

Annual protestant church assembly

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ANNUAL PROTESTANT CHURCH ASSEMBLY

The Swiss Protestant Church in London held its Annual Assembly on Sunday, 12th June. Members of the French and German-speaking parishes met at 10.15 for proceedings which lasted for an hour and were followed by a bilingual service. Ambassador Ernesto Thalmann and Madame Thalmann honoured the Congregation with their presence.

The Assembly was most efficiently chaired by Mr. Georg Gyssler, who has recently agreed to become President of the Consistoire, the Church's executive council, following the resignation of Mr. Jean Bader. In his Report, Mr. Gyssler referred to the continuing difficulties of the two parishes, which are faced with the special problems of being in London. He urged parishioners to support the Swiss Church and deplored the often dismal attendance on Sundays. He recalled that, on occasion, our ministers had spoken to congregations of two people only. But he stressed that the Consistoire had decided to spare no efforts in reviving the church and in particular the activities of the young.

Referring to the situation of our ministers, he said that after an unsettled period, the French-speaking parish now had a permanent minister, the Rev. Frank Orna-Ornstein. Mr. Gyssler also praised the work done by Pastor Paul Jungi, of the German-speaking parish, but brought sad surprise by announcing that Paul Jungi, who has not been with us for much more than a year after succeeding Uli Stefan, had informed him of his wish to return to Switzerland next year. Mr. Gyssler explained that the reasons for this premature return were personal and tied to the health of Mrs. Jungi.

In explaining the Accounts, Mr. Raymond Oggier, the Honorary Treasurer, showed how much the Swiss Church depended on help from Switzerland. Running the Church involved in 1976 an expenditure of £15,355. This figure included the salaries of the ministers and community workers, organists, visiting preachers, and expenses. But the main individual items of expenditure were connected with the important repairs carried out at the presbyteries and the church. Expenditure on these repairs rose to nearly £4,000.

The Accounts contained in the Annual Report sent to parishioners show the Church's reliance on financial support on the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches. The Federation gave us £4,172 last year. Support from former members of the church now living in Switzerland increased considerably in 1976 to £2,341 while support from parishioners in Britain fell to £1,738. Sunday Collections fell from £853 in 1975 to £648 last year. All

this obviously reflects the growing material difficulties of people living in this country and the strength of the Swiss Franc versus the pound.

Another major source of income last year was the Bazaar whose net proceeds totalled £2,749. Yet the Accounts closed with a whopping deficit of £4,653 which, presumably, will be met from the Church bi-centenary fund.

Reports on parish activities were then presented by Mr. P. M. Béguin and Mrs. N. Towers. In her report, Mrs. Towers dwelt on the many successful outings of the Mother's Group and her account brought another proof of the excellence and value of this institution started by Pastor Marcel Dietler.

Service was conducted by the Revs. Paul Jungi, Orna-Ornstein, and Alexandre Nicod, who was minister of the French-speaking parish for eight years until 1972. He is now pastor of the village of Lavey, on the border between the Cantons of Valais and Vaud in the Rhône Valley. It was a great pleasure for his former parishioners to see him and his wife.

The Rev. Nicod, who farmed in the Broie Valley before "receiving the call", had no difficulty in finding glowing expressions and adequate metaphors drawn from the land to develop the theme of his sermon which centred on the "harvest" to which the disciples of Christ are called in a passage from the Gospel by John.

He said that this "harvest" had already begun and was continuing. One need only see all the assemblies of men and women responding across the world to the Word of God. The Rev. Nicod made particular reference to a vast gathering of young Christians in Lausanne and a march to the well known religious community of Thesée, towards which more than 10,000 people converged.

Pastor Jungi, who next rose to the pulpit, developed a rather similar theme taken from a passage in St. Luke describing how the disciples, sent for the first time on the field by their Master, returned marvelling at the miracles and great deeds they had been able to achieve in the name of Christ. Pastor Jungi said that this passage showed how Christians really committed to their Saviour, and allowing Him to carry out His purpose, could achieve equally great things.

Communion service was conducted by the Rev. Orna-Ornstein. As the church was almost full, the communicants successively formed two large semi-circles round the Altar. After Service, a great part of the congregation remained to enjoy an excellent cold buffet prepared by the ladies of the French-speaking parish.

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