mind has Mountains

25 – 28 August 2022

The Swiss artist will be showing an
immersive installation called The Mind
Has Mountains. Carol is using images
of structures inside the human skull,
evoking mountainous landscapes.



Fundraising Ballet Gala

1 October 2022, 3pm

Support the Swiss Church's arts
programme! Come and join us for
an afternoon of music and dance
choreographed by Swiss ballet dancer
and choreographer Ruth Gordon.
Ruth is a patron of the Swiss Church
arts programme. Her generosity and
initiatives help the church support an
incredible variety of talent, and to be a
stepping stone on their journey.



Ali Clarke & Gary Scholes Sanctuary

27 – 30 October 2022

This artist duo are talking to the Swiss
Church communities to develop their
work for 'Sanctuary' their exhibition
of sculptures that represent different
habitats or homes and they are made
from a range of materials including
concrete brick and wood.

Goldsmiths MA Design Film evening

Friday, 31 March (time tbc)

VEGSIL Annual meeting

**Sunday 23 October,
Reformed Church of Cham (CH)**



La Causerie is back!

We are delighted that some of our church groups are
back meeting at the church and in other places! The
church groups are an important pillar of our community
and have been strengthening the friendship among our
members and friends of the church for decades.

On 10th May 2022, La Causerie went on an outing
to visit the Kyoto Garden in Holland Park guided by
Suzanne Perrin, an expert on Japan. They have also
resumed their famous monthly Tuesday lunches in the
church, chatting in French and enjoying a glass of wine.

La Causerie is our social group for French speakers in the
Swiss community. You don't need to be a member of the
Swiss Church to attend.



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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“Sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making music in your hearts, giving thanks always to God for everything, in the name of Jesus Christ.”

(Ephesians 5:19-20)



“Let gratitude be the pillow upon which you kneel to say your nightly prayer. And let faith be the bridge you build to overcome evil and welcome good.”

(Maya Angelou, 1928-2014, American poet and civil rights activist)

To give online: swisschurchlondon.org.uk/church/donate and follow the link.

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Swiss Church in London

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Please complete a Gift Aid form if you are a UK taxpayer. Gift Aid increases the amount that the Church from your donation by 25%, at no cost to you. Forms are available on our website.

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