



# Swiss Church News

## Spring 2023

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



Dear Reader,

Welcome to this edition of the Swiss Church News. It is my great privilege to have been part of the Swiss Church London (SCL) community since November.

In my capacity covering Reverend Carla's maternity leave allows me to discover a different part of the West End. I now found myself switching lanes in my daily commuting route from Tottenham Court Road to Gower Street. Riding past University College, a helpful reminder for me to reflect on the role of the Church in society. Whether we truly represent the ministry of Christ and bring the heart and soul of the Gospel to the people around us?

Switching legions to the Swiss Church allows me to explore London through a different lens. I had the opportunity of meeting ministers of many other denominations in the proximity. Adding further identity confusion to my own ministerial vocation, an anglicised Episcopalian Chinese presbyter and now with a slight Zwingli or Calvinistic twist!

Over the past few months I have been grateful for the experience I have witnessed, the inclusivity and openness of the SCL community, Sunday or weekdays. In ethnic ministries overseas, where a specific language of worship could easily enclaved the openness and mission of any church. The SCL has proven quite the opposite by welcoming people from all walks of life into its premises. It truly reflects the famous Wesleyan quote - 'the world is my parish'.

I cannot say much more about Switzerland, especially since most of our readers have stronger ties with Switzerland than myself, but what I can accompany with readers to explore further is the extent of being an overseas person in London and how well the Swiss community here on Endell Street has embraced their identity as Swiss diasporas.

In these few short months, I got to meet a diaspora community with its rich heritage and culture, fully immersed into the daily lives of the ordinary people in the hearts of Covent Garden. From hosting secular events in Arts or corporate team building, overnight it transforms into a venue serving breakfast to the community. I trust that people would at least take time to Google the English translation for 'je ne mettrai pas dehors celui qui vient à moi' and 'Gott segne dich und behüte dich'. Such hospitable welcome allows more people to step inside of a church, who would have gone to an alternative venue.

It is also humbling to have read appreciation letters from children and grandchildren of past congregation members who are recently deceased, their fond memories of the church and who feel greatly indebted for the support of the SCL throughout the years.

While I am trying my best to catch up on the most basic sentences required in Swiss German or French, I did not feel for one minute that I was not worthy to shepherd the Swiss Community here on Endell Street. A big thank you to you all.

The year 2022 was eventful and the BBC managed to sum up most of the main events in a 74 second video. I looked back and would have never imagined myself remaining in London at the end of the year. Yet the same old Woody Allen quote- 'If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans!'

We have our goodbyes to the old and welcome the new, various contributors that have highlighted the challenges in 2023, we look forward to yet another eventful calendar year.

Blessings and good wishes,

Harry Ching

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## From the Consistoire



By Barbara Wachter,  
*Chair of the  
Consistoire of the  
Swiss Church in  
London 2020-22*

Dear Reader,

Let me start by wishing you all a very happy, healthy, and prosperous new year! It is a bittersweet feeling to write to you for a last time, as I stepped down from my role on the Consistoire last September. After five years in London, and three on the Consistoire, I have moved to New York for a new role at the United Nations – a distance a little too far and time difference too great to continue in my Trustee role.

Having initially been introduced to Carla by my aunt Maja Wachter, who came to London for a sabbatical at the SCL in 2019, it was on the evening of 26 September 2019 that I walked up

the stairs of the beautiful Endell Street building to join my very first Consistoire meeting. Little did I know that it would be both the first and last Consistoire meeting I would ever join in person!

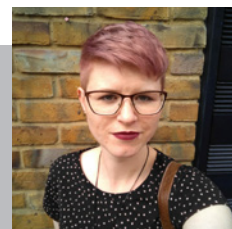
The past three years, during which I served first as Networking Officer and later as the Chair of the Steering Committee and then the Consistoire as a whole, were strongly marked by the pandemic. Looking back, I am proud that as a community, we didn't only weather the storm that was Covid-19 but came out of the period stronger than ever in many ways. Among the highlights of the past years for me is having seen the Church's art activities come back alive and expand; to see Breakfast on the Steps not only return but thrive; being able to emerge from the lockdowns in a solid financial position; and witnessing the Swiss Church approve and introduce same-sex marriage.

All this work, including my own on the Consistoire, would not have been possible without so many, hence a few words of thanks: firstly to my fellow trustees and to Carla, for your steadfast

support and friendship; to all members of the Congregation for bringing life to the Church, and for your trust; to the volunteers of BoS for your hard and invaluable work to the community; and to the Arts Committee for making the Church a place of encounter and wonder.

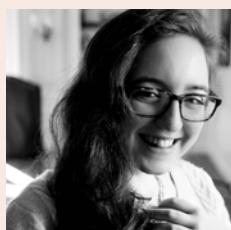
I greatly cherish all the relationships and connections I have been fortunate to foster over the years, and hope to stay in touch! One thing is for certain, I will never tire of hearing news from the wonderful Swiss Church, and from all of you.

- By Katrin Frey



In the Summer of 2021, I wrote to you about change being the nature of humanity. Still, change is often not easy and comes with heartache for some and excitement for others. Naturally, the Consistoire too is affected by change: This year we had to say goodbye to Marco Mambelli, who acted as Treasurer since 2017 and has moved to Abu Dhabi (Marco also got married). Acting chair of the Consistoire Barbara Wachter heard the call of the West: Barbara took on a job at the UN in New York and sadly had to give up her duties in the Consistoire as of August 2022. We wish them both all the very best in their future endeavours and send them a heartfelt thank you!

In October I represented the SCL at the annual VEGSIL (Vereinigung ehemaliger Glieder der Schweizerkirche in London) meeting. In the Sunday morning service in Cham (ZG) I led the sermon where I talked about decision making (thank you to Rev. Rahel Nilsson for the outstanding support!). Afterwards I delivered news from London to the VEGSIL and got to meet some lovely people, who had spent some time of



## From the Venue

- By Emily Rose

I feel like I'm constantly reporting on the

state of "the return" or things "coming back" ever since March 2020. We are now at a point where I can see the differences between the now/future and pre-pandemic.

A big difference to the rhythm of the building is that we have far fewer weekly regular hires, mainly because the clients' needs have changed, and also because we have been cautious with weekly hires as they can end up entwining with the identity of the organisation.

Though the sound of fewer hires may seem concerning (and a bit scary), it's also worth knowing that most of our weekly hires pre-pandemic were very

highly discounted, many hardly engaged with the community or organisation, and most did not align with or further SCL's mission. As the world is fully finding it's new "normal", I hope this extra space on the hall's calendar will enable us to take on more lucrative hires, be the venue for more events that further our word of mouth reputation, and, more importantly, enables us to support activities that express the mission and identity of The Swiss Church in London (have you seen the SCL arts programme yet?!).

If I'm completely honest, seeing space on the calendar can make me feel a little bit anxious, but space is need if one wants to grow – and I'm sure as you read through the rest of the Swiss Church News, you'll agree that it feels like SCL is growing into an exciting new chapter.





## Art

### Art Programme Propels into 2023

What a busy and successful second half of 2022 it turned out to be for the Art Programme at the Swiss Church. Our Art Committee, led by Co-Chairs Mary Branson and Julie Hoyle, along with our great team of volunteers and Art Coordinators, were involved in a number of exhibitions and events that formed part of 2022-2023 Art Programme. They were designed to promote a variety of creative arts practices under the umbrella of the

beautiful architecture of the church. In November 2022, we opened the doors to Cora Sehgal Cuthbert's culminating Artist in Residence exhibition. Exploring love and loss, *I Left Love Here Somewhere* was a mixed media installation based upon the artist's relationship with her Nan. Made up of text, photography, sculpture and print, the installation explored the ways in which the themes of family, immigration, spirituality, grief, isolation, mental health, care, love and loss intertwine. In a moving exhibition, Cora asked us the question, 'When all seems to be lost, can love still be found?'

Cora's exhibition was accompanied by a sold-out talk on *Love and Loss* with fellow artist Stephanie Shanan. Through Cora's artworks, music, text and objects, the pair explored the themes of the exhibition and the meaning of love and loss in contemporary society.

The next Artist-in-Residence Open Call will be announced in March. More information on the application process will be released on the Swiss Church website:

[swisschurchlondon.org.uk/art/artist-residency](https://swisschurchlondon.org.uk/art/artist-residency)

### New Art Coordinators Join the Team

Our Art Committee has now strengthened the team with the appointment of two new Art Coordinators, Diane Chappalley and Lizzy Drury. A painter herself, Diane has been a dedicated Art Committee volunteer before taking on this new role. Lizzy has previously held the position of Artist in

Residence with Swiss Church in 2020 as artist-curator 'Hot Desque'.

Working closely with the church team and Art Committee, the pair plan and implement the Art Programme, liaise with artists who are using the Swiss Church for rehearsals, residencies or exhibitions. They also manage the Swiss Church's Artist Community networks and media outputs.



### Sound at the Swiss Church in London 17 – 23 July 2023

We are delighted to announce a collaboration with the London College of Communication (LCC) MA Sound Art programme.

Students on the programme have been invited to submit ideas to the Open Call for the exhibition. This could be in the form of an installation or performance which takes advantage or reflects the interior space and acoustics of the Church as an architecturally unique listed building. It offers exciting opportunities for the use of sound as Art Committee Member and LCC Tutor David Molin states: "The seamless blend of the cultural and the sacred, of stone and glass, we believe, creates a unique space and acoustics for a sound artist to work with."

The result of the Open Call will be announced on 14 April and the successful applicant's artwork will be on display at the Swiss Church on 17 – 23 July 2023. The selection panel, including members of the Art Committee and external artists, will select one project to take through to realisation. With collaboration between students encouraged, this is set to be an exciting, experimental exchange.

Please check the Swiss Church webpage and socials for more information on the successful project nearer the date.

### Upcoming Exhibition

## Fabienne Hess

**Date: May 12 – 14 2023**

**Opening night, 12 May, 6-8 pm**

We are excited to announce that our 2023 Arts Programme will include an exhibition by Swiss artist Fabienne Hess, who was awarded the exhibition by Art Committee Co-Chairs Mary Branson and Julie Hoyle. This May, Fabienne will create an exhibition of silk hangings, which she is developing through participation in church communities such as the Mothers' Group and Breakfast on the Steps, as well as through researching the church's archive. Fabienne's exhibition looks at fabric as a metaphor for community. This explores the idea that community, like fabric, is made by the joining of disparate elements into a whole that offers shelter and belonging.

Hess is getting to know these communities well and has invited the members of the Mothers' Group to her studio in Hackney to take a look at her artwork and to collaborate with her on the content of her silk hanging designs for the upcoming exhibition.

For more information on Fabienne, please see her website: [fabiennehess.com](https://fabiennehess.com)



# Ministry Reflection

## Breakfast on the steps

- By Andreas Feller



Breakfast on the Steps & Haircuts for our Homeless Community is looking back to a busy year 2022. Thanks to all the amazing volunteers, including our amazing hairdressers Jake & Bence. Since April 2022, Breakfast on the Steps has been served every Tuesday at the Swiss Church. The volunteers organised a festive Christmas special for our guests on 13 December 2022 with lovely Christmas decorations, small gifts for the guests

and a special breakfast menu. We were excited to re-open our services from 9 January 2023 again. A heartfelt thank you to all donors of our Christmas fundraising campaign, which will provide us the necessary funding to support London's homeless in 2023. We also received a grant from the National Lottery's Community Fund.

Overall, it is a very positive start into the New Year.



## Ministry in Cyprus, A short reflection

- By Rev Harry Ching

Cyprus often appears in the same sentence with Switzerland in many John Le Carré novels! I had a wonderful time serving a diverse parish for 2 years, based in Famagusta. Like Switzerland, Cyprus has a rich history and mixed linguistic heritage, situated at the cultural crossroad in the Eastern Mediterranean, a stepping stone of many great empires throughout the centuries. The island was under British rule between 1878-1960, which shared many similarities with my native Hong Kong. Furthermore, the island has a great biblical significance where St Paul and Barnabas had set foot in Acts 13:4. The island was first mentioned in Numbers 24. Lazarus came to Cyprus and died there the second time.

Today the Cyprus Question remains as one of the long outstanding unresolved conflicts in the world. From a ministry perspective, my primary focus was to an African student majority chaplaincy parish, which students aspired of a European dream. Many young Africans were ill informed about the Cyprus situation and were lured to the Turkish Cypriot administrated part of the Island.

They were seen as illegitimate under of the authority of the internationally recognised Republic of Cyprus, unable to complete the pilgrimage from Salamis to Paphos.

The parish of Ammochostos is shared with two other expatriate congregations of mainly British retirees which meet in an Orthodox chapel in a local cemetery in Deryneia and a shared building with the Scandinavian church converted from a disused bank. Congregation members on either side of the age group 35-60 (A mirror contrast to my Dubai parish in terms of demographics). In spite of the political challenges, parish life was harmonious, young and old worship under one roof in the chapel of Little St. George on Salamis Road in a joint service monthly,

6km away from the ruins of Ancient Salamis City and the Tomb of St Barnabas.

Friday Night football with the men's team against counterparts from with other denominations and student societies were unforgettable, while Bible studies and prayer remain an integral part of weekly parish life. Music team was strong and services were well attended, the small chapel of St. George that was once con turn into art workshop during the initial Turkish intervention in 1974.

The challenges for the parish continued to this date, yet I am reminded of the Chinese word for "crisis", when there is crisis there is always hope!



## Congratulations Mrs Vivienne Williams

-by Norman Williams

Dear reader,  
I am writing to you to inform you that my mother was 100 years old on 26th January 2023. Her name is Mrs Vivienne Williams (formerly Iller). The family has been much to thank the Swiss Church in London for especially in the inter wars period. But how and why you may ask?

The family history on mother's side can be traced back well into the 1700's in Switzerland. However, my grandmother and grandfather came to London in the inter wars period in their late teenage years independently and met initially through their work in the kitchens of a major London Hotel. Grandfather, Gotleib Iller came from Appenzell and Grandmother, Emma Gaux from La Chaux – a village in upper Lausanne area. Both found their

► Continued from page 4

way into the Swiss church in London and were married. They were not well off and struggled and the Swiss Church assisted them in so many ways including accommodation finding. They lived in the Kensington and Ladbroke Grove areas of London but eventually moved out to Vivian Avenue in Wembley Middlesex. There were six children, Emily, Albert, Rosa and George (Twins), Helene, and Vivienne. I believe there was also another child who died. Life was tough.

During the 2nd world war, Albert became a major in the intelligence Corp of the army and he even met a cousin from the United States who was also a major, in the US forces, two Major Illers! Emily and Rosa worked in domestic jobs and Vivienne joined the ATS as a secretary to colonels etc. Mum had many stories to tell. Unfortunately, she is suffering from Dementia now and resides in a care home in Watford and is receiving excellent care. In herself she is well and strong not taking much medication at all. If fact very remarkable but at this grand age she sleeps a lot.

Rosa (Gathard) used to keep in touch with the Swiss Church until she passed away aged 95... a prolific letter writer and received the church magazine 'Swiss Messenger' regularly. Mum, being the youngest was often looked after by her two eldest sisters with Helene only a few



years her senior. Helene lived to 102 and I believe you were informed of her 100th birthday a couple of years ago. She lived in Canada but has since passed. Mum is the last of the family still alive.

My recollections of the Swiss Church date back 65 or more years as through Aunt Rosa my mum and dad took my younger brother and I for several years running, as young children, in the 1950's to the Annual Christmas Children's party somewhere in a hall in Holborn or south Kensington where we were given a tea, sandwiches, cake, a Swiss flag, badges and a goodie bag with a calendar of a Swiss scene as well as Swiss sweets and bread biscuits. I remember we saw films portraying life in Switzerland, Swiss railways etc. and played games with many other Swiss children – happy times as we were not well off. I vaguely remember some other events.

One thing I found out recently, was that the real family name was Iller von Spreicher.... I suspect they dropped the von Spreicher bit. I also found Grandfather's Christening certificate!

I would like to express my thanks to the Swiss Church in London for what you did for the Illers' and wish you and your current work every success.

Yours sincerely,  
Norman Williams



La Causerie meeting in January for lunch



Mothers' group meeting at the Swiss Church for lunch

► Continued from page 2

their lives in the SCL. Such interesting stories I heard from the VEGSIL members. A delicious autumnal lunch in the Alterszentrum Büel with a glass of Suser was followed by a guided tour through Cham. I was able to frame the VEGSIL meeting with long overdue stays at the vicarages in Fehraltorf and Gossau, where some of my best friends are working as reverends.

As of 8th August 2022, the SCL is officially registered to perform opposite and same sex weddings. What has been a long and sometimes frustrating process has finally come to fruition. We are overjoyed to have caught up with progress and to align the SCLs legal standing with that of our host country as well as our mother church, the Swiss Reformed Church in Switzerland. So, if you have a connection to Switzerland, you can get married at the Swiss Church, no matter who your partner

is. Just get in touch with our Reverend Harry Ching.

And lastly, I want to hand out some laurels: The Consistoire is overjoyed at the success of our in-house outreach programme led by Andreas Feller and his team of smashing volunteers. Not only did they land a National Lottery's Community Fund grant of £3,200, but their Big Give Christmas Campaign reached the target of £6000, which was doubled by the campaign. Breakfast with tea, coffee and a kind smile for the homeless people in the area is secure. Well done!

Wishing you all a wonderful 2023,  
Katrin Frey.

*(Are you interested in donating your time to the SCL to help within the Consistoire or the outreach programme? Get in touch)*



## From the Community

### Congratulations to Oliver Wooley and Diane Chappalley on your wedding day

'It was very special to get married at the Swiss Church in London, the incredible architecture and the location of Covent Garden are so unique, it felt magical. We worked closely with reverend Carla Maurer to prepare the ceremony which was very personal and reflected our values as well as the church's.

The Swiss Church staff handled everything with a lot of care and we felt very considered. As a Swiss citizen, it was incredibly special to sign the 200-year-old church record book and be part of this long legacy of the Swiss community in London. We were so proud to have our ceremony there and our guests were stunned by the church's understated beauty'

Diane and Oliver



### Samichlaus

- By Therese Theurillat

On the 4th December we held a heart-warming celebration of our Swiss Family Christmas event. We were singing some Christmas Carols in Swiss German, the Christmas story was told to the children and kids together with their parents carved beautiful Raebeliechtli (Jack-o'-lantern).

Even the Samichlaus made his way through central London and joined us on this special occasion. To end the day we paraded with our little Raebeliechtli lights through Covent Garden.

*(We will organise more family events like this, please keep an eye on our website for it. The next will be held on the 2nd of April to celebrate Easter together.)*



Rev Carla Maurer, Julian Simmons and Yuvi are delighted to announce the birth of their baby boy Kit Kaspar Simmons, born on 10 December 2022. Many thanks for all your good wishes, cards and presents! We can't wait to introduce Kit to the congregation.

## Obituary

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of our very dear Friend Gret Schwab 20th August 2022. Gret was a long standing member of the Swiss Church and active member of the Swiss Mothers group and generally a great help in the Swiss community in the past. All who knew Gret will keep her in loving memories. Our condolences and sympathies go out to her family.

May she Rest in peace!

Lisa and Maya, La Causerie



Sunday service on 6th November Rev Harry Ching's first sermon at the Swiss Church In London, and, Rev Carla Maurer's last service before her maternity leave.

# Events @ the Swiss Church

**Church services:**  
Every first and third Sunday  
of the month, 11am

March 19  
2 April (Palm Sunday)  
9 April (Easter)  
23 April  
7th May  
21 May  
28 May  
4 June  
18 June  
2 July

The services are followed by lunch  
or refreshments. Communion and  
choir every first Sunday of the  
month. Everyone is invited to join  
our Sunday services!



**Breakfast on the Steps and  
Haircut for the Homeless  
Community**  
Every Tuesday, 7.30am – 9.30am



**Upcoming Exhibition**  
**Fabienne Hess**  
May 12 – 14 2023  
Opening night, 12 May, 6-8 pm



**Annual General Meeting**  
2 July, After Church Service



**Sound at the**  
**Swiss Church in London**  
17 – 23 July 2023



## The Tiger Vocal Quartet

*Favourite Opera Scenes*

**Sunday, 23rd April 2023 at 4pm - Free admission**

The Tiger Vocal Quartet presents a concert of favourite  
opera scenes from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, *Magic Flute*  
and *Così fan tutte* and Beethoven's *Fidelio*, culminating  
in Bizet's famous *Pearl Fishers* duet and the quartet  
*Bella figlia dell'amore* from Verdi's *Rigoletto*. Admission is  
free, but donations to the Swiss Church would be very  
welcome on the day. There is no need to obtain a ticket,  
simply come to the Swiss Church, Endell Street on  
Sunday, 23rd April 2023 and be ready to listen to lovely  
music at 4pm  
(doors open at 3.30pm).

### Programme to include:

Beethoven *Fidelio* quartet *Mir ist so wunderbar*

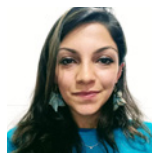
Mozart *Don Giovanni* quartet *Non ti fidar &*  
*duet La ci darem la mano*

Mozart *Così fan tutte* quartet *Benedetti doppi coniugi &*  
*trio Soave sia il vento*

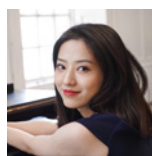
Mozart *Zauberflöte* quartet *Soll ich dich Teurer*

Bizet *Pearl Fishers* duet *Au fond du temple saint*

Verdi *Rigoletto* quartet *Bella figlia dell'amore*



Soprano Mahtab Ghamisari was a member of Morley Opera School  
and will be starting a Graduate Diploma at Trinity Laban in 2023.  
She has performed roles such as Despina from *Così fan tutte*,  
Zerlina from *Don Giovanni*, Jemmy from *Guillaume Tell* (Rossini)  
and Amore from *Handel's Poppea*.



Mezzo-soprano Yixuan Qian holds a MMus from the University  
of Surrey and trained at the Berlin Opera Academy and London  
Morley Opera School. She obtained an Advanced Postgraduate  
diploma at Trinity Laban and has studied with Patricia Rozario,  
Helen Yorke and Julia Mintzer. She has sung as La Ciesca in  
Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* and in opera scenes as Cenerentola from  
*La Cenerentola*, Orlofsky from *Die Fledermaus* and Hänsel from  
*Hänsel und Gretel*.



Tenor Julien Allen studied with James Oxley and Jordan Theis. He  
has been soloist in Mozart's *Vespers* and *Requiem* and Dvorak's  
*Stabat Mater*. He also sings in the Bach Choir, "the UK's finest  
independent choir".



Bass-baritone Yang Wern Ooi studied with Julian Smith and Justin  
Lavender (Vocal Professor, Royal College of Music). Formerly a  
lay-clerk at Tewkesbury Abbey, he has sung the bass solos in Orff's  
*Carmina Burana*, Bach's *Magnificat*, Fauré's *Requiem*, Dvorak's  
*Stabat Mater*, Mozart's *Coronation Mass* and as Pilate in Bach's  
*St John's Passion*. He conducts the choir for the Swiss Church and  
sings sacred bass arias there monthly.

Pianist Svyatoslav Antipov studied at the Purcell School of Music  
and is a graduate of Trinity Laban. He has performed at numerous  
recital locations in London including the Wigmore Hall and was  
selected to play at the 'Lang Lang Inspires' massed piano day at  
the Royal Festival Hall.



### Frauenverein

Every first Tuesday of the month.  
Mrs Cecile Mistry 07778 508 405

### La Causerie

Every second Tuesday of the month.  
[info@swisschurchlondon.org.uk](mailto:info@swisschurchlondon.org.uk)

### Mothers' Group

Every second Wednesday of the month.

### Vegsil

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### Presidents Erika and Chris Dyke

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**“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.”**

*Hebrews 13:2 NRSV*

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