



Swiss Church News

Spring 2024

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



Dear readers

I always knew that the day would come when I would write my final editorial for the Swiss Church News, and this is it. After eleven years of devout service at our lovely church in Endell Street I will move on to Adliswil outside of Zurich to serve as Minister in the Reformed Church of Sihltal.

It wouldn't be quite truthful to say I enjoyed every minute of my time at the Swiss Church. There were obstacles to overcome, fires to fight (sometimes several at a time) and mountains to climb, and I had the odd sleepless night. I felt at times overwhelmed by the responsibility, especially in the first few years when the Protestant Church of Switzerland withdrew their permanent involvement and we were left to manage every aspect of church management ourselves, including financing, HR and building maintenance. Luckily, I am stubborn and determined by nature, curious and eager to learn new skills, and a good troubleshooter; secondly I sensed an incredible potential for development and creativity, and a community spirit and history so precious I felt immensely protective. It was my goal throughout to build a foundation for the future and to recruit leaders, staff and volunteers who share the passion and vision for a

church and community centre fit for the 21st Century, nurturing and enhancing an open-minded search for truth in the Christian tradition whilst open to all faiths and worldviews. I am confident that this foundation is now in place.

The Swiss Church has not reached its full potential yet. I am convinced that the next big leap is just around the corner, engaging ever more people through the arts, social outreach and Swiss community life to create what Londoners desperately need: open and welcoming community spaces in an often isolating and unsettling world; a space for far-reaching vision and shared hope, spirituality, creativity and friendship. I will be part of the onward journey from afar, as a loyal friend of the Swiss Church, continuing to take an interest in our London church that means so much to me and has profoundly shaped me as a Minister, Christian and human being. I believe that when things are looking bright and hopeful, it is the right time to step back for a new team of people to take the lead.

To start listing highlights would be an impossible undertaking, but if I had to choose one it would be the evenings sitting on the church steps after office hours, with a drink and a friend, looking at the stars and pondering the big questions of life.

If I had to share a word of wisdom it's this: we are but floating little boats on the long stream of the human story, standing in the footsteps of people before us, and paving the path for those following after us. We each contribute a glimpse of hope, a shining idea, our wonderful talent to the human journey. As you look forward, always remember the past; and embrace the moment! God's home is in the present moment, in every breath we take.

Look after each other!

Go in peace, and
bring peace to the world,

Carla

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Latest News



From the Consistoire

By Daniel Everett (President)

It is a privilege for me to write my first newsletter on behalf of the Consistoire and the Church.

But firstly, I would like to thank Katrin who has guided the Consistoire as Acting Chair these last 18 months and now supports me in this transition phase as Vice President in the Consistoire.

2024 is going to be a year of transition and renewed focus for the Swiss Church: having returned to London in September 2022 after spending the last 27 years in my other Heimat, back in Switzerland, I was honoured to be elected as President of the Consistoire in December. This is a position that I understand was unfilled for quite a few years, and I hope that I can leverage my expertise and knowledge from the business world to steer the ship that is the SCL through any future storms.

High up on the long-term agenda is to bring structure and professionalism into HR matters, guidelines and reference documents. This will help the Church's image as a hub for the arts, as it will give us as solid base from which we can negotiate better with big hires. On that note a massive thank you to our Venue Manager Therese Theurillat for balancing the building's agenda and bringing the Genesis lightshow so smoothly to an end. What a success!

Speaking of balancing: Anina Smith had been balancing the Swiss Church's books for the past ten years with commitment and accuracy. In autumn last year Janice O'Brien took over, as Anina ventured out to seek new opportunities elsewhere. All the best to you Anina and thank you for your hard work! Janice is not only a great choice for Finance Officer she also brings with her an abundance of knowledge when it comes to dealing with council officials and the police. Just what we needed, as antisocial behaviour on the building's front steps are unfortunately increasing once more.

On the other end of the spectrum remains our passion for the Swiss community (our bread and butter) and the homeless outreach. Our long-standing Breakfast on the Steps almost reached their BigGive funding campaign target before Christmas with a whooping £13'780 collected. Well done to Andreas Feller-Rys and his team! But as I referenced in the introduction to this newsletter, we also face a period of transition in 2024.

We will be bidding a sad but joyful farewell to three people who have contributed so much to the spiritual, cultural and community fabric of the Church. Reverend Carla Maurer will be leaving us during the summer after over 10 years of service and commencing a new journey with her husband Julian and their family in Adliswil, in the parish of the Reformed Church of Sihltal, just minutes from downtown Zürich. We will share more news about Carla's departure in due course.

I also bid a farewell and possibly auf Wiedersehen to Trustee Katrin Frey, who will also be returning to Switzerland this summer, more precisely to Langnau am Albis to complete her vicar training. With her move the Consistoire will be looking to recruit additional trustees to support the Church, namely in the area of Safeguarding as well as Fundraising.

(Any chance you know someone who knows someone who knows someone... who would be perfect as a Trustee? The search for volunteers and trustees is never ending and we would love to hear from you. Just get in touch with me, Carla or Katrin. Dankeschön!)

And lastly but not least, I would like to share the news that Andreas Feller-Ryf will be leaving London on April 1st to return home to Solothurn. Andreas leaves behind a Breakfast on the Steps community event, that has flourished further under his dedicated, tireless and passionate leadership. Our weekly guests experience not just a sandwich or a coffee, but an environment that has profited from Andreas' background and training in the Swiss EHL hospitality industry.

But change is always also an opportunity for refreshing and building upon the success of the past. In this spirit I look forward to engaging with you, our dear readers! Without you, *Eidgenossinnen und Eidgenossen*, the Swiss Church would not exist. You populate the church halls abundantly during the ever-popular family Samichlaus event and remain loyal to the bi-weekly Sunday service. Thank you all. As such I wish you all a prosperous and calm 2024.



From the Venue

By Therese Theurillat

As I write these words, the fresh January light illuminates the newly oiled wooden floor, filling me with joy that the church is ready to host a jam-packed program for the year ahead. While I cherished the Christmas season and all the festivities that came with it, I'm eager for spring and the light to return.

Being the gatekeeper of the church is a fascinating role, as I get to meet and interact with various people from all walks of life. With so many inquiries pouring in, I have to learn to balance and prioritise our schedule carefully. I'm determined to do justice to our vibrant Art Programme while staying true to our regular hires and the wonderful community that is at the heart of our Church. This year, I hope to bring in some exciting corporate hires to fill the church's pockets.

We're sharing the [canvas-event.org.uk](https://www.canvas-event.org.uk) website with some of London's most prestigious buildings and venues, and I can't wait to see what events we will attract this year. Having learned my lesson from last year's Genesis Show, I want to ensure that our community activities can thrive without interruption.

This spring, we have a lot to look forward to. Besides the Art exhibitions, we will host the High Holborn Choir Spring concert on April 20th and a beautiful exhibition that combines art, craft, and fashion during London's Craft Week in May.



Ruth Gordon

An interview

“Supporting young talent gives my life purpose!”

An interview with Ruth Gordon-Jaeggi, Organiser of the Ballet Gala Fundraiser

On 7 September 2024, the Swiss Church will host its third annual fundraising Ballet Gala in support of the Art Programme. We spoke to Ruth, retired Swiss ballet dancer and organiser of the event.

You are Swiss, from Luzern. What brought you to the Swiss Church?

I went to ballet school in Luzern and by 11 I knew I wanted to be a ballet dancer. I came to London when I was 19. My late husband Simon Richard Gordon passed away in 1981 and I fended for my son Matthew. Petra Kehr from the Swiss Benevolent Society came into my life. She invited me to coffee mornings at the Church and introduced me to the lovely Reverend Carla.

Can you tell us what you do aside from the Church?

After the death of my husband, I realised I had to do something with the rest of my life!

I found a family from Ghana with children who wanted piano lessons. They blossomed but the family went back. Another family from Ghana came with their children and they did very well with ABRSM exams. Over the past 3 years I have had 60 students and there are some lovely stories. My volunteering not only gives many talented children a chance to explore music but gives me a purpose in life! I also volunteer for Age Exchange in Blackheath which is very rewarding

You are extremely generous with your time. What drives you the most?

Simple answer: Art and Artists! Unfortunately, art has been and is to a large degree political. To me, politics is ugly, and an evil created by man. I love to create beauty and hope.

We have heard the Gala project is growing in London. Tell us more.

Slowly organisations come and ask for our input artistically and financially. We are only too happy to perform and help. I always come back to the Bible: Jesus was able to help and teach with no money, why can't I?

Thank you for your openness, Ruth!

For the full interview with Ruth, please visit our website swisschurchlondon.org.uk/arts

Save the date for this year's Ballet Gala on 7 September and support the Swiss Church's Art Programme!



Sophie Taeuber Arp Opera Rehearsals

This Summer, we are excited to partner with the Sophie Taeuber Arp opera project providing 2 weeks rehearsal space as in the lead up to a series of performances at London's Grimeborn festival this August.

Member of the Dada movement, dancer at the notorious Cabaret Voltaire and a unique voice across a host of diverse art forms, Sophie faced many struggles before her tragic death in 1943. Weaving music, dance, verbatim, art and poetry, the opera asks: What happens to a talented female artist when she's part of an artistic couple? What pressures does she face?



Whistling and moving Looking back on the church's first Community Artist Residencies

This Autumn and Winter, artist Aliaskar Abarkas, and artist duo Amanda Camenisch & Therese Westin have invited the public, local communities, artists and music professionals to join sound workshops as part of their Community Artist Residency.

Aliaskar started with a workshop of the unusual kind: a Community Whistling Choir! This ongoing project encourages people to learn, celebrate, and mourn, crafting soundscapes through whistling. On April 17, the whistling choir will perform with composer

Maxence Léa Marmy. The Choir meets every first Monday of the month. To sign up to a workshop, email artscommunity@swisschurchlondon.org.uk.

January also saw Amanda Camenisch & Therese Westin's 'A Home Is A Cloud', a large-scale movement and sound piece, performed by 20 participants. The group explored notions of home, faith and belonging through the lens of music and movement as a form of worship. The result is a 45 minute long, part scripted part, improvised score, consisting of collective movement, song, voices and poems. This culminated in the two-day exhibition at the church.

Amanda & Therese continue their residency into the Summer. They will open their sessions to the church and local community.

‘Vale’

By Peter Yardley-Jones, Director of Music

How does one contain a decade of a leader, friend and force for good in 500-600 words? Firstly, Carla, thank you and I (and I'm sure all who are reading this) will miss you! I remember the day I worked with you on our first service together back in 2013 where in the Presbyterian faith, it's common that the Minister chooses the hymns, whereas, you wrote to me to say: "As I'm not very familiar with the song book of the Swiss Church, it would be great if you could choose the hymns". I knew from that moment, this was going to be a great working relationship!

Under Carla's leadership and direction, she has been able to pivot and steer the Swiss Church to financial independence. She has propelled the Swiss Church into being an ecumenical place of worship and cultural hub, truly adding the Swiss Church onto the cultural map in London. One cannot underestimate the huge task this must have been, but one that she grasped and leaves a lasting legacy for the continuation of the church. The events have been run to further the church's outreach to the local communities, incorporating music, faith and all walks of life. The Swiss Church has evolved and progressed into a place we now all know and love.

Liturgically, some of the most memorable moments have been where Carla hasn't been afraid or concerned to speak from the heart. I fondly recall our first London Pride service, which was a joy to work to build together and a very memorable sermon.



Swiss Church team 2014

I very much enjoyed Carla's "Bible hits" sermons too. We have always worked well together to build themes for services with music and liturgy at the heart and I will miss this, as it is a rare treat!

In this piece, we would also like to take a moment to thank Carla's wonderful husband Julian and the family who have been part of the Swiss Church and its community, by supporting Carla in her role. Also joining in the community and fellowship at Sunday Services and also as a great BBQ'er in the summer! Julian also facilitated and gave his time and expertise for the first recording of the Swiss Church organ.

I'd now like to add some of my own personal memories, working alongside Carla. One of my favourites would have to be when in 2014, we held an all-night Easter Vigil, including Bach's *Johannes-Passion*, which was one of the highlights of my personal career.

The whole Swiss Church team and helpers rose to the challenge of organising and putting on an all-night vigil. It was also a joy to attend her wedding celebration to Julian in their local pub.

Pfarrerinnen Carla, on behalf myself, your colleague and friend, your Swiss Church members and Consistoire, and the communities you have positively impacted and helped during your time serving the Swiss Church - we join together to thank you for all you have done, your time, love and commitment to our church and we would like to wish you the very best as you embark on a new, exciting venture with your wonderful family. We, at the Swiss Church London know that you will bring joy, prosperity and love to all you serve in the future.

I reflect back on Proverbs 3, the first Old Testament reading you chose at the Swiss Church: "do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity"





THE SWISS CHURCH LONDON CHOIR IS BORN

The Consistoire and Minister are delighted to announce the birth of our church's own choir: The Swiss Church London Choir, which has been formed to enhance worship during services with choral singing of an even higher standard than is already being performed. Music will take its place alongside the church's important visual arts programme with active encouragement of community participation.

There will be choral music for services on the first Sunday of the month with two full mass settings each year: a Requiem mass in November for the Commemoration service and another mass in the spring or summer. Mozart's Coronation Mass in C is planned for the 2nd of June. The church has been very fortunate in our partnership with the excellent High Holborn Chamber Choir up to now and this will continue alongside our new choir.

Dr Yang Ooi has been appointed as Choir Director and he will work closely with Peter Yardley-Jones, Director of Music and Organist in exploring the choral repertoire further for our services.

Yang is also Conductor of the Staff Choir at Godolphin and Latymer School, Chairman of the Old Wykehamist Chapel Choir Society and was formerly a bass lay-clerk at Tewkesbury Abbey and Director of Charlton Church Choir in Worcestershire.

If you are interested in joining the choir please contact Yang on: choirdirector@swisschurchlondon.org.uk to arrange a simple audition. The main qualities he is looking for are an enthusiasm for singing, a pleasant voice that blends, ability to read music, to sing in tune and to be part of a team, and either basic sight-reading skills or the willingness to practise your part outside of rehearsals.



Art is a guiding light in times of crisis

Report from the Art Retreat

On 28 February, members of the team, Consistoire and volunteers came together for a one-day art strategy retreat at the French Protestant Church, Soho Square. We talked about our vision for the growing Art Programme, and analysed why we do the things we do. We made creative mind maps of connections we already have and those we want to strengthen and establish.

It was an incredibly inspiring day. We grew together as a team,

finding our unique identity and drawing inspiration from each other. We came to realise how unique the Art Programme at the Swiss Church is with its welcoming atmosphere and giving people a sense of belonging in an often isolating world. Art is a guiding light in times of crisis. Many individuals have found a home at the Swiss Church through the arts or confidence to explore new paths and reflect their personal faith and spirituality.

If you would like to be involved with the arts, please email art@swisschurchlondon.org.uk

Swiss Family Christmas

We shared much loved Swiss Christmas traditions with over 20 Swiss families on Sunday 3 December carving Räbeliechtli (turnip lights), singing carols and listening to the Christmas story. Samichlaus came all the way from Australia, but it is said that he has excellent knowledge of Swiss customs. With many thanks to all the volunteers who helped to make this much loved event happen!



From Breakfast on the Steps

Big Give Christmas Challenge

The Consistoire and the team of volunteers at Breakfast on the Steps would like to thank everyone who participated in our Christmas fundraising. We are delighted to have raised enough funds to support the homeless community in Central London for another year. On Tuesday, 12 December 2023, we celebrated a special Christmas breakfast at the Swiss Church with Christmas music, a wonderful breakfast buffet, mince pies, and personalised gifts and Christmas cards for our lovely guests.



A fond farewell

By *Andreas Feller-Rys*

"On a personal note, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to each and every person who has been involved in Breakfast on the Steps. I will be moving back to Switzerland in April and, therefore, hand over the lead of this meaningful initiative. Three years ago, I embarked on this journey with a modest breakfast table in the foyer, and today, it has blossomed into a small operation serving over 70 homeless people every Tuesday with a lovely breakfast and monthly haircuts. We have evolved into more than a weekly routine; we have become an institution, well known for its Swiss hospitality and genuinely friendly service beyond the Borough of Camden.

I am thankful to hand over at a time where we can count on a group of very capable and loyal volunteers as well as funding well into 2025. I am immensely grateful for my time here and I have forged bonds that have become treasured friendships. I might not be a constant presence anymore, but will drop in as much as I can on my visits to London. I wish you all good health and happiness!"

The Swiss Church congregation, team and Consistoire wish Andreas all the best for his future. We are immensely grateful and indebted to Andreas for reviving the Breakfast on the Steps after the pandemic. Andreas has not only carried on but raised the bar significantly. His passion, friendship and attention to detail will be greatly missed.



Events @ the Swiss Church

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

2024

March 3, with communion and choir
March 17, with soloist
March 31, Easter Sunday
April 7, with communion and choir
April 21, with soloist
May 5, with communion and choir
May 19, Whit Sunday, with art exhibition
June 2, with communion and choir
(performing Mozart's Coronation Mass in C)
July 7, AGM and Farewell drinks for
Rev Carla Maurer
July 21, Confirmation service
August - no church services

September 1, with communion and choir
September 15, Federal Penance Day
October 6, with communion and choir
October 20, with soloist
November 3, Communion Service
November 17, Requiem Service with choir
December 1, Advent service with choir
December 15, Carol Concert (5pm)

Community and Events

**Breakfast on the Steps and
Haircuts** for the Homeless Community
Every Tuesday, 7.30-9.30am

Swing Dance Classes
Every Tuesday 7.30-10.30pm
Everyone welcome- No experience- No
partner, no problem

High Holborn Spring Concert
20 April 2024
highholborncc.org.uk for more
information

**Unione Ticinese: Concert of the
Ticino Choir "Voce del Brenno"**
10 of May
utlondon.org for more information

TURSI: Unveiling the Art of Craft
17 -19 May 2024 12-6 pm

**LCC MA Sound Art exhibition
17 - 21 July, 12-6pm**

**2024 Fundraising Ballet Gala
hosted by Ruth Gordon**
7 September (evening, time TBC)

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Art

**Community Whistling Choir
rehearsals with Resident Artist
Aliaskar Abarkas
In the Gallery room**
Every first Monday of the month until July

**Ruby Wroe (Annual Art
Committee Co-chair Choice
Exhibition)**
11th - 13th April, 12pm - 6pm

**You can download the latest Swiss
Church News on our website.**
swisschurchlondon.org.uk

Our Church groups

La Causerie

Every second Tuesday of each month
there is a unique opportunity for French
speaking Swiss to get together for a
convivial lunch at the Swiss Church.
Contact Geneviève Higgin and Françoise
Mistovski via the church office for more
information.

info@swisschurchlondon.org.uk


Mothers' Group

We meet to promote friendship
between Swiss women in a Christian
environment.
Every 2nd Wednesday of each month –
varied visits and outings to local
attractions.
Contact Mrs Marianne Fisher-Hertig, Mrs
Margrit Rahman and Mrs Erika Tan via
the Swiss Church:
info@swisschurchlondon.org.uk

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“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”

Barack Obama

“If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude.”

Maya Angelou

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