



# Swiss Church News

## Autumn 2020

Eglise Suisse de Londres  
Schweizerkirche in London

Chiesa Svizzera a Londra  
Baselgia Svizra a Londra



Dear Readers,

Over the past few months the Swiss Church has lost four of its members born between 1923-1926. *Albert, Eric, Elsy and Jean-Jacques* served as members of the Consistoire or were active members of the church groups, contributing to the church each in their own way over decades. Until the very end they remained committed to the Swiss Church, and they will be fondly remembered. As a Minister the contact with some of our oldest members has always been an invaluable source of insight and wisdom, but perhaps what I like the most is the laughter we can share, and to be able to soak up some of the lightness and nonchalance that seems to come with old age, if not for all, then at least for many.

It is sad to see a generation go and it makes me think how people's commitment towards institutions has changed. My generation is a project generation. We like to be involved with a project with a clear start and end date where we can immediately see results and celebrate our achievements. This is not necessarily a bad thing. It allows us to react flexibly to people's needs and thrive with an idea that might otherwise get lost. But there is also a downside to it. If we live from project to project, how can we build a foundation that will carry generations to come? If we only live from success story to success story, how can we learn to work through difficult relationships and overcome major setbacks and times of standstill?

To commit to an institution for a lifetime, be it a church, a charity or a school, can feel slow, and an immediate impact may not always be visible. Yet the relationships that develop over time can last for a lifetime. They

are the material strong foundations are made of, and if we keep our doors open for new people and ideas to enter, many good things can come of it. In this sense, I am grateful to work with so many talented and committed people to further the life of the Swiss Church and honouring the memory of those who have passed away.

The past months may have seemed quiet, but a lot has happened behind the doors. We have used this time to review the way we are doing things and to think about our contribution as a church in times of a global crisis with long term effects that will be felt by many for a long time to come. You will see changes in the way we use the church welcoming more art and theatre groups to use our premises for exhibitions and rehearsals. We are also restructuring the Breakfast on the Steps outreach programme for homeless people to collaborate with other charities. We have also adapted our fundraising strategy to rely less on commercial income and seek more support from grant funders. We are very grateful for all the generous support we have received, from churches in Switzerland, UK funds and individuals. This puts us in a place to support the communities that need it most and to create a creative and peaceful atmosphere in an anxious world.

I am delighted to announce that we will resume church service at Endell Street once a month. You will find the details in this edition.

I hope to see you soon! Stay safe and kind and hopeful!

Yours,  
Reverend Carla Maurer

- Editorial .p1
- Latest News .p2
- Art .p3
- 'In Between' .p4
- Risotto recipe .p6
- Announcements & Events .p7

# Latest News

## ✚ From the Consistoire

- by Barbara Wachter, President of the Steering Committee



Dear Readers,  
It's a pleasure to connect with you for the first time through the Swiss Church News as the President of

the Consistoire's Steering Committee.

Just like everyone else, we as Swiss Church trustees were faced with a series of tough questions at the beginning of the lockdown, about the immediate, but also the medium and longer term future of our cherished Swiss Church, and about the functioning of its governance body, the Consistoire.

The first action we took after the Church had to close its doors in March was to establish a so-called "Steering Committee", made up of a smaller group of trustees and advisers. To enable smooth and quick decision-making, this new lead committee was to meet once a month, and – of course – virtually. I can therefore proudly say that the Consistoire has now joined and mastered the world of Zoom!

And we've been busy: amongst other things, the Steering Committee organised the Annual General Meeting, which took place virtually in July;

took care of Swiss Church building maintenance; compiled the crucial set of COVID-19 policies necessary for the gradual re-opening and use of the Church building; and pondered the Swiss Church's vision and strategy for the upcoming months.

The Consistoire has also had a new addition: Hassan Mohanna joined us, first as adviser and since August as a trustee and Steering Committee member. A very warm welcome again! A welcome back for Anina, who has returned from maternity leave – she will resume the role of Finance Officer in the Swiss Church team. And finally, a big thank you to Heidi, who covered for Anina in her absence.

I am also excited to announce that the whole Consistoire will gather again – first of all online at the end of this month, and then, if the situation allows, also physically before the end of the year.

I would like to close by expressing my gratitude to Carla and the team, as well as to all fellow trustees for your tireless work and great leadership during this difficult time. I am proud to have weathered the storm with all of you and greatly look forward to the next chapter.

Best wishes,  
Barbara

## ✚ New trustee Hassan Mohanna

Hassan grew up in Lebanon, and worked for several years in the Middle East and North Africa before moving to live in the United States for several years, working on civic technology and innovation.

Hassan moved to London in 2019 with his wife, Evelina, and first heard about the Swiss Church when they were looking for opportunities to volunteer in their new city. His excitement to serve the Church stems from his



constant exploration of how tranquility and a sense of purpose can be achieved via religiosity, spirituality, and service. During the lockdown, Hassan and

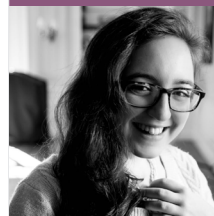
Evelina spend most of their evenings walking, to get a sense of London, and to see as much of the great architecture as possible.

Hassan has been an adviser to the Consistoire's Steering Committee since March 2020 throughout the coronavirus crisis and is excited to serve on the Consistoire as a trustee

and to get to know the community further. He is grateful to the Church community for reaching out after the Beirut explosion in early August, and for their great kindness and support.

## FROM THE VENUE

I say the word 'exciting' when I'm nervous. I say that word a lot anyway, but especially when I'm nervous – and I've said that word a lot along this pandemic journey. The Merriam Webster dictionary has three definitions of 'excite':



The first is 'to call to activity'. On the 11th of March, Heidi and I were in the office past 7pm preparing for the not-quite known. I walked out the church that evening not sure

when I'll be back. It was indeed busy for a week or so as we contacted all the hirers (and we were meant to be entering a busy couple of months of hires) and then I was on furlough.

The second definition is 'to increase the activity of'. Coming back from furlough, one of my first tasks is to help the church increase and support the activity of the arts in the building; helping with grant writing, background research and, hopefully soon, scheduling in and staff attending artists using the building for creative responses to the restrictions Covid-19 has placed on the industry. From my corner of the musical theatre world, I have seen interesting responses to lockdown with Youtube concerts, podcast musicals and Zoom readings. I am beginning to hear about and see responses to the post-lockdown restrictions, and I get a sense that we may be in a good position to support those responses.

The last definition is 'to raise to a higher energy level'. Selfishly, I enjoy the building when it's chaotic. Filled **will** people from top to bottom, from different walks of life, completing different tasks and engaged in a variety of activities. In those moments, the building hums with an energy that simply brings me joy. I feel hopeful that focusing support for the arts will energise all aspects of the church. I also feel hopeful that our client base will return and I'm interested to see how that client base may change with the shifting landscape of a lot of industries and the changing landscape of London in general.

'Excite' is also a transitive verb, a verb that is 'characterised by transition'. All change and transition hold an element of fear because there is risk and potential for a worse outcome, however, change and transitions also hold potential for betterment and increasing value.

I say the word 'excited' so much when I am nervous because I want to stay hopeful. Now, we're 6 months on from that late night in March, I still feel a little nervous but also very hopeful and (yes) excited for what the future brings to The Swiss Church in London.



# Artist Residency 2020

## 'Scenarios'

### New art installation:

We have been working on our project 'Scenarios' at the Swiss Church since early August and it has been a fantastic opportunity to have a studio together for the first time. In light of COVID-19, the project itself has presented us with a new set of scenarios. From making use and seeking out different spaces in the beautiful, largely empty church, to discussing and researching how to adapt our ideas to fit social distancing guidelines, our project continues to be re-worked and re-framed. We have also been considering how to make our series of events throughout October more accessible to those who are shielding or unable to travel.

Working in close proximity to the local Covent Garden theatres, our project is inspired by the origin of the theatre term 'scenario': a written outline of the characters and events in a play which actors are invited to improvise around. The values of the Swiss Church have guided our research into how we, as curators, can create 'safe spaces' for processes of healing to begin in relation to art - which we believe is now more important than ever. Artists and creatives have always sought out and adapted to new ways of working and we are excited to be showcasing a range of different artists to explore new modes of exhibiting over the duration of our curatorial residency.

As artists ourselves studying together at the Royal College of Art, we have enjoyed the hands-on, making side of this project. So far, 'Scenarios' has taken the form of a series of model sets that examine shape, colour and texture in relation to healing. The models will be used to host and curate a series of experimental exhibitions in October that will be viewable in person by appointment or online. We are also excited to be working closely with queer artist Rubie Green to produce a new site-specific sound installation, whose work aims to amplify marginalised voices and features a range of voice recordings taken during lockdown. We are grateful for the Swiss Church to be hosting us in their space and it has been exciting to adapt to the unforeseen challenges of curation today. We look forward to sharing with you our outcomes during October.



*Hot Desque curator's studio space at the Swiss Church.*



*Rubie Green's installation artwork, 'I'd be lying if I'.*



*Our 'Scenarios' project - experimenting with artworks within model sets.*

# In-between

## - I am who I am!

Lake Walensee, St. Gallen, Switzerland



*Heidi Holenweg has worked at the Swiss Church since May 2020. She is standing in for Finance Officer Anina Smith, during her maternity leave.*

*Heidi moved to London from Switzerland three years ago to join her partner, together with her 16-year-old daughter. She is a trained social worker, has a diploma in adult education and is fluent in several languages. In this article Heidi tells us why she hates going to the hairdresser, what she has in common with Roger Federer, and why she never leaves her house without her identity card.*

My name is Heidi. That's what it says in my passport and that's how I was baptised. I don't have any other names, and it's not a nickname. What's so hard to understand?

One day late in the evening, I was walking home after a long 12-hour shift at the SBB (Swiss Railways) where I had completed my apprenticeship as a young woman, and worked as a public servant. My way home led along the Langstrasse, better known as Zurich's red-light district, and party mile. Two policemen stopped me, and asked for proof of identity. As a Swiss citizen, I was not obliged to have my identity card on me, and indeed, it was at my parental home in the East of Switzerland. When I told them my name, they both laughed and one of them said: "In that case, I am Tina Turner!" I spent hours at the police station, and when

they finally let me go, they recommended that given my appearance, it would be better to always have my identity card on me. Ever since I never leave the house without it.

I would describe my appearance as latte macchiato. My sisters' skin ranges from hazelnut to dark chocolate. Our hair is tight curls, or kinky curl patterns, and most of us resorted to using modern technics to straighten it – although I am now in the process of returning to my kinky curls.

I was born in Switzerland in 1976. My mum, a deep, dark, chocolate skinned, oldest daughter from a well-known family, was born and raised in Lomé, Togo. My father was a typical Swiss, son of a farm labourer, originally from Obstdalen, GL; and a maid from Appenzell, born and raised in the region of Wil, SG. He was a globetrotter, travelled around the world, and met my mother during a trip to Togo. In the winter of 1974, my mother left her West African home with my two eldest sisters for a small village in Toggenburg.

Growing up in this family in a small village, and later in the small town of Wil in the 1970s, colour was never important to me. This changed once I became more independent and spent more time outside the home. People thought it was ok to touch my hair, and to rub

my cheeks as if to try and remove the colour. I remember as a child in my pram the hands of complete strangers moving towards me. It didn't make any difference whether they asked if I minded, or not. It always felt humiliating and inhumane. To this day, I still much prefer a visit to the dentist than to the hairdressers.

Roger Federer's mother is originally from South Africa. He has mixed European and African heritage, just like me. Yet no one would ever call Roger Federer a 'Mischling' (which in English can be translated as 'crossbreed' or 'mulatto'). Mischling sounds more like a dog breed to me. What does this even mean? I grew up in Switzerland, speak flawless Swiss German dialect, and feel 100% Swiss. What's 'mixed' about me? Does it mean that I am only partly a member of Swiss society?

My daughter speaks pure Zurich dialect. Let's say she looks Swiss, and she never gets asked if she is Swiss. Yet, historically speaking she would be a foreigner in Zurich as her Bürgerort (place of origin) is Bern. Swiss passports were only introduced in 1915. Prior to that only cantonal citizenship existed.





Things are different in London, this multicultural melting pot of people from all over the world. When people hear my cute Swiss accent, they sometimes want to know where I come from. When I answer Switzerland, no further questions are asked. In Switzerland however, people often want to know where I really come from, originally, and only if I give in, and say Togo, do they let it go. Now that I live in the UK and I say London is where I'm from, I occasionally get the answer: "Of course, many black people live there!". In Switzerland people also often speak back to me in High German – yet my Ostschweizer dialect couldn't be purer! What annoys me most is, if someone replies to me in grammatically incorrect German. "Go back to where you come from if you don't like it in Switzerland" is also a phrase I became accustomed to as a youth. The discrimination and bullying I experienced at school, both by classmates and teachers, impacted on my mental health, and I didn't see any sense in learning anything, or preparing for the future. Sometimes, when I had particularly good grades teachers accused me of cheating.

As I grew up multilingual: in Swiss German, French and Ewe, I sometimes struggled to find the right word, or was not familiar with certain expressions. I was treated as stupid. This once almost had fatal consequences. I had terrible



*Heidi's grandmother surrounded by family members*

stomach pains, a stomach flu, and went to see the doctor. The word that stuck with me from this doctor's visit was 'simulatitis' ('simulation-sickness'). I repeated this to my teacher the next day who didn't react particularly well. When I was in pain again weeks later, I was too intimidated to say anything. This time it was my appendix that had burst. I was in hospital for two months because of complications. Much later it was explained to me that this diagnosis by the doctor had nothing to do with my own health situation back then, as the doctor was talking about another patient.

There are so many highly qualified professionals with a migrant background in Europe, doctors, engineers, architects, psychologists, but sometimes their language level is not perfect. They are

not stupid. They just don't yet have the language skills quite on the level that is expected from them. Our skin colour or hair pattern has nothing to do with our degrees or skills.

*I am how I am!* I can't change my skin colour. My name is Heidi. That's what it says in my passport, and that's how I was baptised. I don't have any other names, and it's also not a nickname. I am punctual, I have a master's degree, and I pay my taxes. I cook an excellent rösti, and as a born and bred Eastern Swiss I eat my St. Gallen sausage without mustard, of course. What's so hard to understand?

***Heidi's experiences of racial prejudice and abuse may trigger similar memories in some of our readers. If you would like to talk to someone confidentially you can call Reverend Carla Maurer on 07968 530 380 or email [info@swisschurchlondon.org.uk](mailto:info@swisschurchlondon.org.uk), or if you would like to talk with Heidi let Rev Carla know. Everything you share with us will be treated confidentially and never be shared further without your permission.***



## Before the city life

By James Rasa, Editor

Living in a big city like London is a lifestyle many people can relate to but I would like to tell you briefly about my upbringing in Ticino, Switzerland. In the Verzasca valley to be exact, in this tiny village called Vogorno and lived with my mother, sisters and a family friend whom I saw as a brother.

My grandma owned a restaurant further up the valley where My mother would work during busier times. I've got to meet many local farmers who supplied the

restaurant with wild game, greens, cheese and mushrooms from the nearby forests. I worked at the family farm which was a 1 hour hike above the nearest road, 1050m above sea level.

We had 6 cows and 5 horses along with a few vegetable patches and fruit trees. During the summer time we would bring the cows out of the stables and in different grazing spots throughout the alps, as per the centuries old tradition of *alpine transhumance*.

My favourite part is the Autumn, where family members and friends meet to

make preserves, jams, sausages and pickles for the winter, of course we could have easily bought them, but they would make for great, personal gifts for Christmas to friends outside of the valley. My grandma, Jeaninne Ricca, has recently retired, but her restaurant and legacy lives on though a friend that took over the business.

In one of our video calls, I've asked her to share one of her recipes to keep us warm for the coming seasons, so here is her famous mushroom Risotto!

## Mushroom risotto:

30 MIN-40 MIN

4 PORTIONS

### Ingredients:

- 280 g Carnaroli Rice (or risotto rice)
- 150g Porcini mushrooms (60g dried)
- 1 shallot
- 100ml White wine
- 1.5l of stock (vegetable or chicken)
- 50 g butter
- 100 g Parmigiano Reggiano
- 2 tbs Olive oil
- Nutmeg
- 1 tsp salt

Nutmeg and pepper to taste

Jeaninne also suggests changing up to a equal mix of red and white wine and fresh thyme or rosemary for a more rustic flavour and to add some cloves or lemon for extra acidity




### Preparation

- Put the **stock** on a slow simmer with the **salt**. It will have to be incorporated warm into the rice later.
- Scrape the fresh **mushroom** clean with the back of a knife and chop the cap finely and the stem into small cubes. (If using dry mushrooms follow the packet instructions for soaking. Once ready, pat dry and roughly chop)
- Mince the **shallots** finely and sauté in a pan with the **oil** on medium/ high heat
- When the Shallots turns see-through, add the **rice**, stir thoroughly for 3 to 6 minutes
- Add the **wine** and keep stirring at medium heat until the wine is both evaporated and soaked in the rice and you can't smell alcohol anymore
- (Optional add a rind of parmesan)
- Add the mushrooms and stir before ladling the stock to cover the rice
- Mix at regular intervals, add stock a little at the time and wait for it to get absorbed before adding more. (If you run out of stock before the rice is cooked)
- The rice should take 10 to 20 minutes to cook, refer to original packaging for exact timing. Once is done. Turn the heat off and stir in the **butter** and finely grated **parmesan**.
- Finish off with a good dusting of **nutmeg** and **pepper** to taste and is ready to be enjoyed.







**“No matter how big a nation is, it is no stronger than its weakest people, and as long as you keep a person down, some part of you has to be down there to hold him down, so it means you cannot soar as you might otherwise.”**

*(Marian Anderson, 1897-1993,  
American contralto)*

**“Do not judge by appearances,  
but judge with right judgment.”**  
*(John 7:24)*

To give online: [swisschurchlondon.org.uk/  
church/donate](http://swisschurchlondon.org.uk/church/donate) and follow the link.

**Bank details for internet banking or  
Standing Orders:**

**UK – HSBC Bank**  
Sort code **40-03-15**  
Account no: **61410512**  
Account Name: **Swiss Church in London**

CH – Post Finance Account no: **80-37960-9**  
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  
registered charity no: 1094992

Contacts  
Minister  
Rev. Carla Maurer  
020 8350 4916  
079 6853 0380  
[carla.maurer@swisschurchlondon.org.uk](mailto:carla.maurer@swisschurchlondon.org.uk)

Organist  
Peter Yardley-Jones  
[pyj@swisschurchlondon.org.uk](mailto:pyj@swisschurchlondon.org.uk)

**Swiss Church in London,  
79 Endell Street  
London WC2H 9DY  
Tel: 020 7836 1418**

[info@swisschurchlondon.org.uk](mailto:info@swisschurchlondon.org.uk)  
[www.swisschurchlondon.org.uk](http://www.swisschurchlondon.org.uk)  
Twitter: @SwissChurchLond &  
@SwissRevLondon

**Carla Maurer's blog:**  
[swissvicarlondon.blogspot.co.uk](http://swissvicarlondon.blogspot.co.uk)