



Swiss Church News

Summer 09

Swiss Church in London
Eglise suisse de Londres
Schweizerkirche in London
Chiesa Svizzera a Londra
Baselgia svizra a Londra

Editorial

Dear Reader,

This year we are celebrating the 500th anniversary of the birth of John Calvin! Is this in your opinion a reason for great joy or rather for a sceptical shrug of your shoulders? Well, since I have been announcing that we are organising Calvin events, together with other Protestant Churches of London, I have heard quite a few negative reactions. Today Calvin is not a very popular figure in many people's minds. He has a poor reputation even in non-church circles. I find this very interesting. For me this makes him an even more intriguing individual. I am glad that this anniversary gives us the opportunity to find out more about his person, his thoughts, his successes and also about his failures. That's why the theological article of the Swiss Church News issue is dedicated to John Calvin and to the question why he might have become a very little known and for some even an unpopular figure over the centuries. Besides this, that article shows some unexpected sides of this fascinating person. Hopefully this will inspire many of you to join us for the various Calvin events that are still to take place in London. Especially I would like to recommend to you the event about Calvin and Capitalism with Rev Dr Frank Jehle which will take place at the Swiss Embassy. Please don't forget to subscribe for this event.

Yours sincerely



Farel adjuring Calvin to remain at Geneva

John Calvin: a controversial but fascinating character

Opinions about the reformer John Calvin are extremely diverse. They range from enthusiastic admiration to deep rejection. And it has to be admitted that many tend to be located somewhere near the latter. As we are celebrating his 500th anniversary this year, this is a good opportunity to show some appealing and maybe unknown sides of his in many ways fascinating personality.

On the 7 April 2009 the Swiss Newspaper Tagesanzeiger printed an article entitled "John Calvin was a brutal tyrant of virtues, in which the journalist Michael Meier referring to a book by Volker Reinhardt, depicts a disturbing image of Calvin. But is it true that this famous reformer from Geneva hated every kind of joy in life and liked to punish people for

what he considered immoral behaviour? Of course to make up our minds on that subject we have to rely completely on the historical sources that are available today, and in the case of Calvin some of them are indeed not very positive ones. The Dutch theologian Hermann Selderhuis pointed out that even in his time Calvin was described as a "knaggy person that is in some respects similar to a witch". On the other (to be continued on page 6)

In this edition

From the organ loft	-----2-3
Renovation project	-----4-5
THEOlogical	-----6-7
Interview	-----8-9
Biblical Quotation	----- 10
Kids Corner	----- 11

From the organ loft

Minister's report



When I look back on the highlights of the past few months I would say that the three baptisms are certainly one. For me they are

a sign that the Swiss Church is a lively church, how else would young families find out about our church? Besides this I see in baptisms a sign of hope that the Christian tradition is passed on to



Baptism of Lia Karlaganis

the next generation. This thought is very encouraging for our daily work especially if we think of the renovation project of our church. Hopefully many more generations will benefit from the newly renovated building in the future. This brings me to another topic that has taken quite a lot of my attention and time recently: I have attended a good number of meetings related to the renovation project. On one hand it is interesting for me to follow the process of the renovation closely and on the other hand there are quite a few decisions to be taken that will affect the way of how we will be able to use the church later on. In addition to this we have already started with the organisation of the Opening Event of the renovated church building. For this reason I have set up three different task groups. One group meets for the music programme, another

one for the planned commemoration brochure and a third one for the arts part of the Opening Event. We also want to take this event as an opportunity to advertise the cultural programme of the Swiss Church. One can hopefully expect some cultural highlights in the near future of the Swiss Church in London!

Apart from all that the focus of my work is of course on the Parish - for example on the Easter Service that we celebrated together with the Dutch Church. As we were guests at their church we mainly joined in their traditions, which was an inspiring experience. We started with an early morning service at 9.30 am, in which the new Easter Candle was lit. Each one of us received a candle and we passed the light on to the next person by saying: "The Lord is risen!" After that we shared a marvellous breakfast including some

Dutch specialities. The breakfast was followed by a Festive Easter Service that was held in three languages: Dutch, German and English. So this was an international and hopefully unforgettable experience for all of us who attended.



Baptism of Jasmine and Iris Viesulas

On the 18 March we started off the series of Calvin Events in London. The Hungarian Church hosted this first event. Every minister was able to introduce his or her church and the Calvin event(s) they were organising by their church. After we had celebrated a



Calvin '09 Opening Event
Rev I. Salanki & Rev N. Dürmüller

short service together the Hungarians spoiled us with a marvellous reception that was appreciated by everybody. I am personally very excited about the three events that the Swiss Church will be hosting in June and November. If you have not done so yet, please have a closer look at the Calvin programme in London or visit our website: www.calvin09.org.uk. I am looking forward to seeing many of you at these events.

Rev Nathalie Dürmüller

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www.swisschurchlondon.org.uk
You can download the latest Swiss Church News on our webpage.

Deadline for the next Swiss Church News

10 July 2009

From the organ loft

News from the Consistoire



After a long winter this year, the fresh spring colours are a joy to see: leaves and grass in various shades of green, and yellow, white and pink blossoms, tulips in all colours and bluebells. The Consistoire also hopes that this year a number of projects will successfully blossom!

The search for a new Youth and Parish Worker is under way and we are currently interviewing potential candidates both in Switzerland and in London.

The renovation project is progressing. There was a huge mountain of earth lying in the main hall. Service trenches leading from the plant room situated underneath the apse to the entrance area have been built along the side walls. The additional basement space has been excavated, as well as the foundations for the lift, the columns and the retaining wall. The hole is impressive. The concrete team has now moved in. They poured blinding concrete (a first course layer of concrete) on the dirt floor in the basement, then built timber shutterings, which are forms to pour the vertical concrete walls. Currently they are laying steel rods of different sizes on the blinding concrete, this to reinforce the concrete, so that the weight will be distributed more evenly. The photographs on the following pages, show the different phases of building works under way. On the external façade, scaffolding has been erected. Now the façade decorations can be viewed from close up: the various angels, the Bible and the balls on the top. The scaffolding reminds me of Bill de Vigier, a project donor and former patron. He was the founder of the Acron Group and he revolutionised the construction industry

by inventing the adjustable steel prop – they replaced the traditional wooden pole scaffolding used since biblical times. Decisions will soon have to be made on the colours of the exterior and interior walls, as well as the apse, and on the treatment of the oak floor in the Main Hall.

Most of the time it is possible to go and view the building site. Nick Smith the Site Manager is very accommodating. If you want to be sure that it is accessible, first give me a call on my mobile 07979 253 052 some 24 hours in advance.

We hope to be back in the Church in September. Though the builders will have completed by then, the organ builder will move in to install and tune the new organ. We should be able to use the offices during the week and the Church Hall on Sundays even before the organ is completely installed and tuned.

The opening ceremonies will take place on the weekend of November 14/15. As Rev. Nathalie Dürmüller has reported, we are busy preparing for this event and beyond. Invitations will follow.



Cookery Class with Chef Jacques Pasquier

On 25 March, 19 people took part in a cookery class with Chef Jacques Pasquier at the residence of the Swiss Ambassador. The event was graciously hosted by Gabrielle Lautenberg. We are very appreciative that through her efforts £2000 was raised towards the renovation.

We are also organising a final appeal to

raise the remaining £50,000. Enclosed is a leaflet explaining how you can participate in this last effort by sponsoring an organ pipe! We would like to give as many people as possible an opportunity to contribute in a tangible and remembered way. The names of all contributors will be recorded and kept within the organ case. Please also encourage your friends, family and neighbours to participate.

Our intensive search for a new vicarage was unfortunately not successful. We had a buyer for the Vicarage. We also thought that we had found a new vicarage, but the seller withdrew at the last minute. The Consistoire decided not to sell the vicarage to meet the prospective buyer's 31st March deadline as we had no prospects of a replacement in sight. Our experience has been, that despite the weak property market, a suitable property at a reasonable price in a more convenient location was not available despite our looking at over 25 alternatives. I would like to thank Rose-Marie Breitenstein, Nathalie Dürmüller, Geoff Fisher, Ruth Luka and Erika Tan for their efforts on this matter over the last six months.

To end on a very positive note, I am very pleased to note that Philip Maillardet has been co-opted on to the Consistoire. Philip will, in addition to the responsibilities of a Consistoire member, be in charge of the Archive and be our Historian. Emel Rochat, who for many years, very ably held these roles, will assist Philip when needed. I would like to thank Emel for all her efforts in the past years. It is amazing how many people email the Church and want to find out something about an ancestor, or obtain some information for their research work. But after all, in 2012 we shall be celebrating the 250th anniversary of the Swiss Church in London.

Ursula Jost

Renovation project

Views of the building site during groundworks



Excavation before demolition of retaining wall.



Excavation complete with foundations for columns and lift.



Peter Gibbons,
Director Saltash Construction

Emmanuel Christ,
Partner Christ & Gantenbein



Gurmeet Singh, Steel fixer,
Oliver Connell, specialists for reinforce concrete



Commencement of steel fixing on 50mm of concrete blinding floor.

Photos: A. Bradley,
U. Jost,
N. Smith

Official Opening Ceremonies and Festivities

14 and 15 November 2009

Please remember to put these dates in your diary.

More information and invitations will be included in the next Swiss Church News.

Renovation project

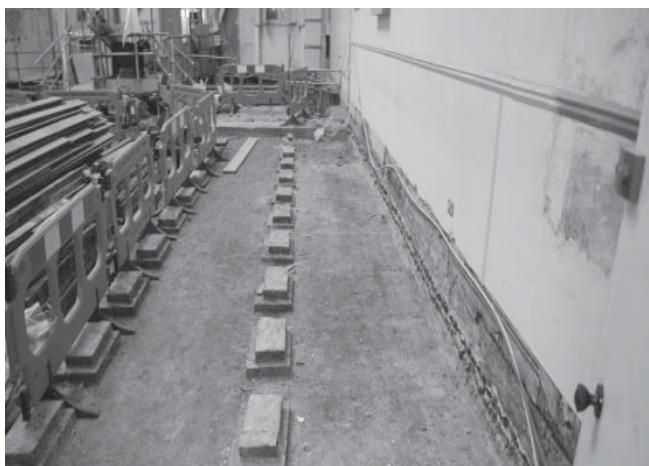
Sponsor an organ pipe

Towards the renovation of the Swiss Church

We would like to invite you to participate in this last fundraising effort for the renovation of the Swiss Church.

All sponsors will receive a certificate acknowledging their contributions and a permanent display of the sponsors' names will be kept on display in the organ housing.

To take part please complete the form in the enclosed leaflet or go to the downloadable documents on our website: www.swisschurchlondon.org.uk/pub/publications_downloads.



Floor with joist of pads on which wooden floor will be relaid.



Building the service trenches (for air circulation, extracting kitchen air)



Stephanie Hirschvogel, Architect,
Christ & Gantenbein.

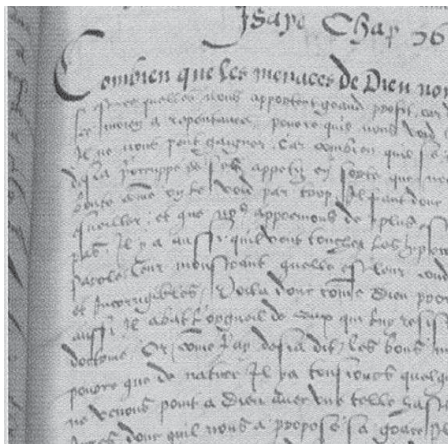


Denis Cahill and Shepetim Kupa, Oliver Connell,
and Nick Smith, Site Manager, Saltash Construction.



Peter Travers, groundworker,
Saltash Construction.

John Calvin: a controversial but fascinating character



Institutio Christianae Religionis by John Calvin

hand there are also quite a few historical sources that plead for another perception of Calvin's personality. John Piper describes the reaction of Calvin's contemporaries in his book *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy* in a very different way. "In his own day, even his brilliant contemporaries stood in awe of Calvin's grasp of the fullness of Scripture. At the 1541 Conference at Worms, Melancthon expressed that he was overwhelmed at Calvin's learning and called him simply *The Theologian*". In modern times T.H.L. Parker agrees and says: "Augustine and Luther were perhaps his superiors in creative thinking: Aquinas in philosophy: but in systematic theology Calvin stands supreme." So the question remains: Who was the real John Calvin? As is often the case, the truth probably lies somewhere in between. He was certainly a great thinker, who has contributed enormously so that the ideas of the Reformation were spread in many different ways. For example in his main work called *Institutio Christianae Religionis* he treats all the important theological subjects that one can think of. The first edition of the *Institutio* was published when he was only 27 years old and from then on he revised it several times. Still today this is one of the most recognized reformed dogmatic

schoolbooks which is frequently being quoted by modern theologians.

But John Calvin had an impact not only in the field of theology but also in political and social matters. As he was both a lawyer and a theologian he managed to combine these two domains in various ways. On one hand this becomes obvious in his strictly analytical and clear theological thinking on the other hand in the way that he approached civil matters. For example he fought for a fair relationship between Church and State and his views on law gave the justice system a solid ethical foundation. Besides this he



Calvin as a comic character

had a deep concern for the poor, which led him to reorganise the General Hospice. Generally it can be said that he brought concern for the poor back to its place in the life of the town. But perhaps his crowning achievement was the creation of the College and the Academy that offered quality education to all, without distinction. It is not exaggerating to say that this school concept shaped a dynamic society that was open to the world and to development. In many respects the city of Geneva benefited from Calvin's efforts and thoughts. The sociologist Max Weber even claimed that it was a Calvinist ethic and Calvinist ideas which influenced the

development of capitalism. This could explain why Geneva has become such a wealthy city. Since Weber's essay was published in 1904, it has been much debated whether this thesis is correct or not. Professor François Dermange, who is an expert on John Calvin, pointed out that there are various other reasons that led to Capitalism as we know it today and that Weber's arguments are quite partial. Still Calvin's openness towards giving credits to the poor might have helped the birth of Capitalism. These examples show how wide Calvin's influence has been, and that we might even be affected by his thoughts in ways which we would not necessarily expect.

After having discussed some of the positive achievements of John Calvin we also want to look at the downside of his character. Most severely he is criticised for his involvement in the execution of Michael Servetus. The Spanish theologian, physician, and humanist fled to Geneva after having boldly criticized Christian dogma, in particular the Holy Trinity. Arriving in Geneva Servetus attended one of Calvin's services where he was recognized and immediately arrested. It is challenging for us today to understand how such a faithful person like Calvin could have been so cruel in his judgment against a fellow theologian. There is no reason for defending Calvin's harsh reaction nor is there any explanation for it. Nevertheless before judging Calvin one should not forget that at the time it was considered to be within the law to condemn a heretic to death. Many people had to face this cruel reality and Calvin himself could only escape this fate by fleeing from France to Basel in 1535.

There is one other subject for which Calvin is often criticized. This is the

Calvin is often criticized. This is the doctrine of the so-called double predestination. According to this doctrine God elected some to salvation and the others to eternal damnation. Does this conviction of Calvin reveal another cruel side of



Reformers' wall in Geneva built in 1909. William Farel, John Calvin, Theodore de Bèze, John Knox.

him? Here again it would perhaps be unfair to judge someone's belief who lived in a century that is so unfamiliar to us. Concerning this particular doctrine one has to realize that Calvin was a strictly logical thinker. He pointed out that it is only a coherent consequence that if some people are meant to be saved, others must be predestined not to be elected for salvation.

Most likely if we really want to understand John Calvin we have to see him in his historical context and we should avoid judging him too quickly. Georg Plasger makes this point when he writes: "It is true that some of Calvin's characteristics will remain well-nigh foreign to the people of modern times. He is an ascetic who placed his whole life in the service of

the Reformation and therefore could take severe action. But we must endeavour to perceive a different picture". The website www.calvin09.org that has been set up by the SEK/FEPS (Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches) introduces us to this other Calvin. There you can find various theological articles but also some amusing details about his life, with answers to questions such as: "Did Calvin make jokes? Did Calvin have a nickname? Was Calvin lovesick?" After all, this year's rediscovery of John Calvin should also have a light side! May we all experience part of it by attending some of the Calvin Events be it at the Swiss Church in London or at any other Reformed Church all over the world.

Rev Nathalie Dürmüller

Calvin celebration events

Calvin and Capitalism

by Rev Dr Frank Jehle

Thursday 11 June 2009, doors open 6pm - Event starts 6.30pm

Swiss Embassy, 16-18 Montagu Place, London W1H 2BQ

This lecture will give a brief summary of Calvin's labours, to then address some more contemporary questions; in particular the possible relations between Calvinism and Capitalism will be explored further. Calvin was also a pioneer in what was later to be called "ecumenical dialogue". He established good links with the Church of England and its archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer.

BOOKING REQUIRED FOR THIS EVENT UNTIL 5 JUNE.

RSVP to info@swisschurchlondon.org.uk OR 020 7836 1418.



Rev Dr. F Jehle

Light and shadow of the reformation

by Dr Rinse H. Reeling Brouwer

Monday 28 September 2009, doors open 6.30pm - Event starts 7pm

Dutch Church in London, 7 Austin Friars, London EC2N 2HA

This lecture will among other things deal with the testimony Calvin himself gave in his two farewell speeches towards the end of his life in April 1564. He repeatedly showed his strong and his weak sides, and thus he left behind an ambivalent legacy for his successors. At the same time he realized that he himself could not give the final verdict on his own life and work and so he held on to his 'Theology of Hope' to the end. Perhaps that is the preeminent sense the Reformation has bestowed upon us and that still continues to give us something to ponder.



Dr R Brouwer

Interview

Interview with Albert and Elena Bertin



Being in the process of a complete renovation of the Swiss Church building involves also enquiring about the history of our church. Therefore I interviewed the two eldest members of the church: Albert and Elena Bertin. Albert has been a member of the Swiss Church London since 1929, he was only four years old by then. Elena was six years old when she joined the Sunday School in 1928. They both have seen a lot of changes in the history of the church. Naturally they have many fascinating stories to tell about the church and their members. Their family roots are based in Italy in a French speaking, Protestant community in Piemont. When their parents went to the Swiss Church for the first time her mother made it clear that they didn't have any connection with Switzerland. But Mr. Hoffmann, the minister at the time, responded: "Dans mon église il n'y a pas besoin de passport." ("In my church there is no need for a passport.") This is how it all started so that Albert and Elena Bertin are still today strongly attached members of the Swiss Church, who attend the Sunday services whenever possible. In total they have seen fifteen Ministers and Albert has written a list of all their names that he handles with a lot of care over the years. Both of them have contributed a lot to the Swiss Church. Albert served as a member of the Consistoire for twenty years and he was

and still is a historian of the church who helped people to find out about their family history linked to the church. Elena was a Sunday School Teacher for many years and she has also been the president of the group "la Causerie". They were both active members of the "Jeunesse", meeting at the church Monday evenings for talks, lectures, debates, etc. The group also organised two theatrical events at Kingsway Hall in 1952-53, the proceeds of which went to "Linton Flood Disasters Fund".

What was the Swiss Church in London like when you started going there?

Albert Bertin: The Church was very active at the time and the services were very well attended. There was a morning and an evening service every Sunday, at that time everything was held in French.

Elena Bertin: I remember how we attended Sunday School, we started at the age of four and six. There were so many children at the Sunday School, it is hard to imagine it nowadays. Once a year we had our outings and it used to be two double-decker busses full of children! We usually went to Surrey, not too far. That was always a very special event for us I shall never forget. Sunday School was quite different by then as we didn't have a lot of toys we heard Bible Stories and sang hymns from the hymn booklet called

"Pleine Voix". Each time we had to memorize a verse from the Bible for the next Sunday and then we got little stickers for our booklet. At the end of Sunday School we used to queue up in a line to put a coin into the missionary box.

What are your most precious memories of your time at the Swiss Church?

EB: I think for me it is when we were made honorary members. That was five or six years ago. That was a very special moment indeed. An older memory is of the time when I was a Sunday School teacher and the children performed their play at the Christmas family service. That was always a big event that I enjoyed so much. I also like to remember my time when I was the president of "la Causerie". In this group I have built up lots of friendships that I value very much.

AB: What comes into my mind first is that I met my wife Serenella at the "Groupe-ment de la Jeunesse de l'Eglise Suisse de Londres" in 1951. That is of course a very precious memory. The other one is that I was the first non Swiss person who was elected as a Consistoire Member on the 3rd June 1973. That was a big honor for me. I served 20 years as a Member of the Consistoire in the function of a Co-Treasurer.

Interview with Albert and Elena Bertin

Is there anything that shouldn't be forgotten about the history of the Swiss Church?

EB: There have been quite a few changes in the building structure. At the time there was no foyer in the front of the church. Also the pulpit was moved from the centre to the side after the fire of January 1930.

AB: Also there was no basement and we had only one toilet under the steps of the balcony. Until after the war we didn't even have a kitchen! The Church had a house in Bedford Square, the Foyer Suisse, where our meetings took place, small events, rehearsals, bazaar, etc. The house was damaged in the Blitz.

AB: Something else that I would like to mention is that the Swiss Church was only French speaking in the beginning. The German speaking Swiss started their own church in the city in 1924 and worshiped in various locations. Eventually they started using the Swiss Church building. At first they had their services in the morning from 10 -11 am and at 11.15 the French speaking service took place. And the next month it would be the other way round. But then it all became a bit complicated. So then the Consistoire decided that the services in German should take place in the evenings. My only godchild was baptized at an evening service in 1968!

EB: What is important to me is that during all those years and with all those changes the warm welcome was always there! We appreciated the services and I have always taken something away with me from the service.

Is there anything that you miss in the Swiss Church as it is today?

EB: Of course we regret that there are no longer services in French, but things



Christmas dinner in 1957 in the Swiss Church

change and there are not many French speaking parishioners at the Swiss Church any more.

AB: Talking about the German speaking services: Every Christmas the Swiss German Church had their own service one week before Christmas at their Church in the city. Our mother used to take us to those services and this is how we got to know some of the Swiss German Ministers. The last of those services that I attended was in 1938 but after that it all had to stop because of the war.

How do you feel about the renovation?

EB: Of course the church as we know it needed to be redecorated. But we have been used to that church for over 80 years, so to contemplate the planned big changes is not only an easy thing for us. Our personal feeling is that it didn't need such a big renovation. But we are very grateful that we have been able to be part of that church for so many years. Hopefully the renovation will help to have a better attendance of the church events and that the warm welcome and friendship will continue to be there.

Would you like to add anything else ?

AB: One thing that has changed quite a bit is the composition of the Consistoire: At the time when we started going to church it was virtually masculine. There were a lot of business men and Swiss representatives who were members of the Consistoire. Nowadays we have a lot of women contributing to the Swiss Church. Before the war the Swiss German Church had their own Consistoire, but afterwards they decided to have only one Consistoire. At the end of the forties they fixed on having only twelve members, six males and six females they also tried to even out the Swiss Romans and the Swiss Germans.

EB: This makes me think that once we had a "Conseil de Paroisse" which was a group of people that pointed out that it was wrong that only the Consistoire could take all the decisions concerning the church. There was communication between this Conseil and the Consistoire relating to matters concerning the Church.

EB: I also would like to add that we are both grateful for the warm welcome we have received and enjoy the privilege of being members of the Swiss Church for so many years.

Interview by Rev N. Dürmüller

Biblical quotation

“Je ne mettrai pas dehors celui qui vient à moi” (Jean 6,37b)

Our readers may be interested to hear the outcome to my article in the Winter 08 edition of the Swiss Church News inviting you to make comments on the biblical quotation in the apse.

There has not been much response but quite a few parishioners who commented on the matter to me or discussed it with Nathalie Dürmüller felt that they were happy with the present quotation and liked it. I would like to thank Dorothea Chiverton for her suggestions which she had kindly submitted.

With the colouring scheme and other

details of the renovation project having to be decided in the near future we will have the present biblical saying incorporated as it is no doubt the wish of everyone concerned.

There is, however, still room for one or two quotations to be placed at the exit of the church. It is suggested that these are either in German and/or English. May I invite you once more to send your suggestions as soon as possible to the address on the right for the consideration of the spiritual study group.

Rose-Marie Breitenstein

Please send your suggestion to:

info@swisschurchlondon.org.uk

or

Swiss Church in London
79 Endell Street
London WC2H 9DY

(marked “Biblical quotation”)



Bible at the top of the Swiss Church building

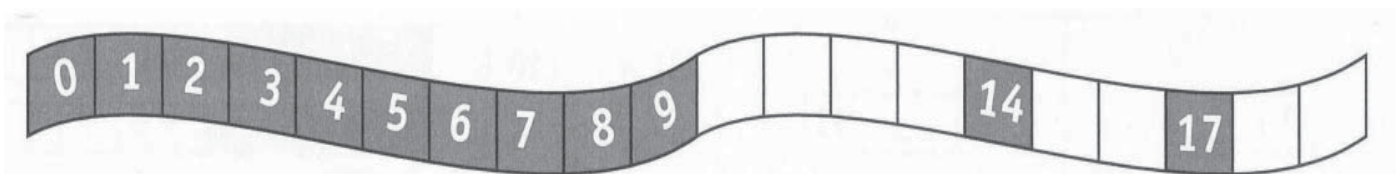
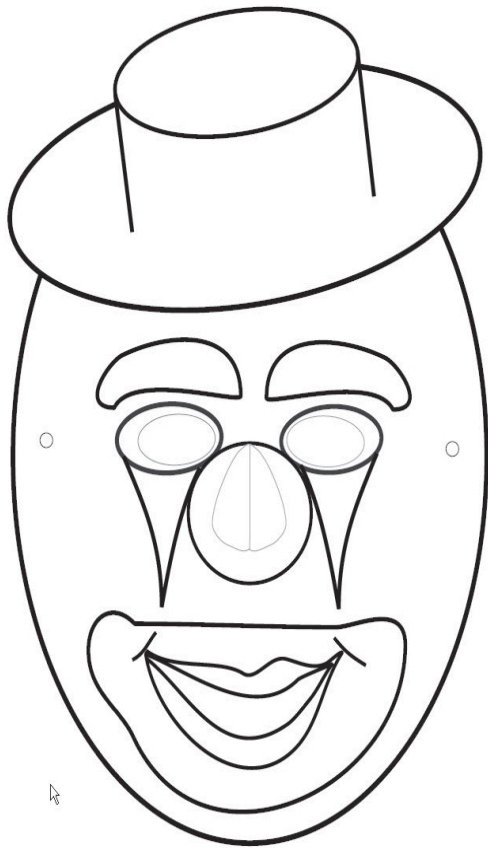
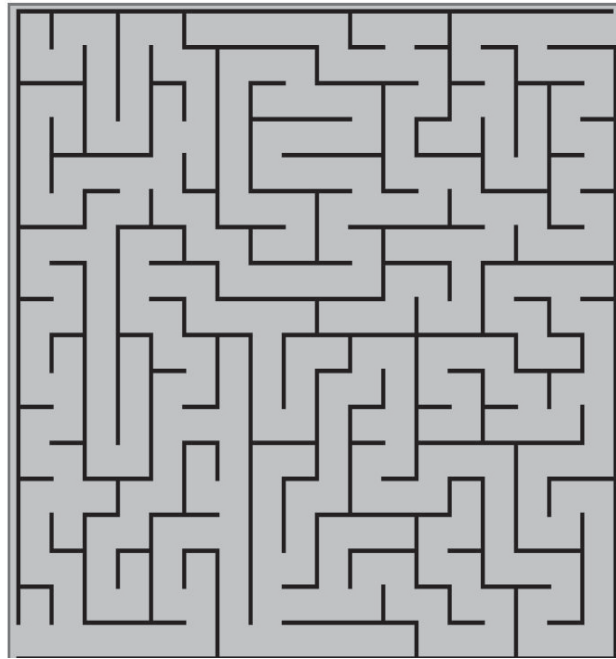
Rooms to let in well kept family house near Manor House, North London

The house is easy to reach by the Piccadilly Line within zones 1-2. There is a kitchen and a dining room to share.

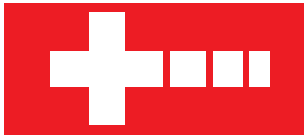
The rent for a room is between £80 and £90 per week. Short stays for BB are possible for £20 per night.

For more information please call: 0044 (0)20 8800 8281.

Kids Corner



Swiss Church in London
Eglise suisse de Londres
Schweizerkirche in London
Chiesa Svizzera a Londra
Baselgia svizra a Londra



How to find us at the Dutch Church

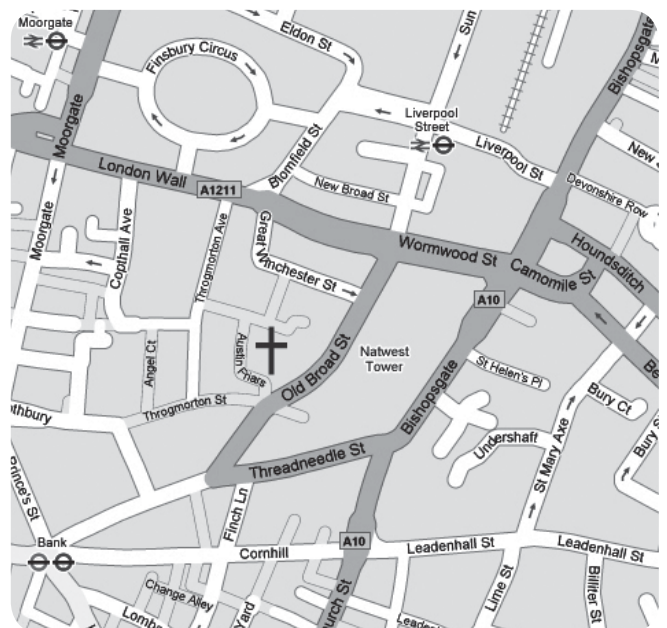
From Bank Station

Exit 2 staircase left side.
Follow Threadneedle Street (along Bank of England).
Take second road on left Old Broad Street
Turn left into Austin Friars (under the arch) and follow path.
The Church entrance is on the right after the bend.

From Liverpool Street Station

Take exit marked "Old Broad Street" leading into Old Broad Street (open during rush hour only) Otherwise take exit opposite station platforms 1, 2, 3 (short escalator)
Follow Old Broad Street on your right.
Straight forward at traffic lights (London Wall)
Turn right into Pinners Passage (opposite glass tower block) which leads into Austin Friars. The Church is on your left.

The stop for buses 11 (Victoria Station) and 23 is Great Winchester Street at the glass tower opposite Pinners Passage.



The Dutch Church
7 Austin Friars (off Old Broad Street)
London EC2N 2HA