



Swiss Church News

Winter 2022

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

Currently, things feel a bit like moving house,

except that I'm not going anywhere. On the one hand, there is the old house filled with lots of things, pre-loved items, furniture with our own personal history attached to it, a wardrobe assembled over the years, and books that we will probably never read again, but at the same time don't want to give away. On the other hand, a new house awaits, like a blank canvas, ready to be filled with our touch and personality, offering a brand-new start set in a new neighbourhood and landscape. What should we bring from the old place to the new one? Moving house is always both, a fresh start, but also a transfer of our own personal history and personality to a new environment.

The past weeks have very much felt like moving house. There is this new place, created during lockdown, like a blank canvas that over time has been filled with traces of life, inspiring unthought thoughts and emerging ideas. And there is the old place, breaking back into our lives. Which elements should we keep so that they will eventually become one? No doubt, we will have to take certain things to the charity shop, or to the tip, to make space for the newly

purchased items. For instance, at the Swiss Church, many people have so enjoyed listening to the audio services, or reading the words, printed and sent to their homes via post. Many people, previously unable to come to church, became part of the worshipping congregation. So, how can we hold on to this precious new online place and stay connected, while returning to our beautiful church building in Endell Street? What compromises are we willing to make? We are entering a new phase as we are trying to unite the best of both worlds, transitioning between two places.

I am delighted to announce an exciting project for next year. "Zwingli Goes to London" is a collaboration with sister churches in Switzerland, and with Reverend Scotty Williams who will be with us in London from March to August organising screenings and workshops around Zurich's reformer, and the Swiss Zwingli film that is now also subtitled in English. Keep your eyes open for more information!

After six years, David Hume has decided to step down as trustee. With his business skills and long experience in governance and organisational development, he was an important pillar of the Consistoire, someone we could always go to for advice. I first met David when I joined the dance classes of his dance school Vera the

Diva in the church hall on a Tuesday evening. It was a time when the Consistoire urgently needed people with a vision and experience in change management. I was delighted when David said yes, and his support has been invaluable over the years.

New beginnings, changing seasons and precious traditions are forever intertwined. They keep us rooted and, at the same time, encourage us to move forward. And so, in this sense, I wish you all a blessed New Year. May it be peaceful and inspiring.

God bless,
Reverend Carla Maurer

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✚ From the Consistoire Time to say cheerio

- By David Hume



I was fortunate enough to come across the Swiss Church in 2013 after searching around London for a class venue for my community

dance school. We were very warmly received and the church became our base during which time I became familiar with the church procedures and office team.

Over time and with the encouragement of Carla I was recruited to be a trustee. It became clear that my business

skills could be useful in helping the Swiss Church develop its organisation processes, systems and governance.

After six years my role as a trustee is coming to an end due to family commitments and relocation to the Midlands. I have so enjoyed collaborating with a wide variety of people in the Consistoire and the office team. This has ensured the daily life of the church continues and we have achieved considerable progress in implementing up-to-date procedures which meet the standards set by our regulatory authorities.

The challenge of dealing with finance, church building, and governance issues has made my time rewarding. I can thoroughly recommend being a trustee to anyone who wishes to offer their skills. No matter how large or small, a trustee's commitment is always appreciated.

A special thank you goes to Carla for her guidance and support. Also, to the Consistoire members and the office team, both past and present, who have made my time so enjoyable.

God bless the Swiss Church



✚ From the team Changing seasons

Finance Officer Anina Smith, from Bern in Switzerland, joined the Swiss Church

team in 2014 and is one of the longest standing team members. Her role has changed over the years as she became a mother of two and as the Swiss Church embarked on new projects. Time to find out how Anina is doing! Interview by Carla Maurer.

Anina, you have been through a whirlwind of a time in the past few years. You had two children, moved house, then the pandemic hit, with all its consequences. First things first: how are you?

I am good, thank you. I have just come out the other side of having had Covid, and so my head is still slightly all over the place trying to catch up with everything, but all in all all's well.

You've started working for the Swiss Church in 2014 as full time Office Manager, and you are now the church's part-time Finance Officer. You have held many positions and responsibilities through the years. Talk us through them!

The initial position I took on in Spring 2014 was for Office Administrator. However, that role covered much more than just day to day office admin and included the managing and running of our hire spaces, daily bookkeeping and the design of the Swiss Church News. It was therefore renamed Office Administrator & Event Venue Manager to reflect the two main aspects of the role.

In 2015-16, I was able to complete the AAT Level 2 Certificate in Accounting, thanks to the Swiss Church, deepening my knowledge and expertise in regards to all things financial. Later that year I went on maternity leave. We agreed that I would return part-time for finance and office admin, and that a new part-time role covering event venue management would be created.

As the business side of the Swiss Church increased and the financial workload and responsibilities grew, the office admin side of my role ended up being added on to the events venue management position, leaving me with all things finance to focus on and manage in two days a week.

What were your highlights and the biggest challenges over the years?

My highlights would be reconnecting with Swiss traditions such as Swiss National Day and hopefully soon Samichlaus with my two little boys, experiencing London Fashion Week thanks to venue hire clients, and completing the AAT Level 2 Certificate in Accounting.

And on the other hand my biggest challenges were (or still are) stepping in when the Consistoire has unfulfilled positions and requires the staff to help out, handing over responsibilities whenever my role changed as I tend to constantly worry and see where there is space for improvements, and balancing work and being a mother whilst trying to look after myself as well.

How has the Swiss Church changed since you first started working here?

There have been many seasons and one of my favourite ones was when I was working fulltime and we had the open door policy with weekly events such as Breakfast on the Steps, Prayer, Holy Soup and of course the monthly ladies' meetings. The liveliness and buzz about the place was infectious and many good friendships were formed and remained (one of my favourites being Andy).

I feel though that if comparing the start of my journey with the Swiss Church to now, the biggest change would be with myself. I went from being the centre of many things and a constant presence within the building to working partly from home and partly in the office. I don't always know anymore what is going on. Before, I was being used to being the person people would come to for information. I don't particularly like having lost this closeness but it simply reflects a different season in my personal life.

What vision and hopes do you hold for the Swiss Church's future? What potential do you think is still uncovered?

I would love for the Swiss Church to truly become a community centre for the local area as well as the Swiss community in London and the UK; a hub of activity and a life-giving place to people from all walks of life where we work and thrive alongside one another without friction or judgement.

The Serpentine are coming!

By Emily Rose Simons,
Venue Manager

A couple of feet under the windows of the skylight, is a shelf. Did you know this? You can only see it if you are positioned within the skylight – something I experienced this October during the setup for the Serpentine Galleries exhibition. Their team had brought in two cherry pickers and a group of experienced engineers, to extremely carefully fix four projection screens to the ceiling of the church. I was asked to go up in the cherry picker to inspect and understand the work being undertaken. I climbed up the small metal ladder to the already tall basket of the machine without allowing myself any external signs of fear or hesitation.



coming!” – to which she replied “what’s a serpentine?” and “Which wedding cake layer are you making today? The second or the fifth?”

The Serpentine was indeed coming, and coming fast. I was released from the creaking old house and ten days later I was eye to eye with the tops of the light fittings – but there was much to do before we got



to this point.

Back on earth, an additional contract and deposit system had to be created to accommodate the scale of the exhibition and potential for damage, more site visits, and site visits at night had to be scheduled for their designers to work round the clock to ensure the practicalities were in place, toilet rolls and hand towels were ordered, oh, and I should probably let the team know about the enormous transformation that is about to take place..

I didn’t know a massive exhibition was about to happen until suddenly it was. Yes, there were site visits, and phone calls, and emails (so many emails) but it was a last-minute, hypothetical, ‘isn’t it nice they know we exist’ situation until I was in a cot bed in a strange creaking house in the grounds of a Scottish castle, having just reached the end of answering yet another email of two dozen questions and then turned to the solicitor and fellow bridesmaid in the next cot bed, “bloody heck, the Serpentine are

Art

The hall became dark, the foyer was full. For most hours of the day, and some evenings, loud music and sound design would pulse through the building. People would come, recline on a floor of red carpet (the colour unrecognisable in the pitch black), stay for a few minutes, stay for an hour, use the toilet facilities. Until the Monday rolled around and overnight the sunshine returned through the windows onto the subdued atmosphere of a skilfully scheduled Get Out. The keys were handed back and the building was once again in its default angelic serenity.

When I stood on a fully extended cherry picker, frozen by the slight wobble that came with every movement from the designer who stood next to me, I inspected. I understood. And then the cherry picker began its gentle descent. My eyes caught the immense distance between myself and the curator sitting on the steps of the apse. I couldn’t help but register the shock of the large distance and worked again at ensuring a calm and professional exterior. Eventually, my feet were finally graced by the relief of the wood floor immediately beneath them and the curator congratulated me on going up in the cherry picker – not even she had braved it.



New Venue Assistant

To support the Venue Manager with the many hirings and events that take place in the church, we welcome to the team a new venue assistant to the team, Stefano Zenocchini. A

venue assistant’s role is to check the church ahead of an event to make sure it’s in good shape, to occasionally help the community set up for their events, and to make sure people using our building feel welcomed and looked after.

“I’m Stefano from Brescia, Italy, and I moved to London 5 years ago. I am a musician and used to be a guitar teacher back in Italy. When I moved to London, I started to work in the hospitality industry, where I’ve been working for a few years as a manager in a Hampstead cinema. I’m an easy-going person, and very enthusiastic to be now part of the team as a Venue Assistant. I’m excited to start to work in an open-minded and creative environment like this one. There are so many different events going on. I’m really looking forward to being part of the team!”

What does Christmas mean to me?

- Introduction by Carla Maurer

Christmas 2020 was one of a kind, and we will probably remember forever where we were and who with. Just days before Christmas, news came that households wouldn't be allowed to mingle. Some stuck to the rules, some interpreted them a bit more flexibly. Everyone was affected by the restrictions. Many of us separated from loved ones, had to ditch much loved Christmas traditions. It certainly made us rethink the meaning of Christmas. For

me, it restored something that I always found was missing: peace and quiet. I didn't miss the hectic Christmas traffic at the airport, the frantic shopping, or the big family gatherings. It was low key and mellow. And perhaps that's what I missed most, sharing that feeling with loved ones.

I asked people associated with the Swiss Church what Christmas meant to them.



**By Meret Engel,
Swiss Church
sabbatical vicar
2018**

On Christmas, God became man. He decided to meet humans at eye level. This is for me the core of Christmas. It shows me: God

didn't stay in a far-away heaven. He didn't fear becoming vulnerable. He renounces being untouchable and lordly, but encounters humans in daily life, in their fears, struggles, hopes and yearnings. Thus, Christmas is an appeal to Christians to encounter other humans as Jesus did: Openhearted, willing to see personal hardships and not being indifferent in the face of other people's suffering. This is quite far

removed from Christmas as it is celebrated these days: it's not about presenting the most expensive and fancy gift. The most precious gift we can present is ourselves, our time, presence and compassion. Christmas reminds me of the great significance of relationships, and I enjoy being together at Christmas, be it with my family, friends or in the congregation.



**By Thomas
Dummermuth,
Swiss Vicar in
Lincoln US**

"It's getting closer!" My colleague couldn't hide her excitement. It was November 1st, a cold, dreary day, and her third grader had started practicing Christmas Carols on the piano. All I could think of was, Blech. To me, it just seems so very far away. Christmas: that's sitting in a dimly lit Swiss church. The smell of dripping wax intertwined with burnt rubber soles from the radiators underneath the pew. The excitement of singing ancient carols, something about

a boat bound toward our shores bringing heavy cargo: lyrics that couldn't possibly make sense to a 9-year-old in a landlocked country, and yet they forever remain imprinted in my mind. Here in the middle of the USA, what Christmas means to me seems more than an ocean away. Yes, I am landlocked again, both literally and figuratively, through a sea of holiday lights and Christmas music surrounds me. That promised boat heading to our shores? Maybe it is like the Ever Given, that container ship stuck in the Suez Canal. The reality is: it's not just a matter of fragile supply chains. That Christmas I long for might never really make it here again, because it's lost somewhere

in the Bermuda triangle between homesickness, assimilation, and nostalgia. And then again I'm reminded that the first Christmas was not exactly what people might have longed or hoped for either. Instead, out of a glaring light, an angel's voice proclaimed the good news. News of great joy. For all people. Against all odds. So, I might as well just get up and go looking. Once again. For Immanuel, the "God-with-us" might be found, even when we least expect it.



By Lilian Jost, former Swiss Church community worker

O Come All Ye Faithful – Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht – All I Want for Christmas Is You!

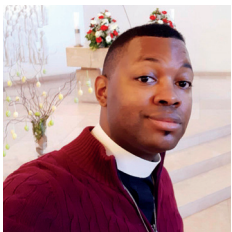
What would Advent and Christmas be without its songs? Traditional carols accompanied by an organ, sung in a candle-lit church after nightfall;

Whams!'s 80s synthies bearing out of a loudspeaker at a mulled wine stand; a bright and busy shopping centre the week before Christmas, stressed out shoppers listening to Mariah Carey for the umpteenth time that year; a choir standing on a bridge, sheet music in cold fingers, singing Carol of the Bells to passers-by.

That last one – that's the one I've missed most. At long last, after a long, forced break, choirs all around the world can meet, rehearse and

perform again. We are doing our funny warm up exercises again, sopranos are struggling with that one high note again, tenors are once again realising that they are vastly outnumbered by every other voice group. We are back to doing what we love most: singing! Merry Christmas and happy singing!

(Personal recommendations from this year's repertoire: Rachmaninov's Ave Maria and Lux fulgebit by Javier Busto)



By Scotty William, Vicar in St. Gallen, Switzerland

When the season of Christmas comes, I always think of a "new beginning", for the birth of Christ in Bethlehem was a fresh start for

humanity. No longer did our old ways or relationship with God remain, for a different way had come about through a baby in a manger. We no longer needed sacred buildings and special gatherings to encounter the Divine, for the Maker of all things was among us or "God with us" as Isaiah writes.

Through Jesus, we could touch God, hear God, see God, and know God in a personal way. Furthermore,

God could come to know us from an inside perspective that was up and close. In short, Christmas was a new beginning for our Maker as well, and because of this, we can say with joy and confidence that God understands.

Because of Christ, we and our God have truly found a new beginning.



By Bernd Rapp, Pastor of St. Mary's and St. George's German Lutheran Church

Am I a Christmas person? I don't know.

Well, I like Christmas; the smell of it; the presents of course; the music... oh, the music. I do have to hear either the Messiah or the Christmas Oratorio or both at least once. I really like the time of Advent. Our home changes then. It's decorated

with an Advent wreath and all sorts of seasonal decorations.

And yes, I do like some of the fuzz around Christmas... the lights in Regents Street, Christmas at Kew, or a proper Gluehwein somewhere. Do I look forward to Christmas this year? Cautiously yes. I hope that my children can fly in from Germany. I guess, everyone wants to have loved ones around them over Christmas. But it wasn't possible last year. Let's hope it is this Christmas. And every year I am astonished by the biblical texts connected with Advent. Sweets in the supermarkets,

but repentance in Church. Mulled wine in the Christmas markets, but biblical visions of the end in the Services. Huge presents under the Christmas tree, but a small poor child in the manger. But every year, the good news finds its way into the world and into my heart: God is love! And his love is small and fragile and we can look at him in Jesus Christ. Hope to the world always in difficult times.

Am I a Christmas person?

Yes, I think so!



Breakfast on the Steps is back

It was an emotional moment. After 1 year and 8 months, we were finally able to reopen the much-loved Breakfast on the Steps (BoS), a community breakfast for people affected by homelessness and poverty, and everyone seeking company and a calm start to the day.

In March 2020, we had to take the difficult decision to close Breakfast on the Steps. Our local partner executive search company Farrell Associates, who used to provide

volunteers from their staff, moved to work from home. Also, at that time we had no permanent community worker. It was not possible to recruit a

new team under those circumstances. Throughout the pandemic, we gave financial support to The American Church and Notre Dame French Roman Catholic Church, who continued to cater to the homeless in the abandoned city centre.

In June 2021, we were able to relaunch monthly haircuts with Jake and give out care packages. This was made possible by Andreas Feller, who took on the volunteer role of Local Outreach Coordinator. Trustee Jenny Breitschmid assembled the care packages. Consistoire advisor and longstanding BoS volunteer Robert Kaufeler, who used to cook a monthly hot breakfast before the closure, was also back.

So, together with the office team, we had enough resources to plan the reopening of the popular breakfast.

Breakfast on the Steps currently takes place on Tuesdays twice a month, with one cold and one hot breakfast. Please consult our website or social media for more information.

If you would like to volunteer please contact Andreas Feller (andreas.feller@swisschurchlondon.org.uk)



Artist Residency

Abel Shah

Exodysis I



with thanks to
Camden Giving and
Arts Council England

The Swiss Church in London
27-28 November
Saturday 12-8
performance by Sarah White & tyroneisaacstuart from 6pm
Sunday 12-6

Christmas Fundraising Challenge

Have you ever donated money to a cause dear to you, and your donation has miraculously doubled in value? Well, here is our chance for a little fundraising Christmas miracle at the Swiss Church.

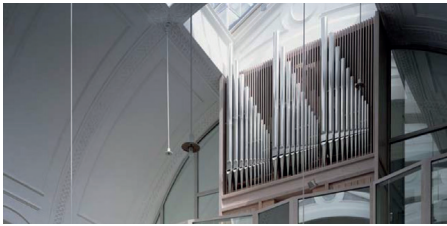
We have qualified to participate in the Big Give Christmas Fundraising Challenge to raise money for the church's local outreach work. Big Give is an online match funding platform, and any donations made from 12:00 PM, 30 November 2021 to 12:00 PM, 7 December 2021 on the Swiss Church funding page will double in value.

Use the link below to raise £10'000 for the Swiss Church this Christmas:

donate.thebiggive.org.uk/campaign/a05690000lwZbPEAA0

Many thanks!

Events @ the Swiss Church



Sunday, 5 December, 11am

Swiss Christmas Family Gathering Join us for a morning of Christmas celebrations for all generations, with carol singing, reading of the Christmas story, prayer station, Samichlaus, and lunch for everyone. Families must sign up. Free. Donations appreciated.



GERMAN YMCA
Christmas Fair 2021
SATURDAY 4th DECEMBER
1 PM - 5 PM
Lancaster Hall Hotel, 35 Craven Terrace
London W2 3EL

★ **Enjoy German Specialties** ★
Bratwurst ★ Sauerkraut
Leberkäse ★ Maultaschen
Kuchen ★ Glühwein

★ **Live Jazz from The Ticklers** ★
★ Carol Singing
★ Christmas Choirs
★ Kids' Entertainment
★ Magician
★ Christmas Cards
★ Ornaments & Decorations
★ Tombola with great Prizes

Sunday, 19 December, 5pm

Christmas Carol Service Our traditional and much-loved carol service is back. We will sing French, German and English Christmas carols, with a London choir and organist Peter Yardley-Jones. Join us to enjoy the unique atmosphere of the Swiss Church.



Church services 2022

9 January, 6 February, 6 March, 3 April, 17 April (Easter Sunday), 11am, at Endell Street.

Audio services will be provided on the 3rd Sunday of each month. Go to www.swisschurchlondon.org.uk/downloads to listen online.



Announcements

Avalon Serafina Jacobs-Hodson, daughter of Lavinia and Simon, was baptised on 7 November 2021 in the presence of the congregation, friends, and family.

Maja Gray, daughter of Sonja and Pieter, received a blessing.

“God says: Remember that I desire for you to be determined and confident.”



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
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You can download the latest Swiss
Church News on our website.



“Mary gave birth to her firstborn, a son, and she wrapped him in cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them at the inn.”

(Lukas 2:7)

“A baby is like the beginning of all things: wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities. In a world that is cutting down its trees to build highways, losing its earth to concrete, babies are almost the only remaining link in nature, with the natural world of living things from which we spring.”

(Eda LeShan, 1922-2022, psychologist and family counselor)

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

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Account Name: **Swiss Church in London**

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.

The Swiss Church in London
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