



Swiss Church News

Autumn 2018

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

By Rev. Meret Engel

Dear Reader,

At the beginning of August my husband and I arrived in London. Although we had been in London before, I was struck again by the size of this city. Coming from a village with 10,000 inhabitants, I now found myself in a city of nine million people. We hadn't even a flat, as it was too difficult to look for one from Switzerland. So we stayed in a hotel for a week in the hope that we would find a new home fairly quickly. In the beginning I felt a bit lost, not only because my sense of direction is not very good, but also because I couldn't find the way from A to B without Google Maps. There was also an inner feeling of being lost. Everybody seemed to be busy, in a rush and had his or her job to do, and I felt overwhelmed by all these impressions.

The feeling of being lost, and linked to it, the feeling of loneliness is a big issue right now. At first glance, thanks to digital networks, it seems to be much easier to connect with other people. But that's not true. As David Brooks wrote in the New York Times, "There's a mountain of evidence suggesting that the quality of our relationships has been in steady decline for decades. In the 1980s, 20 percent of Americans said they were often lonely. Now it's 40 percent". And in Britain, according to a 2017 report published by the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness, more than nine million people often or always feel lonely. The issue prompted Prime Minister Theresa May to appoint a Minister for Loneliness.

So how can we cope with loneliness? The Bible gives a clear answer: Humans are social beings. The crucial importance of relationships

is written in the Greatest Commandment of Love, in Matthew's gospel, in which Jesus invites us to love God and to love our neighbour as ourselves. (Matt 22, vv.34-40). We were made to communicate with and to support each other. That design is part of God within each of us, just as also He has fellowship within his own being: God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, an eternal message and one of love for each other. God is therefore a "gesellige Gottheit", a social God, as the Swiss theologian and poet Kurt Marti once wrote.

By highlighting the vital importance of relationships to human beings and to the heart of Christian belief, I am coming back to the beginning of my story. I have learned from experience, the importance and value of relationships, and of being supported. My husband Daniel and I, received a very warm welcome at the Swiss Church, and within a week we had found a new home, thanks to a new relationship. I am also impressed by the work of the Swiss Church, which helps to connect and support a very diverse range of people. It gives space to artists, homeless people, people who are looking for community, and to people who want to share their belief.

So I would like to thank you for all of these personal encounters. I will be stepping into Carla's shoes while she is on Maternity Leave, leading Sunday Services and taking part in Church and Swiss community events. I will be here until the end of December, and I am looking forward to getting to know you all, during the coming months.

Rev Meret Engel

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Latest news

✚ From the Consistoire



by **Stäuber,**
President of the
Consistoir

I am delighted and honoured to have been appointed President of the Consistoire of the Swiss Church, and I look forward to an exciting time ahead! Since joining the Board of Trustees in early 2017, I have been responsible for outreach and social work, and I will continue to focus on this area.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank David Hume for taking up the role of acting president last year, when

Johannes Reich left, and for doing a fantastic job of leading the Consistoire.

Thankfully, we will still be able to draw on David's experience, as he is one of three members of the leadership team which we put together this summer. The team consists of company secretary Nathalie Chalmers, David Hume and myself, and we'll be in regular contact with each other to discuss urgent matters or organisational issues.

Finally, I would like to thank Alexandre Tissot, who will be leaving the UK and therefore also the Consistoire, for all his fundraising efforts since joining last year. It helped the Church immensely. All the best for your future in the Netherlands, Alexandre, you'll be missed!

Gilbert Genton - A Tribute

Gilbert Genton was well known to members and friends of the Swiss Church in London for his dedication to the Church during his time in London. When he returned to his native Lausanne he played a key role in establishing the Anciens Londoniens so that French speaking members could maintain their links with the Swiss Church in London, and with each other back in Switzerland.

He passed away in Lausanne on 5 August 2018, and his funeral service was held at the parish church of Saint-Laurent, Les Bergières on 14 August 2018. He had been a conseiller paroissial at Saint-Laurent for very many years, where his tireless dedication is sadly missed.

Anthony Plowman, a personal friend, who first met Gilbert Genton at the Swiss Church in London in the 1990s, shares some personal memories...

"Later I met Gilbert in Lausanne, and we made a visit together to Villars-Chesières

(Vaud). I had been introduced to him by Simone, a mutual friend, who had returned to Lausanne, after some time in London. We took a steamer across Lake Geneva, then a train, and finally the postbus to reach the village. Villars had changed a great deal since I attended L'institut La Villan in my youth...

Gilbert was a keen letter writer, and in recent years we corresponded regularly about our mutual interests: mountaineering, Swiss wine and food and current affairs."

C'est bien, bon et fidèle serviteur, entre dans la joie de ton Seigneur (Matthieu 25)



From The Venue

By **Nat Breitenstein**



As my second summer here at the Swiss Church draws to a close, it feels an apt time to reflect on our achievements, strengths and weaknesses, alongside our hopes and aspirations.

The greatest strength we have here is our team and its willingness to pull together. So much is dependent on the spirit of supporting one another and on being flexible and understanding. This is of course paramount to those who are most alone, who need support and care from others. Josh Kelly our Community Outreach worker and his team of volunteers from Farrell Associates and our sabbatical Ministers, Stephan Degen-Ballmer, Meret Engel and her husband Daniel Engeli all work together providing breakfast to our homeless community, who are with us every Tuesday morning. Most significantly, they give time to listen and engage, creating a space that enables the members of this community to have a voice individually and as a whole. Here, reaching out with the gift of connectivity is invaluable.

Another cherished and inspiring community here are all the 'Mothers' who have helped hold the place together for many, many years and are really the heartbeat of the Church. Without their dedication and enthusiasm I don't know where we would be! It is always such a joy to watch them working together as a team.

Recently we've had act of generosity from one of our neighbours, Scott Brownrigg, who have donated two sofas and a coffee table for our Foyer which has massively smartened up the space and given us another area for meetings—or to just sit and chat! Thank you all at Scott Brownrigg, but in particular Lorraine who organized all this for us.

When it comes to hirers, we seek to extend our good will to them, giving time and effort as well as accommodating their budgets when possible. We are a charity dependent on venue hire but also a community with a heart. I believe this comes across to everyone who uses the space and knows that they can depend on us to support and help them while they are here.

P.S. – Recently we've had a new addition to our team here. Congratulations to Carla and Julian for bringing us the newest and youngest member of the team - Yuvi Mark Simmons. We are all looking forward to having you around!

Contact me: venue@swisschurchlondon.org.uk



Art at the Swiss Church

Art Programme news

by Kirsty White

It has been a busy Summer for the art programme, and things are only getting started....

In June Glasgow-based artist Romany Dear performed two new works at the Church that looked at queer identity and dance as a practice of collective support and social action. To our delight the evening was very well attended.

This August we were very excited to welcome our first artist in residence to the Swiss Church, Zurich-based Miriam Laura Leonardi. Miriam joined us for three weeks, to develop her project *The Church* (after Robert Ashley's *Perfect Lives*), a live re-enactment of the penultimate episode of composer Robert Ashley's television opera *Perfect Lives*. The culmination of her residency was a performance of her project in the Church hall, that featured live organ accompaniment by organist Daniel Engeli.

In September we are looking forward to hosting graphic designer Alexandra Lunn for a series of half-day typography workshops in the gallery room. Part of London Design Festival, the workshops will teach participants how to build and construct their own typeface from paper, from scratch. Lunn will also create a collective font inspired by the group's designs which will be shared with participants later in the year for

them to use on Mac computers. Workshops last half a day and will take place between Wednesday 19-Friday 21 September. Please visit <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/craft-in-the-digital-age-make-your-own-typeface-tickets-48868025580> to book a ticket.

In October we will be welcoming Brussels-based artist Melissa Gordon to the Church to perform her ongoing performance-work *Collision*. The performance takes as its starting point a previously unperformed play by British artist, playwright, and actress Mina Loy. Written in 1916, the play describes the transformation of an interior by a machine and a character known simply as "Man". In Gordon's production this scenario is depicted by two corporeal mimes, who expand and then collapse specially built kinetic scenery.

The performance will mark the launch of a new publication celebrating Gordon's *Collision*, featuring an introduction by Marie-Anne McQuay (Head of Programme, Bluecoat, Liverpool), an interview with corporeal mime Rita Pulga and an essay by yours truly. Please join us for the performance on Thursday 4 October at 7pm. For more information please visit beingandappearing.org.uk.

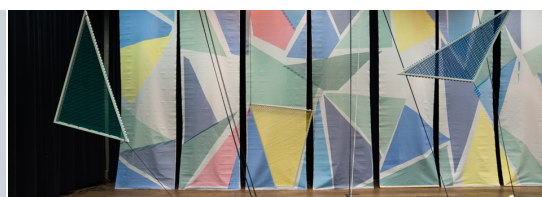
Rounding out the year, British artist Rebecca Birch will present a new commission developed specifically for the Church in November. This is the sequel to her highly successful exhibition at the Grundy Art Gallery in Blackpool, *The Yellowing, part 1*. More details coming soon!



Miriam Laura Leonardi, *The Church* (after Robert Ashley's *Perfect Lives*), 2018



Two fisted, many sided, tuna fem by Romany Dear part of *Being and Appearing* at the Swiss Church in London. Photo by Camilla Greenwell



Melissa Gordon, 2016. Installation view *Fallible Space*, Bluecoat, Liverpool. Silkscreen on scrim, metal frames, ropes, pulleys and sandbags, dimensions variable



Variations on *Solo Yolo* (we still have many lives left to dance) by Romany Dear part of *Being and Appearing* at the Swiss Church in London. Photo by Camilla Greenwell



Visit by Parish Group from Fraumünster in Zurich

In August we were honoured to welcome twenty seven visitors from the Fraumünster in Zurich.

The historic Fraumünster will be very familiar to many readers. Some of you may have been at the Fraumünster when Carla preached there as a guest, in February. Our visitors were taking part in a whirlwind tour of British cathedrals and we are honoured that we were included in their itinerary.

After a chance to slow down over coffee and cake, to admire the architecture and Christ and Gantenbein's renovation of the Church, our visitors took part in a short series of mini-lectures and discussions. Geoff Fisher spoke about the history of the Church and his own role in the renovation project. Miriam Laura Leonardi, our 2018 August Artist in Residence spoke about the possibilities that the Residency gave her to explore some new artistic performances. Robert, one of our homeless guests gave us all an insight into his life on the streets. There was a lively question-and-answer session after each presentation. Then the group was off with their London guide for another cathedral visit. Revd. Dr Niklaus Peter, Minister of the Fraumünster, and his wife Vreni were able to stay a little longer, which gave us a chance to compare notes of the similarities and challenges that our respective churches share in two contrasting European cities.

We would like to thank the Fraumünster once again for their generous financial support of our community outreach programme

We look forward to seeing you all in London again soon.

Parish Visit

by Wil-Hüntwangen-Wasterkingen Confirmation Class

In early July we were delighted to welcome the confirmation class from the Reformed Church parish of Wil-Hüntwangen-Wasterkingen (ZH) accompanied by Minister Revd Heinz Leu and youth worker Raphael Baumann.

Our visitors had an early start on Tuesday morning, when they helped with setting up our weekly Breakfast on Steps. (see page 7 for more details), and chatted with some of our regular guests. Later in the morning Geoff Fisher gave an interesting talk on the history of the Swiss Church in London. One of our homeless Breakfast on the Steps guests shared his story of life on the streets, in a short talk, and took part in a fascinating question-and-answer session, which broadened everyone's knowledge of homeless in Central London.

Our visitors also attended Sunday Service, which included a baptism, and took an active role in the Reading. After the service, the congregation very much enjoyed chatting over lunch and coffee in Swiss German and English with so many lively young visitors. We thank all the confirmation class for visiting us, and hope to see you again whenever you visit London. We also thank everyone in Ev. Ref. KG Wil-Hüntwangen-Wasterkingen for their continuing financial support of the Swiss Church in London and our outreach programmes.





Swiss National Day

Following on the success of 2017, Swiss National Day was celebrated once again on 1st August in the Swiss Church. In the afternoon there were children's events: face painting and games. For the adults a busy Church hall, decked in cantonal flags was a hive of activity.

Traditional raclette was on sale, together with delicious modern dishes, made with top-quality Swiss ingredients. We thank Maja Pauling, Guillaume Jounot and their team from The Fabulous 698b Company for the catering. Swiss beer from 1936 Beers, and Swiss wine from Alpine Wines by Joel and Rob provided a perfect accompaniment.

Visitors also enjoyed traditional home-baked Swiss cakes, coffee, and tea, over a chat with friends, old and new. Our thanks go to the ladies of the Church congregation for their baking, which is always a huge hit at all our community celebrations.

And for those with an appreciation of fine artisan chocolate, Ivan Le Jeune of Le Jeune Chocolatiers provided free tastings to enable folks to make a wise buy. For those still missing home, Ricola sent a huge box of every one of their many flavoured sweets, which had been transformed into table decoration goodie bags.

In his welcome speech Ambassador Fasel emphasised Switzerland's contribution to world affairs: a small country with different linguistic and cultural traditions, that had a proud record of achieving compromise both at home and abroad, in an increasingly fractious world. After watching President Alain Berset's speech live via satellite TV link on our big screen, and singing the National Anthem accompanied by the Church's Späth organ played by organist Peter Yardley-Jones, there was a surprise in store. Two alpine horns, expertly played, filled the Church with the sound of the mountains.

A total of about 350 people attended the celebrations. We would like to thank you all for coming. Such a successful event would not be possible to hold without the tremendous hard work and support of so many.

To all of you, whether you helped at Swiss National Day for the fiftieth time or first time, we say "Thank you":

**Professional catering- Maja Pauling and Guillaume Junot, Fabulous 698-
fabulous698b.co.uk**

**Swiss Wine – Joelle and Rob, Alpine Wines
alpinewines.co.uk/alpineshop/index.php**

**1936 Swiss Beer
www.1936biere.com**

**Swiss Artisan Chocolate
lejeunechocolatiers.com**

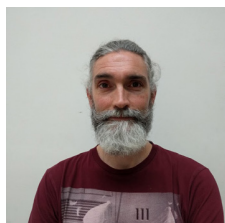
**Swiss Sweets- Ricola
ricola.com/en-gb**

Cakes and Light Refreshments- Cecile Mistry and the ladies of the Swiss Church London congregation and friends.

**The Embassy of Switzerland in the United Kingdom:
Ambassador Alexandre Fasel and staff.
eda.admin.ch/london**

Swiss Church London team: Anina, Nat, Josh, Colin; the Consistoire; members, friends and volunteers (Margrit, Erica, Alexandre, Cyril, Larissa, Eloise, Catherine, Susanne, Yvon, Peter, David, Allison, Laila, Marianne, Renee).

From the Community



Breakfast on the Steps

By Josh Kelly, Community Worker

Breakfast on the Steps recently played an important part in supporting one man through “The worst three weeks I’ve ever lived through”.

A few weeks ago, I noticed a new face at breakfast. He was shy, polite, grateful and smart. He didn’t want to talk much. Three weeks later one of our volunteers, Renate, struck up a long conversation with him. He was a gardener and builder, with work contracts in another part of Britain. He had come to London for a specific building contract and had been working on site for five months but didn’t get paid. The company told him that it had a cash flow problem and everyone would be paid the next month, then the next month. As the months passed by he spent all his money. Then the building company was declared bankrupt. No one got paid anything for the months of work that they had done. Luckily, he had some private gardening clients, but they paid monthly and he was now in debt, due to the many months of unpaid building work. One thing led to another, and he found himself living on the streets. Early on he learned that he didn’t know the tricks of how to live on the streets. One night most of his belongings were stolen, when he was sleeping. Another rough-sleeper told him about the Swiss Church, that we did a good breakfast, were nice people and provided a safe place on Tuesday mornings.

Our support enabled him to meet other people who told him where to get food, about safer places to sleep, and gave him other tips to help him survive on the streets. As he talked with Renate, we learned that he was due to receive his gardening money in a week. Also, he had a new job waiting for him outside London, along with his tools and a van that he had been unable to get to without the money for the train fare. He told us about the unhygienic conditions he found at homeless shower facilities, his lack of family and friends in London, and how grateful he was that the Swiss Church supported him when he was at his most vulnerable. We hope that he is now safely out of London with his gardening money, and in a secure job.

To end with, some news from our regulars:

Richard had an exhibition of his art work in Bloomsbury Baptist Church.

Dave has been running a crowd funding campaign for a film he has made.

An old regular who is now off the streets and in work, was knocked off his bike and broke his neck! Despite being strapped up when he visited, he was in a positive frame of mind. He asked for our support to deal with administrative matters that he found difficulty to attend to while recovering from his injuries. Since the Swiss Church has the Community Worker post, we were able to help him to deal with these problems. He called in again recently and reported that he should be out of the neck brace soon, and would be starting physio and rehab. We wish him a full recovery.

Josh Kelly

VEGSIL Annual General Meeting, August 2018 in St Gallen

This year’s AGM of VEGSIL took place in St Gallen on 26 August. The annual Church Service was held at the Reformierte Kirche in Rotmonten, led by Dr. Frank Jehle, Emeritus Professor, University of St Gallen; and the Swiss Church in London’s Peter Yardley-Jones played the organ.

Peter Stäuber, the new President of the Consistoire, presented a report on the activities of the Swiss Church in London during 2017-18, highlighting both achievements and future challenges. Marianne and Geoff Fisher, and Lisa Hall-Zeller from the Swiss Church in London also attended.

The AGM was followed by an excellent lunch at the Altersheim in Rotmonten, giving everyone time to renew friendships.

The Swiss Church in London is grateful for the continuing support of VEGSIL, in particular for the Swiss Church News and the Muttergruppe.



Events @ the Swiss Church

EDG. BUSS- UND BETTAG SERVICE- SWISS PENANCE DAY

16 September- 11am

Service with Communion. Led by Revd Meret Engel. Followed by lunch.

MAKE YOUR OWN TYPEFACE

19 to 21 September

Six half-day workshops with Alexandra Lunn Studio. Book via Eventbrite. eventbrite.co.uk/e/craft-in-the-digital-age-make-your-own-typeface-tickets-48868025580

29 September TWO CONCERTS

3pm- Workshop Choir Concert with Vocalino Choir, Wettingen and Robin Tyson of the King's Singers

7pm- St Ursus Cathedral, Solothurn Boys' Choir- opening concert of UK tour.

SUNDAY SERVICE

30 September- 11am

led by Pfr. Christopher Sigrist, Minister at Grossmünster Zurich. *Please note-This service will be entirely in German*

ORGAN RECITAL

22 October- 5pm

by Ben Sheen from St Thomas' Church, Fifth Avenue, New York

ZUR ROSENZEIT AN EVENING OF MUSIC

22 November- 7pm

with Jessica Broad, soprano and Peter Yardley-Jones, piano.

SERVICE OF COMMEMORATION

25 November 2018- 5pm

In this service of commemoration, we light candles for those who have passed away in the past year, and in previous years. The service led by Reverend Robin Pfaff, will be accompanied by organist Peter Yardley-Jones. Followed by refreshments.

FAMILY CHRISTMAS EVENTS

INCLUDING SAMICHLAUS.

9 December- 1pm to 7pm

CHRISTMAS CAROL CONCERT SERVICE WITH CHRIST CHURCH LONDON.

16 December - 5pm

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

Announcements

Birth



Yuvi Mark Simmons, son of Carla Maurer and Julian Simmons, was born on 26 July. Carla and Julian would like to thank the congregation and friends of the Swiss Church for all their good wishes and prayers and are looking forward to introduce Yuvi to everybody soon!"

Yuvi is the short form of the biblical name Yuval: "His brother's name was Yuval; he was the father of all who play stringed instruments and pipes." (Genesis 4:21). Yuvi also means prince in Hindi.

Baptism



Olivia Crozier daughter of Mark and June Crozier was baptised on 15 July 2018 by Marianne Fisher-Hertig

Obituary

Mr Gilbert Genton died on August 5th in Lausanne. He was the President of The Anciens Londoniens, (French speaking former members of the Swiss Church in London), for many years and will be sadly missed. A tribute to him appears on page 2.

Obituary

Mr Nico Harhalakis, husband of Maya Harhalakis, passed away peacefully in his Wimbledon Nursing home on 24th August. He was 99 years old. Maya will be well known to many of you as an active member of the Swiss Church and leader of the Muttergruppe until 1988.



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“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”
- Matt 22,vv37-40

“Our human compassion binds us the one to the other - not in pity or patronizingly, but as human beings who have learnt how to turn our common suffering into hope for the future”
- Nelson Mandela

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