



GENEVALUTHERAN

February 2011 Edition

Dear friends and members of our congregation,

Lent is approaching! This year it comes late. And it comes with the strength of a period inviting us to journey through the complexity of living and dying while searching for meaningful ways of encountering God, the other, and ourselves. Lent is a time for introspection, for thinking deeply about our actions or the lack thereof, for carefully examining our words and choosing others that will rebuild what we might have destroyed. It is a time for repentance and reconciliation, but also a time to discern how to “travel lighter”. The Worship Committee met recently in order to start the process of creating ideas for Lent. For those who are new to our community, it is important to know that Lent and Advent are seasons through which we journey together in worship and other spaces, such as the Neighborhood Groups.

This Lenten season, we will be invited to embark on a journey that considers how much life and death are intertwined. What are our wishes while living and when dying? Do we share our wishes with those around us? Do we talk about our wills early enough so family and friends know what we carry in our hearts and minds? And what about broken relationships? Isn't it better to reconcile while there is still time?

The idea is not to make this Lent a heavy season; on the contrary, it is to create the opportunity for us to think ahead of time and to act while life is plentiful.

For those who are in Geneva, I hope to see you on Ash Wednesday and to engage in worship with you throughout the entire season.

For those who are far away, we are able to journey together through our webpage, this newsletter, email exchanges and the spiritual exercises that we share.

May God bless you all,
Pastor Lusmarina

“Transformation”

Ignore the typos and forget the details; please tell me if the words and images in these posters speak to you – and how. In a nutshell, that is what Claudia Becker, the designer of our publicity windows in the rue de la Fontaine asked us and our friend Martin Weymann from the German congregation a few days ago. Claudia had just sent us her first draft for the next publicity campaign that will kick off in March and run until June, when our summer concerts will provide ample inspiration for a new campaign.

A few weeks earlier, we had done some brainstorming in Mortimer's, the restaurant right across from church (an activity which, we are now sure, is performed best over a pepper steak and a few glasses of local red wine, followed by two ‘boules de glace’ per person). Of course, we also looked for a way to incorporate Easter and the resurrection into the theme. But then we thought, isn't the idea of rebirth – if you allow us to paraphrase this biblical event this way – timeless? Shouldn't we look into that imaginary mirror and ask ourselves whether we are living our lives meaningfully more than just once a year at Easter? We should ask ourselves if we are living meaningfully in an individual sense – by being honest to ourselves, and in a collective sense – by contributing to the well being of the increasingly global community in which we live.

When Claudia emailed her design to us, she asked that we take “a short rest from your daily business for a few minutes” – a gentle reminder that we, too, could do with some ‘rebirth’. She explained that for her, the key word in this theme is ‘transformation’, a process that requires courage. Indeed, we all know that breaking with conventional wisdom or leaving behind baseless fears is not easy.

Claudia's words reminded us of a poem that we had just heard on World Radio Switzerland. It is called “Love after love”, by Derek Walcott:

*The time will come
when, with elation
you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your own mirror
and each will smile at the other's welcome,
and say, sit here. Eat.
You will love again the stranger who was your self.
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you
all your life, whom you ignored
for another, who knows you by heart.
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,
the photographs, the desperate notes,
peel your own image from the mirror.
Sit. Feast on your life.*

Dear fellow members of our congregation: with Claudia and Martin, we wish you all a happy rebirth ... and, if need be, inspiration can soon be found in our publicity windows!

Submitted by Ray Woodcock and Maarten Wilbers

Rendez-vous with John Evans-Klock

Our 'Rendez-vous' series features an interview with a member of our Congregation - for those who find our refreshment hour is just not long enough...!

When did you come to Geneva and why?

In 1996 Chris, my wife, got an offer from the ILO, and I followed.

What are three adjectives that describe who you are?

Open, bookish, subdued. Probably I don't resemble my friends, except maybe a love of learning and books.

From whom have you learned the most? What is it that you have learned from him/her/them?

It is hard to identify one great influence, but surely Chris has taught me the most – about believing strongly in family and causes, about planning ahead, about loyalty, lots of things, really.

Which traits do you appreciate in the opposite gender?

Caring about the world, strong views and the ability to express them, honesty.

What traits do you appreciate in our Congregation and our Sunday service?

I say every chance I get that our congregation is special, and very special to me. It is a spirit-filled church, and I love how people with very different perspectives work hard to find common mission. I love the thoughtfulness of our Sunday services, but also the joy.

Can you share a strong childhood memory? What did your Sundays look like in those days?

Being taught to swim by my father. Sundays were church in the morning, and church in the evening, but we often got an ice cream cone in between.

Where is the most beautiful landscape you can think of?

Well, the Alps are beautiful, but I grew up near the deserts of Southern California and so bare rocks and harsh ground are always the landscapes that touch me most deeply.

What would the perfect dinner be? The perfect dinner company?

Spicy cuisine. I must admit I most long for my boys, Cory and Jasper, as dinner company these days.

God? Prayer?

Difficult to comment on. Both are important to me. Both are difficult for me to explain (even after all those years of teaching church school).

When did you fall in love for the first time?

A girl with a great singing voice and a warm sense of humor, but it was never fated to last.

What's your greatest virtue? Your greatest vice?

I seem to have an easy time accepting and respecting others, and I am glad of that. My greatest vice may be enjoying the sound of my own voice, but Chris might list others ahead of that.

What's the best decision you've made so far?

Putting my family first. I have never regretted the time I was a "stay at home" dad, and wouldn't trade the time with my boys for anything.

At the highest summit: which painting? Which book? Which movie? What music?

Painting: maybe Van Gogh's "Potato Eaters".

Book: Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*

Movie: *It's a Wonderful Life*

Music: Leonard Cohen, "If it be your will." At least at the moment.

What was secondary school all about for you? And what did your country look like in those days?

Early 70s in California – drugs arriving, turmoil in the news, realizing the world was a complicated place.

What is your greatest fear?

Goodness. I think I repress my fears, by and large.

After secondary school, what was your next step? Did you have a 'master plan' for your future?

Plan? No! I aimed for the ministry, then for journalism, then for economist.

What did friendship and dating look like in those days?

My best friends have been from church and from debate. In one case, both. Going out has never been big for me, but I do like live theater.

If you could be Prime Minister for one day, what would you do? What's the point our leaders are missing? Is there hope for our world?

There is tremendous hope for the world, but lots of challenges to meet. It isn't the leaders I worry about as much as the people – so unwilling to share. Or even to face reality, sometimes.

What is Geneva for you?

I have to admit, Geneva has never been home for me. Somehow the transiency of expat life has seemed even more intense than the transiency of professionals in the US, but I suppose that is mainly the language gap.

How do you relax? What are the things that you intensely enjoy? Perfect happiness is... ?

Well, I have been posting on the internet a lot since Cory and Jasper left. Hiking is for deeper relaxation.

What is your motto in life? Where did it come from?

God doesn't want to end conversations, but to begin them. Came out of a conversation with Bill Strehlow, if I remember right.

Life... do you think you have figured it out at this point?

Not in the least. I like to think I collect bits of wisdom as I go, but I am surely not even close to figuring it out.

Announcements

We are all asked to pledge our time, talents and financial support to allow our church community to function smoothly, and to be able to donate funds to those in need. We have 28 pledges as of today. We need about 55 pledges, consistent giving from about 30 more individuals or families who do not make a formal pledge, as well as generous donations in the offering bags every Sunday in order to realize our budget. It really is a group effort to keep our church community financially stable. If you have decided to increase your pledge, and you have a standing order at a bank, please remember to increase the standing order, too! Thank you for considering how you will participate in this effort.

World Day of Prayer activities at the Ecumenical Center

- Thursday, 3 March, Bible Study 9h30 at the Open House, lead by Marietta Ruhland, who works at the World Council of Churches

- Friday, 4 March, Fundraising Bake sale, before and after the worship service
- Friday, 4 March, Worship service, 12h30 Ecumenical Center Chapel

Written by the women of Chile this year. Having endured devastating earthquakes the women of Chile encourage us to enter a process that draws us into the Bible, into the context of Chile and into the real situations of our lives and communities. How many loaves have you? What are your gifts? What can you share? These are questions we are asked to ponder as we reflect on the meaning of the theme “How Many Loaves Have You?” (Mark 6:38)

SIMPLYANEVENINGTOGETHER on Saturday 12 March at the Church. Cocktails at 19:00 hrs followed by dinner and world-class entertainment! Please help our planning: sign up after worship or by email: simplyaneveningtogether@gmail.com. Festive attire welcome; childcare available.

Worship in French at 18h00 Saturday, 5 March, in the cave voûtée, with Pasteur Hans-Christoph Askani, professeur à la Faculté de Théologie de Genève.

Jardin Montbrillant at 10h00 Saturday, 5 March (behind Gare Cornavin). It is our turn to cook and offer a hot lunch at the Soup Kitchen. Valerie Marinoni is the coordinator this month. <valeriemarinoni@hotmail.com> You can volunteer to help by adding your name to the sign-up sheet on the altar after the worship service.

Refreshment Rota for March

6 March: C (Meyrin, Vernier, Châtelaine, Lignon, etc.)

13 March: D (Grand-Saconnex and Petit-Saconnex)

20 March: E (Servette, Paquis, Vermont, Délices, etc.)

27 March: F (Centre-ville, Eaux-Vives, Jonction, Acacias, Carouge, etc.)