

Swiss Church

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THE SWISS CHURCH IN LONDON BI-CENTENARY APPEAL

The Swiss Church in London will celebrate the 200th anniversary of its foundation next month. This is an historical date for the Swiss Colony as, during this long stretch of time, the church has not only fulfilled a great spiritual ministry, but has also carried out administrative work in connection with Swiss citizens who have come to this country. In the early days the Swiss Government had no official representative, and the Church was then appointed to issue passports.

It also had charge of the social work for the Swiss in London who were in need, until in 1870 it was instrumental in forming the Swiss Benevolent Society. It took charge of many other services, such as Swiss House until 1926, and Foyer Suisse until 1942.

Between the two wars, and especially since the last war, the influx of young people from Switzerland has been on an increasing scale. It is estimated that the present number of young people of both sexes coming annually to this country is between 4,000 and 5,000. They stay here for up to twelve months, according to whether they attend schools or take up domestic or trainee posts.

While this is encouraging, the number of permanent residents who came here thirty to forty years ago has considerably declined through death or retirement. In 1939 the churches had the support of about 13,000 Swiss resident in the United Kingdom. Today this number is reduced to about 4,500, the average age of the respective compatriots being 60 years or more. Many have also moved to outlying districts, and visits to them, and to others who are in need of support, have greatly increased the financial burden of the ministers.

These factors — particularly the influx of young people on the one hand, and the reduction in permanent residents on the other — have rendered it more and more difficult to obtain adequate financial support in voluntary subscriptions to keep pace with rising costs and expenditure. In these circumstances it is hard to find money for much needed maintenance work on the church building, purchase of furniture and fittings for the young people's hall, renovations, etc., and to build up a most desirable reserve fund.

The Church Council therefore decided to make a Special Appeal on this historic occasion to all in Great Britain who might be willing to support its vital work.

Under the auspices of the Comité d'Honneur and Comité de Patronage of leading personalities, a Special Appeal has been organised in Switzerland, sponsored by the President of the Swiss Confederation, Mr. Paul Chaudet, and Federal Councillor F. T. Wahlen. It is hoped to raise a total fund of about S.Fr. 500,000.—. Donations in Switzerland are being received by Lombard, Odier & Cie., Bankers, Geneva.

Donations in the United Kingdom, remitted to the Swiss Bank Corporation, 99 Gresham Street, London, E.C.2, for account of the Swiss Church in London Special Account "Bi-Centenary Appeal", will be gratefully acknowledged.

On behalf of the Swiss Church, and its work for all our young Swiss people, the London Committee sincerely hopes that this Appeal will receive your wholehearted support.

Robert J. Keller, Hon. Treasurer.

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