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# NEWS FROM THE COLONY

## SWISS PROTESTANT CHURCH: REPORT OF THE CONSISTOIRE

Whoever has an opportunity to be in touch with the Swiss Church in London for any length of time soon becomes aware of the unusual type of community it represents within the great fellowship of the Christian Church in the world. Many of the features which characterise the life of a normal parish in a closely-knit community are here under-developed or simply missing. On the other hand, fields of action and service are open to the Swiss Church in London which few other Christian communities enjoy. A review of the trends and activities of our church in 1970 will again bring this into evidence.

A normal church, for instance, generally has its monthly church meeting or monthly meeting of its Parish Council or of its elders. The Consistoire of the Swiss Church only meets four times a year and the Parish Councils of the French-speaking and of the German-speaking communities about as many times each. These meetings in 1970 have been well attended, in spite of distance for some, heavy commitments for others and travel abroad for a few. The meetings have paid close attention to the administrative and pastoral problems put to them. The work of the Consistoire has also been most ably supplemented in matters of finances and buildings and accommodation for our pastors by the activity of two permanent commissions designated for that purpose.

Again, any church benefitting, as ours does, from the services of four pastors would in ordinary circumstances be able to manifest a considerable activity in the field of Sunday School and catechism classes. In spite of the remarkable development of the German-speaking Sunday School, growing from less than half-a-dozen children to about 30, religious education is by no means as significant a ministry for the Swiss Church in London as it is for most other churches. Our pastors' reports on the next pages give us more specific information about this aspect of our Church's life.

On the other hand, youth work demands in proportion a much greater part of the attention of our ministers than in ordinary parishes. Indeed, as is well known, more than half of the energies and time of our four pastors are devoted to ministering to the many young Swiss staying for short periods in London.

A remarkably imaginative effort has again been made in 1970 in this field by our pastors. Not only have they been helping these young people to overcome the occasional touch of

homesickness or personal problems and difficulties, but they have also tried in all kinds of ways to help them to face some of the most urgent and crucial problems of our days and to discover the Christian answer, the Christian attitude to so many puzzling questions.

Above all they have been able to create among the young people a contagious spirit of fellowship and service of which our Church has had the first benefits on many occasions and in many ways. The year 1970 has been remarkable for the part played by these young people in the various manifestations of our Church's life—Church Assembly, Bazaar, Christmas celebration, Parish Councils, active participation in Sunday Services and the like. We are grateful that the churches in Switzerland, under the impetus of the Federation of Protestant Churches in Switzerland, have again been willing and able to finance almost completely the cost of this work for young people, including the salary and expenses of the assistant ministers, Messrs. Stefan and Hostettler.

The service to the sick and to the aged people is one of the traditional functions of a church. In London, owing to the composition of the membership of the Swiss Church, this ministry looms large in the long list of responsibilities of our pastors. Distances make this ministry a demanding one. Fortunately in both congregations our pastors can count on the help of a number of church members who have been willing to give time to visit sick and isolated persons. The intercessions of the French-speaking community's prayer fellowship has faithfully undergirded this work. Nevertheless 1970 has witnessed again the departing of many longstanding members, friends and supporters of our Church, some of whom had already been forced to give up their regular attendance to Sunday services because of fatigue, distance and travelling costs.

One of the challenging opportunities for the Swiss Church in London is the multiplicity of contacts open to its members in the manifold activities of the organisations and institutions of the Swiss Colony in London, from the

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Embassy and Consular Office, to various cantonal associations not forgetting the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, the City Swiss Club, "The Swiss Observer", the Swiss Benevolent Society, the Swiss Hostel and others, most of which have shown in one form or another their desire to help and their interest for the Swiss Church.

Although the Church, in certain parts of the world, finds itself more or less in a ghetto, this cannot be said of our Swiss Church in London and we are deeply grateful for such facilities as our members have to bring their Christian witness in these other spheres of life and interest. In this connection we would also like to express our gratitude to the Swiss Ambassador, Monsieur R. Keller, and Madame Keller, who during their all too short stay in London have shown a warm and active interest in our Church and constantly encouraged their colleagues at the Embassy to give whatever help and support they could to the Swiss Church and its various groups, particularly the Frauenverein and the Réunion de Couture.

The Embassy also deserves our deep gratitude for their magnificent contribution to the Bazaar held on October 31st. This was again a cheerful occasion for encounters, renewal of friendships and contacts for our pastors with many church members from distant suburbs, whom they have few opportunities to meet.

Another unique opportunity offered to our Church is the possibility of co-operating in youth work with the Catholic Mission. The fact that the German-speaking Church community had to give up the use of St. Mary le Bow for lack of available facilities greatly contributed to the development of closer contacts. Today Protestants and Catholics mix freely in all youth activities, to their great spiritual and educational advantage. From youth work this co-operation has extended to other aspects of life in the church.

Ecumenical — bilingual — services have been organised twice; "Die Stimme", the German parish paper, is now inter-denominational. Since it was learned in the course of the year that St. Ann's Church, where the Swiss Catholic Mission and the Swiss German Protestant congregation held their Saturday ecumenical and their Sunday evening services, was to be demolished in 1971, joint discussions have been held between representatives of both denominations to examine the possibility of creating in London an inter-denominational bilingual church centre for the Swiss Colony and young people from Switzerland.

Though considerable time and attention has been given to this matter by our pastors, and by an *ad hoc* group in our own Church, in consultation with various personalities in the

Colony and in Switzerland, no definite project could so far be outlined and further search and study are needed. This problem which loomed large in our preoccupation in 1970 will no doubt demand much attention, thinking and prayers in 1971.

This is more than a matter of sound administration and finance — though both are needed! Here in fact we face the deeper problem of the ministry of the Swiss Churches in London in the years to come. What is the Lord of the Church expecting from our Church today, and from our generation to prepare for tomorrow's generations? This is the heart- and conscience-searching question which we are all called upon to ask and to think about in all earnestness and obedience.

The finances of the Church have as usual received the close attention of the Consistoire and of the Finance Committee. That our income in Great Britain should remain as high as it is is a matter for deep gratitude, and we are aware of much sacrificial giving on the part of many old friends whose relative income has been steadily decreasing owing to inflation. We do hope that those of our supporters who are still in active life and are therefore less badly hurt by the general economic deterioration, will see their way to making up for what others cannot do.

Again we would draw their attention to the opportunity for them (and the need for our Church!) to increase their covenant when it comes to renewal or to underwrite an additional covenant. As the accounts show, the financial situation has not changed significantly. The encouraging result of the Bazaar has helped to make up for some of last year's excess of expenditure over income, but we had to allocate some of the interests on the Bicentenary Fund to cover the cost of long delayed improvement in the heating system of the Manse at number 1 Womersley Road.

Special contributions from a number of cantonal churches and congregations in Switzerland have made it possible to complete the reconditioning of the reception hall at 72 Endell Street. For this help as well as for the steady, effective and prayerful support of so many friends in Switzerland and Great Britain we are particularly grateful.

*For the Consistoire:*

THE PRESIDENT.

#### SWISS CATHOLICS IN LONDON: ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting to cover 1970 was held on Sunday, 9th May, 1971, at the Westminster Ball Room, 30 Strutton Ground, S.W.1.

After opening prayers, the Chairman, Mr. Oscar Grob, KSG, extended a warm welcome to all present.

The Chairman stated in his report that the year 1970 can be recorded again as one of steady progress in the

activity of the Swiss Catholic Community, in which both permanent and temporary Swiss residents in the Colony took an active part.

Mr. J. R. Gaechter, Secretary for Economic Affairs at the Swiss Embassy, was recalled in October, 1970, to Switzerland. We are very grateful to him for his assistance given to us as a member of our Committee during his stay in London.

His Excellency, the Swiss Ambassador, Monsieur R. J. Keller, has been appointed Head of the Division of International Organisations in Berne as from 1st February, 1971. During his term of office as our Ambassador, although regrettably only a short one, Monsieur and Madame Keller have shown keen interest in all our activities. We express to them our sincerest thanks and appreciation for their valuable support and wish them every possible success in their new sphere of activity.

We thank the Editor of "The Swiss Observer", Mr. Pierre-Michel Beguin and the publishers for accepting our appeals and reports on our social activities during the year.

The Chaplain, the Rev. Father Paul Bossard said the following in his report:

The chief aim of all my activities is to form the young people from Switzerland, scattered all over London and the United Kingdom, into some sort of a christian community, which is, of course, the church. But our youth with its great suspicion against any established institution is in need of a different approach. This has to be born in mind if the different activities are to appear in the correct perspective.

The ecumenical co-operation among the different churches is a "must" if the message is to have any relevance for our young people, and it can be said that the year 1970 has seen a steady progress and a consolidation of what has been achieved in the previous years. Though difficulties have increased, especially through the im-

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