



# Swiss Church News

Winter 2018

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

## Dear Reader,

*"Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates".* These are the words of one of the most popular Advent hymns.

They refer to Psalm 24, where it is written that God will come to earth and live in the temple. Christians related this Psalm in turn to Jesus Christ: Through him God himself came to earth. But not, as expected, as a King with splendour and pomp. On the contrary, he came in humility, without power or wealth. He was born in a manger, a child in need of care and protection. The birth of Jesus Christ is evidence that God is not an impersonal, indifferent deity. Instead of maintaining a divine distance from life's experiences, including its grief and hardship, Jesus shared in them. With birth of Jesus, God made a new beginning: He encountered human beings as a human being himself and showed them His love. In Jesus Christ, God made a new covenant, which includes not only Israel, but all people on earth. Therefore, Advent is traditionally the beginning of the new Church Year.

Also, in our lives there are different new beginnings. This might be the birth of a child: A new human being comes into the world and will discover and shape it in a personal way. The birth of a child is also a new beginning for those who already are on earth: there is a new member in the family and relationships may change. There are new beginnings during life, too: For example: a new house or job, retirement or the beginning of a new relationship. Confronting illness or the loss of a beloved one are as well, although involuntary, new beginnings: we have to accept that life has changed and to find new paths. But also, world problems require new beginnings: climate change will pose major challenges to global population and demands a re-think of the use of the earth's resources.

We are confronted with a difficult situation in the Middle East, leading to flight of thousands of human beings and Europe has to ask itself how it wants to interact with refugees.

New beginnings might be challenging, and they can seem overwhelming at first. But according to Christian belief, new beginnings are a fundamental part of life. In the Bible you will find a lot of stories of people who had to go new ways: Be it Abraham, whom God ordered to leave his country and move on when he was 75 years old. Be it Moses, who had to assume – initially against his will – responsibility for his people. Or be it the disciples, whose lives changed fundamentally when they met Jesus. Jesus himself showed that a new beginning is possible even in the face of loss and death: Jesus' death resulted in a new beginning, in his resurrection.

The life of Jesus Christ can give hope, not only in good, but also in bad times. His new beginning and new life allow us to live our lives to the fullest, regardless of what we have lost or let go. This is the strength of Christian belief which helped people for centuries to cope with challenges and to seek for new paths. When we celebrate Advent, we should remember this: God himself decided to be human. He dared a new beginning. And he shared life with all that life brought. Therefore, at this time of Advent, we too may hope and trust that we are never alone, that we are able to thrive and even discover peace and joy amidst the letting go. Because Jesus Christ has already moved into this world and will never give it up.

- Rev. Meret Engel

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# Latest news

## ✚ From the Consistoire



**by Peter Stäuber  
- Consistoire  
President**

Dear Reader,  
At the end of August,  
I had the pleasure

of being invited to Switzerland – to my hometown St.Gallen, no less – for the annual meeting of the VEGSIL, the association of former members of the Swiss Church. By a happy coincidence, the meeting took place in the very church where I was both christened and confirmed. It was a very enjoyable visit, and I was particularly struck by the commitment of the VEGSIL members to the Church, many years after they had returned to Switzerland. It was a reminder of what a great institution the Swiss Church is, and gave me a renewed appreciation of the fantastic work that our team and volunteers are doing.

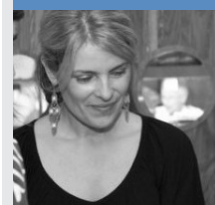
Our voluntary helpers are an invaluable part of our community, and in order for us to be able to continue doing what we are doing now, and possibly more, I'd encourage anybody who is interested to join our team of volunteers – be it at Christmas events like Samichlaus, coffee afternoons or outreach work for homeless people. Please do get in touch, we'd be delighted to have your help!

Also, the Consistoire is always looking for new members. If you're interested in joining us and taking on a role in overseeing and managing the activities of the Swiss Church, shaping the direction in which it is developing, and generally being part of the community, please let us know. If you have specific skills or experience like fundraising, administration, outreach or secretarial work, even better – we'll be glad to draw on your expertise. You don't have to be Swiss to join: true to the spirit of our open Church, anybody is welcome!

[peter.staeuber@swisschurchlondon.org.uk](mailto:peter.staeuber@swisschurchlondon.org.uk)

## From The Venue

**By Nat Breitenstein  
- Venue Manager**



Last Sunday 21st October two very different events took place here, both of which have really stayed with me. Unusually, I was not overseeing either of these events but was instead a

participant, which brought a new perspective.

In the morning we had the christening of baby Yuvi Mark Simmons who has a very special place here. He is our youngest and newest member and brings with him, like all children do, great hope for the future along with a reminder of the need for nurture and care from the whole community. The ceremony was truly touching.

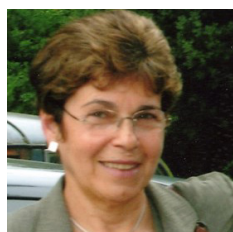
Christenings follow in a long history of rituals occurring under our roof since 1855. The church's walls and inhabitants may have changed over the years along with the city and the wider world, but rituals remain just as significant.

In the evening, on the request of Emanuel Christ and Christoph Gantenbein ETH Zurich studio (responsible for the 2011 refurbishment of the Swiss Church in London), we lent out the building to a small group of their students and assistants for a lecture given by Mr, Adriano Aymonino from Buckingham University. The lecture was on "the rule of taste" in 18th-century English art and architecture.

Prior to the talk I had a brief chat with Victoria Easton from Christ and Gantenbein, who had been involved with the initial stages of the refurbishment works here. Throughout our conversation we reflected on the building's functions, what the refurbishment aimed to achieve and whether it had fulfilled its purpose. The aim had been to develop the building so that it could continue to be used as a church, but also as a cultural space and a hire venue. All this has been achieved spectacularly.

However, the building itself still poses many challenges. It is expensive and time-consuming to maintain. Accidents occur, things break, equipment falters. The building's use-value can occasionally be hindered by the problem of poor acoustics; this and other issues need to be addressed with some urgency.

The refurbishment of a building is never complete; it too needs nurture from all those who use it, not just the architects and maintenance company. I have a strange affinity to bricks and mortar and take great pleasure in looking after this building. It is the energy along with the residue of nurture and care that brings beauty to it and to life overall.



**Ruth Luka – A  
Tribute**  
8 February 1943- 29  
September 2018

Ruth Luka (nee Hasler-Günthardt) was born on 8th February 1943

in Adliswil, Switzerland. As the youngest of four children on her parents' farm, she enjoyed a happy and comfortable childhood. However, when Ruth was only 13, her mother died. This sad time hit her very hard. Friendships forged at that time (with the Dannecker, Gauernik and Hug families) continued throughout her life, through all generations.

Ruth left home, aged 18, working briefly as an Au Pair in Paris, before coming to London. Here, she started to work as an Au Pair for Mrs Hilda Grant, a Swiss lady with a strong faith. Ruth started midwifery studies, unsurprisingly choosing a profession that involved caring for others. It was in the East End Maternity Hospital where she met her future husband. They married in 1966. When Elizabeth and David were born, Ruth turned her hand from midwifery to homemaking. Ruth began attending the Swiss Church in London in the early 1960s. Much later she would go on to become joint leader of the Frauenverein, the Church's Ladies Group, with Helen Szlachta and Maria Kitsis.

Lotti Terroni, a friend for over 30 years recalls "My quiet ordinary life became much richer for knowing Ruth. She was a true inspiration for all of us and she was a person we all admired greatly. We will miss her so very much." From 2007 to 2011 Ruth served on the Consistoire of the Swiss Church. She was also a great benefactress of the Church, and did a lot of volunteering work such as providing beautiful flower arrangements for Sunday services and special occasions, and some fundraising.

In her later years, Ruth's strong faith in God sustained her through increasing bouts of ill-health. She also became increasingly involved with her local Anglican church, St James's in Muswell Hill. Ruth was always doing things for others, whether working at the Muswell Hill soup kitchen, rattling tins outside her local M&S, climbing Kilimanjaro to raise money for Marie Curie, or simply being there for her friends and family.

As her daughter says, Ruth was a perfectionist with her own unique style. Everything had to be just right. Ruth died in the North London Hospice on 29th September. Everyone in the Swiss Church in London will sorely miss her.

*"We now know she is free from suffering and is with her Lord and Saviour ready to see us all again one day".*

## + Art Programme news

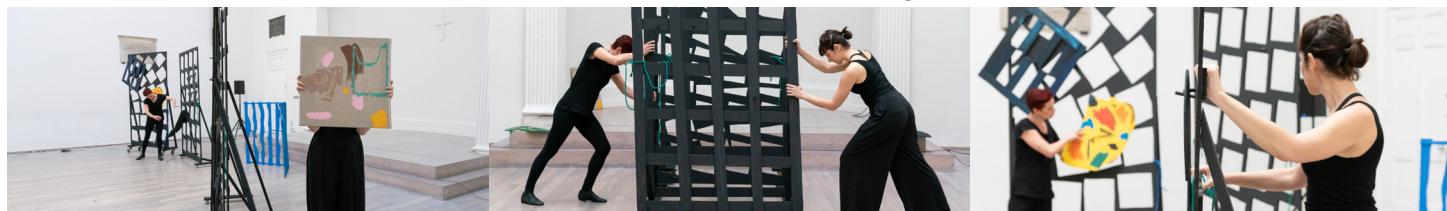
by Kirsty White

This December, I will have completed my first 18 months of programming at the Church. It has been nice to spend a moment writing this article, thinking over the many brilliant projects that have taken place at the Church since I wrote to you last:

In September graphic designer Alexandra Lunn ran a series of typography workshops in the gallery room, teaching participants how to make a typeface using a traditional method of paper cutting taught to her by her Polish grandmother. Print collective, 'Minute Books' documented the process, drawing the workshops by hand, and producing the beautiful publication pictured below (all in one day!) Fantastically Alexandra was successful in gaining Arts Council England Funding to run another series of workshops, one of which will take place at the Swiss Church on Sunday 13 January. For more information please see: [alexandralunn.com](http://alexandralunn.com)



At the beginning of October Melissa Gordon delivered a spectacular staging of British artist, writer and feminist Mina Loy's 1916 play, 'Collision'—an innovative piece of writing, composed mainly of stage directions, describing the transformation of an interior by a machine and a single character known simply as "Man". While Loy enjoyed relative recognition in her lifetime, she has largely been overlooked by the mainstream artistic canon until recently, and Gordon's reenactments are the first known stagings of the play. Her interpretation at the Swiss Church saw two corporeal mimes manipulate a set she had designed built and painted, that assembles itself into a large abstract painting. A beautiful publication is available to purchase that documents and contextualises the performances. Please contact [art@swisschurchlondon.org.uk](mailto:art@swisschurchlondon.org.uk) for details. [alexandralunn.com](http://alexandralunn.com)



Coming up on Thursday 29 November and Saturday 1 December is a performance by Norwegian-based artist Rebecca Birch entitled 'The Yellowing, Part 2' (Bell Mouth). It draws on Birch's research into female social support at the Church (which has included attending the mother's group with her new-born baby) and connecting it to the activities at the bell mouth, or entrance to the fracking site on Preston New Road, Lancashire. Here, the local community, particularly many older women, have held vigil since the fracking commenced in January 2017. The performance will extend methods used in Birch's previous performances—video, live narration and projected drawing—to recount a narrative that will gradually transform the architecture of the Church through projections, audio narration and objects. Starting from the histories of church and bell mouth, it will bring together stories of women from across the UK who take highly political actions, coming to them quietly, but with great determination. For many of these women, these activities are their

first active political engagements, made late in life, and challenging their existing belief systems. Performances will last approximately 25 minutes and will take place every 45 minutes between 5.15pm and 9pm. Refreshments will be served in the foyer throughout the evening. Please see: [beingandappearing.org.uk](http://beingandappearing.org.uk) for further details.

Finally, heading up next year is the annual 'Goldsmiths Exhibition'. This year we have changed the format so that students will be given exclusive use of the church for one week (Monday to Saturday), rather than 8 or 9 days spread over a three-week period. The selected curator will be announced on Monday 19 November, with the exhibition or events programme taking place between Monday 4 and Saturday 9 March 2019. More details to follow shortly!

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!!





## Visit by the Grossmünster Parish Council



On 30th September our sabbatical minister Meret Engel warmly welcomed nine members of the Parish Council of the Grossmünster congregation in Zürich to a special Sunday Service. Their trip to London was organised to mark the end of the Grossmünster as an autonomous parish after 185 years. In 2019, central Zürich's two dozen individual parishes will be amalgamated into one large Parish Council. This move is a response to decreasing figures in church attendance. The Grossmünster's Reverend Christoph Sigrist preached an encouraging sermon on joy. Citing Psalm 122, he emphasized the necessity of rejoicing even in demanding situations. Meret gratefully received a generous donation from the Grossmünster congregation, which illustrated the continuing solidarity and support that the Swiss Church in London continues to receive from Zürich. After the Service we had time to chat and socialise over drinks with our visitors before they caught their return flight to Zürich.

## Visit by the Confirmation Class from Laufenburg

At the beginning of October some dozen youngsters from Laufenburg, a town situated on both banks of the Rhine and divided between Switzerland and Germany, joined the Breakfast on the Steps (BoS). Straightaway, they showed Josh Kelly and his team how helpful, outgoing and open-minded today's young people are. During breakfast they got acquainted with some of our guests in gripping conversation. After breakfast they supported the BoS-team in clearing up in no time at all. Shortly after, they travelled back in time with Daniel Engeli, Meret's history teacher husband. He introduced them to the Church's history, leading them to five "stations", in and surrounding the Church. Then it was on to a talk and discussion with BoS guests Andy and Dave, who provided a moving insight into a rough sleeper's life. Listening to their stories the youngsters learnt that sometimes it might be more important to talk and listen to the homeless, than to give money and food. Discussing the various reasons for homelessness they realised that theoretically almost everybody could be affected by homelessness.



## Sempach Confirmation Group Visit



Later in October a confirmation Group from Sempach visited us. They also started the day with an introduction by Daniel to the Swiss Church in London. Later they celebrated a Service with our Mothers' Group, and presented on colourful posters, what they associate with "Heimat" (homeland). One young man with a mischievous smile made a memorable statement: "Home is where the food's delicious." Revd Hans Weber's thought-provoking sermon emphasized that we are all travellers on a quest for truth, regardless of our homeland. Meret led the Service, assisted by Marianne Fisher-Hertig from the Mothers' Group. Three keen junior leaders of the confirmation group prepared excellent risotto and fresh salad – a delicious lunch, which made hosts as well as visitors, feel just like being at home.

The next day, Josh led a walk from Soho to the National Gallery, where the group eagerly completed Daniel's quiz. Having awarded the best team with some chocolates, we continued our walk to Westminster Abbey, to enjoy Evensong there. The Group was fascinated, as it differed in many aspects from Reformed Church worship in Switzerland.



# Some Thoughts on Reformation Day

by Daniel Engeli

An analysis of the top twenty search results from Google for the words “Reformation Day” gives us a taste of the controversies surrounding this day, which is widely celebrated in European Reformed Churches. Fourteen results claim that Reformation Day marks the exact day when Luther nailed his “Ninety-Five Theses on Indulgences” to the oak door of Wittenberg’s Castle Church (cf. the picture on the left). Four results emphasise that 31 October marks the day when Luther sent his Theses to the Archbishop of Mainz, while two results don’t give us any explanation at all. A quick Google search might be a fascinating way of gaining a superficial insight into popular beliefs, a quick historic review might shed some light on the background of the festive day.

In 1667 the Elector of Saxony introduced an annual Reformation Day to commemorate the spectacular foundation myth of the Reformation—namely Luther’s nailing the Ninety-Five Theses to the Church door. Following the splendour of the centenary celebrations in 1717, 1817 and 1917, more and more Protestant countries introduced an official Reformation Day. In particular the centenaries of 1817 and 1917 demonstrated how an originally religious Memorial Day could be misused for political purposes. The 1817 anniversary was combined with a celebration of the collapse of the Napoleonic Empire and a nationalistic “Wartburgfest”. Sadly, this event organised by students degenerated into book burnings of Catholic and Conservative writings. And the 1917 anniversary was mainly aimed at boosting the morale of German troops in World War I.

Until the 1960’s almost nobody seriously challenged the central foundation myth of the Reformation. Ironically it was a Catholic church historian named Edwin Iserloch who in 1961, exposed the myth by pointing out that the only source of the nailing of Theses to the Church door was Melancthon, who was not an eye witness, and only wrote his account in 1546, shortly after Luther’s death. In addition, he produced two letters written by Luther to his protector Frederick the Wise of Saxony and Pope Leo X, assuring him that he had not published the Theses before sending them to the Archbishop of Mainz.

However, in 2006 some counter-evidence was discovered. A note written in the margin of a bible by Georg Röer, Luther’s personal secretary, was discovered which stated that Luther had indeed nailed the Theses to the door of Wittenberg Castle Church in 1517. According to most professional historians Melancthon and Röer’s accounts do not provide sufficient evidence to outweigh Luther’s own statements. They were not eyewitnesses and reported the central event more than two decades after it had supposedly occurred.

And so, from a strictly historical point of view we can’t celebrate the nailing of the Ninety-Five Theses to the church door on Reformation Day, but only their dispatch to the Archbishop. And only that? On closer examination, the real scale of Luther’s deed becomes apparent. Even though he was only a professor at the recently founded University of Wittenberg, responsible for inspecting eleven monasteries in Saxony, Luther displayed considerable courage to alert his Archbishop about the apparent misuse of Indulgences, a widespread practice in the Catholic Church since the 12th century. Moreover, he complained to the Archbishop about the Pope, mediator between God and human beings, according to all Christian teaching at that time. Therefore, when we celebrate Reformation Day each 31st October, we commemorate the principled and bold behaviour of a cleric who placed his painstaking analysis of Biblical principles above his career.



Surprisingly Reformation Day seems to be facing a bright future, even if it competes with commercialised Halloween celebrations all across Europe. Traditionally Catholic Chile introduced Reformation Day as a public holiday in 2008, following initiatives from their growing Protestant communities. Following the success of Luther Year 2017, three federal German states have done likewise. Now it is up to Protestants to commemorate

Reformation Day responsibly. We should listen to critical voices who point out the divisive aspects of Reformation Day, for example the schism that followed between Protestants and Catholics, and Luther’s detestable although widely held 16th century anti-Jewish views. By listening, we can ensure that Reformation Day does not degenerate into a day on which Luther is declared an undisputed hero, and the division of the Church a permanent and glorious fate. On the contrary, we have to carefully take into consideration the contentious aspects of Luther’s personality, as well as the physical and psychological suffering the reformers and their opponents imposed on Christianity.

# From the Community



By Josh Kelly, Community Worker

## Christmas Family Afternoon: Sunday, 9th December

Are you free on Sunday 9th December between 1pm and 7pm? Would you enjoy helping the children to carve the turnip lanterns, make Christmas baubles, or decorate Christmas cards? Maybe you'd prefer to supervise Twister or make jigsaw puzzles together? Maybe you'd like to help us set up things, make tea and coffees, or clear away? You don't need to come along for the whole afternoon although that would be great. A couple of hours help would be a great help too.

If you can spare some time, contact Josh now:

[josh.kelly@swisschurchlondon.org.uk](mailto:josh.kelly@swisschurchlondon.org.uk) or 020 7836 1418.

## Winter Clothing and Footwear Appeal- 2018.

Last year your generous donations to our Winter Appeal helped us to provide good quality winter footwear to members of our homeless and vulnerable community. Other charities provide winter clothing and footwear that starts to wear out by February. By buying clothes and footwear in the sales, that is good quality and fits we can make sure that every penny raised, is well spent. We will be buying shoes, coats, gloves, hats and underwear.

Contact Josh for more information about the scheme.

You can send cheques payable to "Swiss Church in London-Community outreach" or donate online via our BTDonate page:

[mydonate.bt.com/charities/theswisschurchinlondon](http://mydonate.bt.com/charities/theswisschurchinlondon)

Finally, ...

As harsher winter weather sets in I worry more about the lives of rough sleepers who use our Tuesday Breakfast service. Many of our regulars are very resilient. However, a longstanding dread of mine has just occurred. I have just learnt of the death on the streets of one of our guests. Recently the independent Bureau of Investigative Journalism released a hard hitting, thoroughly researched study which records the death of 450 rough sleepers on UK streets in 2018. Causes of death included suicide, malnutrition and physical violence. Remember taking a few minutes to acknowledge a homeless person can make a big difference. If you see someone on the streets who may be unwell, call the trained professionals from Safer Streets on 0207 833 7970. Check out their smartphone app too.



## Bible stories: The Greatest Hits

The Bible is full of great stories which are part of our cultural heritage and collective knowledge. Who hasn't heard of Adam and Eve, Noah's Ark, the Ten Commandments, David and Goliath, the creation of the world in seven days or Jesus walking on water! Novelists and artists refer to these stories in their works, and they are popular children's tales too. They fascinate and inspire people around the globe and across cultures and religious affiliations.

Reverend Carla Maurer will explore and re-interpret these famous stories, the

'greatest hits' of the Bible, in a sermon series starting in January and until the summer break.

We will start on Sunday 6 January with the story of the three kings who went out to pay their tributes to the newborn king of peace.

Join us for Sunday service and lunch every first and third Sunday of the month. Everyone is welcome!

Your input is very welcome! If there is a story that you think should not be missing in this sermon series, drop Carla an email: [carla.maurer@swisschurchlondon.org.uk](mailto:carla.maurer@swisschurchlondon.org.uk)

# Events @ the Swiss Church

## PHILOMEL "CECILIA SINGS"

**24th November - 7.30pm**

Renaissance music for Saint Cecilia's Day, superb soprano voices accompanied by period instruments. Entrance price - £13. Book tickets via [ticketsource.co.uk/philomel](http://ticketsource.co.uk/philomel)

## SERVICE OF COMMEMORATION

**25th November at 5pm**

Annual service of commemoration led by Revd Meret Engel. At this we light candles for those who have passed away this year and in previous years. Their names will also be read out. Contact Meret at [meret.engel@swisschurchlondon.org.uk](mailto:meret.engel@swisschurchlondon.org.uk) or on 0207 836 1418 if you wish a name of a loved one to be included.

## REBECCA BIRCH: THE YELLOWING

### PART 2-BELL MOUTH

**29th November and 1st December- 5 performances each evening at 5.15, 6.00, 6.45, 7.30 and 8.15pm**

A visual art performance, which explores the power of female social support networks both at the Swiss Church and at the Bell End

fracking site in Lancashire. Entrance free but please register via Eventbrite: [eventbrite.co.uk/e/rebecca-birch-the-yellowing-part-2-bell-mouth-tickets-51866768902](http://eventbrite.co.uk/e/rebecca-birch-the-yellowing-part-2-bell-mouth-tickets-51866768902)

## SWISS FAMILY CHRISTMAS AFTERNOON INCLUDING SAMICHLAUSS

**Sunday 9th December 2pm to 6pm**

Fun for all the family including a visit from Samichlauss. Entrance free. If you wish your children to receive a gift from Samichlauss registration required. Email: [josh.kelly@swisschurchlondon.org.uk](mailto:josh.kelly@swisschurchlondon.org.uk). Telephone 0207 836 1418

## CHRISTMAS CAROL CONCERT SERVICE WITH CHRIST CHURCH LONDON

**16 December at 5pm**

Our traditional and very popular service. Led by Revd Meret Engel; with Christ Church London; and choir accompanied by organist-Peter Yardley-Jones.

Refreshments will be served after the service.

Our programme of events for 2019 will be announced shortly and publicised via our website, and on Facebook and Eventbrite. An email newsletter listing Church Services, community events and arts events at the Swiss Church is sent to everyone who has requested to receive it. If you would like to sign up, send us an email with your details to: [info@swisschurchlondon.org.uk](mailto:info@swisschurchlondon.org.uk)

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

## Announcements



### Baptism

Yuvi Mark Simmons, son of Revd Carla Maurer and Mr Julian Simmons was baptised at the Swiss Church in London on 20 October by Revd Meret Engel. Mr Niccolò Aliano preached the sermon. The Swiss Church congregation welcomes Yuvi Mark into the Swiss Church community.

### Obituary

Mrs Ruth Luka (née Hasler) passed away on 29th September. She gave many years of faithful service to the Swiss Church, including serving as a member of the Consistoire and playing a leading role in the Frauenverein. A tribute to Ruth Luka is on page 2 of this Swiss Church News.

### Obituary

Ursula Talary passed away on 31st October after a short illness. She was very active in the Swiss Church in London, and served on the Consistoire from 2002 to 2009. She also served as a director of The Swiss Benevolent Society from 2005-2015. Her help and support will be greatly missed. The Church and the community send their condolences to her family. A tribute to her will be published in the next edition of the Swiss Church News.





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*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation  
has come: The old has gone, the new is here!*

*- 2 Corinthians 5 v17*

*We must prepare for parting and leave-taking  
Or else remain the slave of permanence.  
Even the hour of our death may send  
Us speeding on to fresh and newer spaces,  
And life may summon us to newer races.  
So be it, heart: bid farewell without end.*

*- Hermann Hesse (1877-1962)  
(from Stufen published 4 May 1941)*

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