



Swiss Church News

Autum 2024

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



Dear readers

New faces are looking at you from the cover picture of the Swiss Church News. My name is Manuel, and I am the new Interim Minister of the Swiss Church. Next to me is my wife Carmody, together with our son Benjamin. The picture is taken as we enter the doors of the Swiss Church for the first service I led on the 15th September. Please note our smiles as we enter these doors! We are very happy to be part of the journey of the Swiss Church in London.

Speaking of going through doors: as you browse these pages you'll notice that this theme can be spotted elsewhere as well. You'll read about a pigeon having entered our church through the fire exit, and about that same pigeon having become a symbol for Andy (who also used to be our

doorman) - Andy who has now sadly passed through the doors of this world to the next.

You'll read from Michelle and Philip about what it means to them to have entered the community of the Christian faith through baptism. You'll read about our upcoming exhibition "Portals" which will showcase artworks by people who pass through our doors every Tuesday for the 'Arts Club' - people who, in many cases, don't have a door they can call their own.

A feature about the exhibition and performance of our 2024 Artists in Residence, John and Rhett, will follow in the spring edition of the Swiss Church News. Hundreds of people entered the Swiss Church in late October to be inspired by their personal stories of brokenness and the healing power of the arts. Through the Arts Program the Swiss Church opens the doors for honest encounters with the deep stuff of life.

In order to keep our doors open - in plain speech, in order for the Swiss Church to exist in the future - we are in need of your support. We are expecting a significant shortfall in this financial year. We are therefore looking for ways to reduce costs without compromising on what we do.

Without ongoing and growing support of friends who commit themselves to its flourishing, the future of the Swiss Church is at risk. Thank you for considering how you could be involved. To mention one example: you can find out, on page 5, about a great way to support 'Breakfast on the Steps'.

With every blessing,

Manuel

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Latest News

From the Venue

By Therese Theurillat, Venue Manager

So much has happened since the last Swiss Church News! This summer - during the "in-between ministers" phase - my role as Venue Manager took an even more interesting turn. With Rupert's help, we expanded our maintenance efforts to the Vicarage, a project I personally enjoyed immensely (though, to be fair, Rupert did most of the heavy lifting). We chose a lovely white colour for the walls, giving the beautiful property a much-needed refresh, and made sure everything was ready on the 5th September for Manuel and his family to move in.

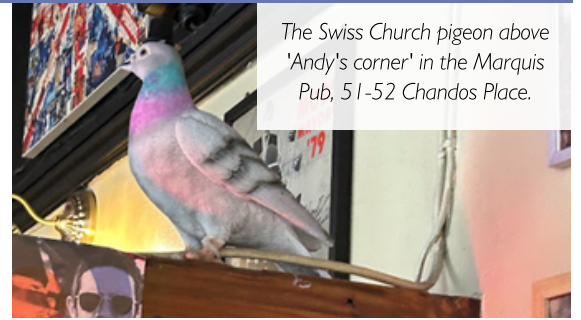
As a Venue Manager, you expect the unexpected every day, but I've never had to deal with a pigeon in the hall before! It was during that transition period, just a day

after we received the sad news of Andy's passing (see page 6) that this unexpected guest arrived. The pigeon flew in through the fire exit doors and soared straight up to the arches beneath the window. There was no way anyone could coax that little bird back down!

After days of trying, with the help of many, nothing changed. Somehow, the pigeon survived without food or water, leaving us with quite a mess on the floor. Despite the chaos, everyone was oddly moved by its presence.

Many even felt that it must've been Andy, leaving us with a little humour and a lingering presence in the church. So much so that if you enter the Marquis Pub today you can see the pigeon again: His friends lovingly put a plaque in 'Andy's corner' and set up the pigeon above it.

Thankfully, after a week, a very tired pigeon



The Swiss Church pigeon above 'Andy's corner' in the Marquis Pub, 51-52 Chandos Place.

finally made its way down, and we were able to escort it out safely into the streets.

After a summer of changes, we're gearing up for an exciting autumn and winter season packed with activities. A full art program is on the horizon, along with our regular hires to who all want to make the most of this space. From fashion shows to wine-tastings, well-being events, and much more, our calendar is filling up fast!



From the Consistoire

Farewell by Niccolò Aliano

Dear friends and members of the Swiss Church, as some of you know already, earlier in the summer months I resigned from the Consistoire. Having gained more responsibilities at work, the time I could devote to the Consistoire sadly shrunk and I decided that it would be best to offer my resignation.

I remain immensely grateful for the opportunity to serve as a Trustee. Over the past 18 months, it has been a privilege to help the Swiss Church navigate the momentous transitions it has experienced. First, we bid farewell after many years of hard work to Anina and we welcomed Janice, who has brought with her a wealth of experience and knowledge. Breakfast on the Steps has also grown immensely and as Andreas left, he passed the baton on to Amanda. Finally, after over a decade of transformative and Spirit-filled dedication, Carla has moved to Switzerland. It has again been a great privilege to help with the onboarding of Manuel as our new Interim Minister.

I was honoured to lead the service on 1 September, where we remembered our dear friend Andy and were joined by many of his loved ones before sharing in a vigil in his memory at the Marquis Pub. For me personally, it was a momentous occasion not only to pay tribute to Andy, but also to reconnect with old friends and meet new ones in person. Be assured that, even if I am not a trustee anymore, I will still be around and help as I can. The Swiss Church is ready to embark on a new, revitalized journey, which I am sure will bring lots of joy and grace to you all. God bless and see you all soon!



Farewell by Lindsey Wiercioch

I still remember my first time visiting the Swiss Church. Carla welcomed me into the foyer and I was able to take a tour of the surrounding area – amazed that such a gem was hidden in the heart of Covent Garden. From there, I'd stepped in to help with community and marketing engagement with the Arts team, later to become Arts Trustee, and the sense of family and support never stopped.

I was welcomed, much like anyone who visits the Church, by everyone on the team, outsider that I was. I am neither Swiss nor particularly religious myself – but the community made every effort to make me feel at home: and I truly did feel just that.

I'm so immensely proud of how far the Swiss Church has come over the past few years. Even in times of hardship and uncertainty, the Swiss Church excelled and showed just how vital it is to many people and communities in London. From our annual Arts Programmes (a dream to plan with Diane, Lizzy, Mary and Julie), Breakfast on the Steps (which wouldn't be possible without our volunteers, and both Andreas and Amanda), to our congregation, our developing choir (thank you, Peter and Yang) and most importantly our home base, our team and Board (Carla, Therese, Ryan, Janice, Daniel, Philip, Niccolo, Katrin, Cecile and of course Emily-Rose): I am honoured to have played a small part in this history.

I wish a very fond farewell to this community, and know that I will always have my Swiss family in London.

From (Outside) the Office

By Ryan Moshwe, Office Assistant

"Guess who did their third Bungee Jump and lived to tell the tale! It was an amazing experience to get back in that crane box over 160ft from the ground, and make a leap of faith. Very thankful to Camden Giving for allowing me for this opportunity to represent my Borough to tackle gender inequality for the people in Camden. Will I be doing it again? Honestly, I don't know but we can only wait and see!"



Ryan in action

Works in progress by the BoS Art Workshop attendees.
Artworks (clockwise) by Debbie, Lorraine, Tian and John

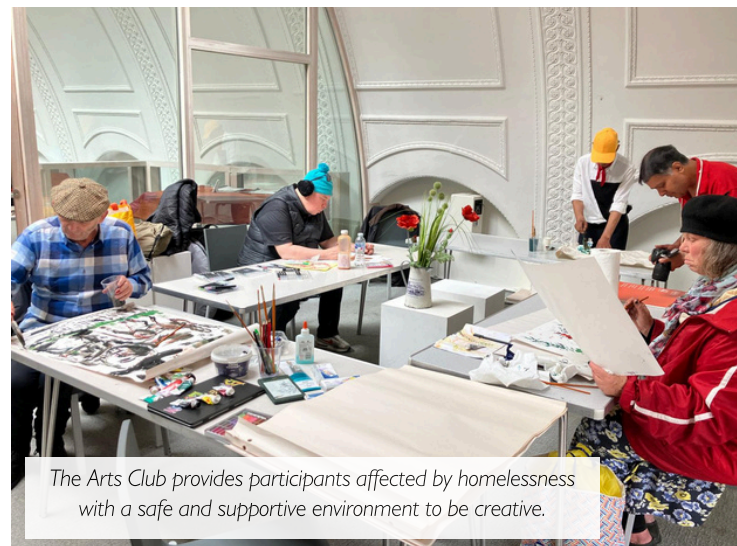


New Breakfast on the Steps Arts Club

Since April 2024, we have been hosting weekly art workshops for people affected by homelessness and poverty. These take place every Tuesday from 9am – 11am, after the Breakfast on the Steps in our on-site artist studio and in the main hall.

Each week, a core group of 10 workshop attendees develop 2D works on paper and canvas, alongside digital works such as film, photography and digital collage.

The workshops are a new collaboration between the Swiss Church Art Programme and the longstanding Breakfast on the Steps programme. Artist-led and centred around the participants' drive to explore materials, processes and ideas, the sessions have fostered conversations, artistic exchanges and collaborations. Our workshop partners with the London Graphic Centre. Based a few streets away in Covent Garden, they generously provide art materials for our sessions.



The Arts Club provides participants affected by homelessness with a safe and supportive environment to be creative.



(photo credit: Neena Percy)

All the Whistlers

by Aliaskar Abarkas

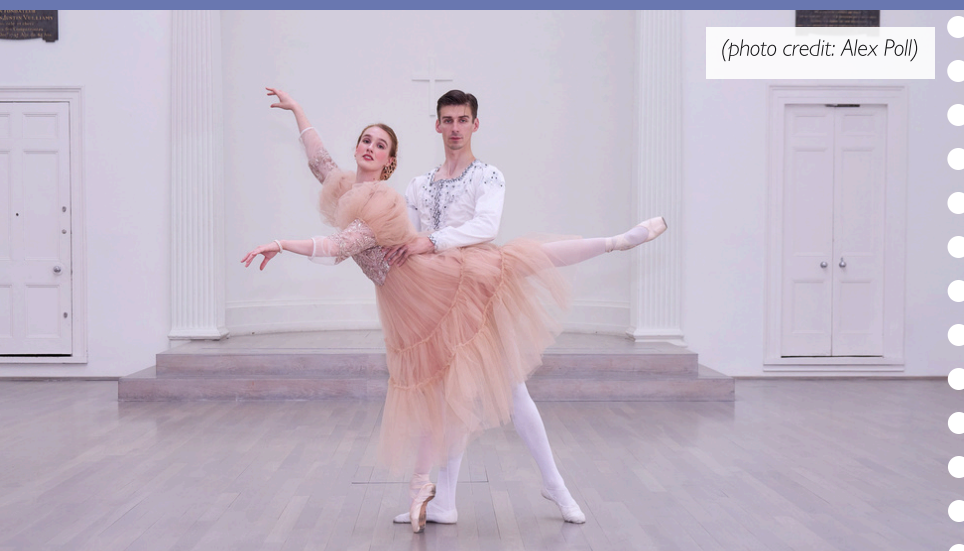
This September, the Art Programme presented Aliaskar Abarkas, our 2023 – 2024 Community Artist in Residence. The event was a celebration of Aliaskar's residency at the Swiss Church and a 'birthday party' for The Community Whistling

Choir project he has been developing throughout the year.

Aliaskar hosted a series of workshops and activities including a reading workshop of recently commissioned whistling poems, a performance and whistling workshop with jazz pianist Robert Mitchell, and a performance by singer and ensemble Nitamortei.

Thank you to Ruth Gordon-Jaeggi!

A huge thank you to Ruth Gordon-Jaeggi for generously organising this year's Fundraising Ballet Gala, 'Etude à la Ballet Russe Moderne'!



(photo credit: Alex Poll)



poster artwork by Lewis-MRP

An Art Exhibition by the Breakfast on the Steps Guests

This autumn, we are thrilled to be presenting the first Breakfast on the Steps Guests' art exhibition, *Portals*, which will be running from 23 – 24 November, 12pm - 6pm. The show will be open to the public over these two days and highlights the voices, stories and talents of artists with experience of homelessness and poverty.

Our first exhibition, *Portals*, offers a passage through doorways, over thresholds and into memories, hallucinations, fantasy, mythology and science fiction. The motivation is simple: to show hoart can transport, be transformative and offer passage to new spaces.

The exhibition aims to highlight the voices, stories and creativity of the community.

Many of the artworks are currently being made at the weekly Breakfast on the Steps Arts Club and will be presented alongside submissions from artists and filmmakers who currently or previously visited the weekly breakfasts at the Swiss Church.

The exhibition coincides with the 10-year anniversary of the Breakfast on the Steps and will feature paintings, drawings, digital collage, short films, photography, poetry and more. All are welcome!

**Portals is open 23 – 24 November,
12pm – 6pm.**

Community



This is your chance to support BOS!

Our "Breakfast on the Steps" program continues to grow, with an average of 75 guests joining us each week.

While many of our guests have been with us for years, we've recently welcomed lots of new faces as homelessness and poverty impact even more people. Our guests truly appreciate what we offer, and many look forward to it all week.

The increasing demand means we rely more than ever on our dedicated volunteers and generous donors.

The good news is that there will soon be a unique opportunity to support us.

We are part of the Big Give Christmas Challenge, a match-funding campaign in which **every pound that is raised between the 3rd December and 10th December will be doubled.**

This is an incredible chance to support our project and make a lasting difference. You can access our Big Give Project via the QR code or the link below.

swisschurchlondon.org.uk/church/donate



In addition to our weekly "Breakfast on the Steps" Art Club and the upcoming *Portals* exhibition (see page 3), we created a zine – self-published leaflets featuring stories from our longstanding guests – to celebrate an impressive 10 years of BOS. Get in touch with the office for a copy!



We warmly welcome new members to our family of volunteers!
If you'd like to volunteer with us, please contact

localoutreach@swisschurchlondon.co.uk

Our community lead, Amanda Camenisch, would be delighted to hear from you and share more about how you can get involved.



At 7.30am the team is ready to welcome our guests with a smile and good quality breakfast.



'Breakfast on the Steps' is quiet space for people to recharge, find peace, and feel nourished.



Baptism of Michelle and Philip

"My recent baptism at the Swiss Church was poignant and a privilege. This was my mother's church during her adolescence. I now feel part of a caring spiritual community. Carla encouraged me with this decision, and I am most grateful to her and to Philip who welcomed me to share the occasion of his own Baptism. The day is a treasured memory, and has furthered my spiritual development immeasurably."

Michelle Armstrong

"My baptism in the Swiss Church was a deeply meaningful moment for me that is difficult to put into words. The impressions I took away from that day will stay with me for the rest of my life: Mozart's coronation mass, the prayer by Bonhoeffer, my baptism verse (2 Timothy 1:7), and Carla's way of conducting the service, all made this an unforgettable day and marked the beginning of a fascinating journey. For all this, I feel a deep sense of gratitude."

Philip Rauber

Happy 100th Birthday Yolande Birch!

by Margrit Lyster

A balloon gently swaying on the door of the Swiss Church - a special occasion? Indeed! Yolande Birch, a truly wonderful, loyal and much loved member of the Swiss Church is celebrating 100 years!



In her address, Carla recalled past conversations with Yolande where it became obvious that three words were of special importance to her - almost life mottos. 'Gratitude' for the kindness and love; 'potholes', often making our paths on foot or in life situations hazardous (Yolande's solution: Stop, take a deep breath, brace yourself and cross with a big step!); and lastly, 'friendship' - like the one which grew through a casual encounter with Cécile Mistry in 1984 as a neighbour, who then became a most caring and supportive friend.

The service was beautifully enhanced with music, and ended with a rousing Happy Birthday. The centenarian proudly paraded her Royal Birthday Card and the ensuing reception was livened by the speeches from Consistoire President Daniel Everett and Consul General Thomas Wagner. All in all a truly special day!

Yolande, we do look forward to celebrating with you again in a year's time!



In memory of Maya Harhalakis

On 13th October the memorial celebration for Maya Harhalakis who passed away on 5th July 2024 was conducted at the Swiss Church. Born in 1935, Maya co-led the Mother's Group for more than 20 years, organised countless activities like Christmas fairs and holiday camps, and was famous for her delicious cooking and baking and her loving presence. To all who knew and loved her, our heartfelt condolences.



In memory of Dora Rita Cookey-Gam

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Dora Rita Cookey-Gam on the 12th September 2024, just three days short of her 88th birthday. Dora was a longstanding member of the Swiss Church, worked as a social worker for the Swiss Benevolent Society in the 1960s, and was active in the Mother's Group. All who knew Dora will keep her in loving memory. Our condolences go to her family.

In memory of Andy Palfreyman

This Summer, we lost our dear friend, artist, and core member of our church community, Andy Palfreyman. Our thoughts are with his friends, family and community at this difficult time.

We initially met Andy through our local outreach programme. He quickly became a dear friend of the Swiss Church. Andy lived a truly inspiring life. His kindness, openness and creativity will continue to guide us.

After experiencing homelessness for 30 years, Andy succeed to find housing and work. He often spoke about the impact that his art practice had on his life and shared his love of art with our community.

A brilliant photographer, Andy had two exhibitions at the Swiss Church, 'Looking Down' in 2019 and 'Cardboard and Caviar' in 2015, where he documented the doorways that were so often his temporary homes. Always wonderfully dressed, he also held a fashion show with us in 2020, 'Andy's Catwalk'.



Events @ the Swiss Church

SAVE THE DATE

Swiss Family Christmas

Our annual and highly popular Christmas gathering for Swiss families will take place on **1 December 2024** at the Swiss Church, 79 Endell St from 12:30pm-4pm. Samichlaus/Saint Nicolas will be with us as we enjoy Christmas tea and cake, carve beautiful Rabelichtli (tulip lights), hear the Christmas story and sing traditional Swiss Christmas carols. Please check our website for further details.

Places are limited. Please email to register your participation.
info@swisschurchlondon.org.uk

We need volunteers to help run the event.

Drop us an email if you can help, including providing refreshments, baking, assembling Santa's goodie bags.

Church services

Everyone is invited to join our Sunday services! They usually take place every first and third Sunday of the month at 11.00 am.

- 1st December** Advent service
- 15th December** Carol Concert (5pm)
- 19th January**
- 2nd February**
- 16th February**
- 2nd March**
- 16th March**
- 6th April**
- 20th April**
- 5th May**
- 18th May**
- 1st June**
- 15th June**
- 6th July**
- 20th July**

Community and Events

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

Swiss Church Choir
Rehearsals on Wednesday evenings from 5.30-6.00pm. Everybody is welcome to join in! Please get in touch with Yang via choirdirector@swisschurchlondon.org.uk

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

Upcoming Art Programme

Portals
23 – 24 November 2024 (12 – 6pm)
An exhibition of work by artists and guests of the Breakfast on the Steps programme.

Louise Ashcroft
23 – 26 January 2025 (12 – 6pm)
Sound installation: Child-free nursery rhymes performed by the Swiss Church Choir.

Davinia-Ann Robinson
27 – 30 March (12 – 6pm)
Clay installation and soundscape: Exploring healing and ecology

Concerts at the Swiss Church in Advent 2024

Concert of Southwark Chamber Choir, Fauré Requiem
27 November, 7.30pm

High Holborn Choir Christmas Concert
6 December, 7pm

Swiss Church Carol Concert
15 December, 5pm

Christmas Concert of Southwark Chamber Choir
18 December, 7.30pm

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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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If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to us as it is, infinite.

William Blake

We make our friends; we make our enemies; but God makes our next-door neighbour.

G. K. Chesterton

Die Aufgabe der Kunst besteht darin, Türen zu öffnen, wo keiner sie sieht.

Peter Weibel

**Listen! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door,
I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.**

The Bible, Book of Revelation 3, 20

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