

Chaplaincy Profile

St Ursula's Church Berne Switzerland

October 2007

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Our Mission Statement:

To know Christ and to make Christ known.

1. Overview

St Ursula's is one of the nine Church of England chaplaincies in Switzerland. Our nearest Anglican neighbours are Zurich and Basle to the north and east, and Vevey and Lausanne on Lake Geneva.

We are looking forward to a new chaplain to walk with us, embracing the diverse cultural richness that exists here, strengthening the church body in worship, teaching, prayer and Christian fellowship. We feel that our priorities can best be expressed by summarizing our strengths and what we perceive as our challenges.

1.1 Strengths

The church family are from a rich diversity of backgrounds, with differences of culture, denomination, age, race and attitude to faith. We give a warm welcome to all who come, with a genuine openness and respect towards newcomers and new cultures.

Many lay people are highly committed, with a deep love for the Lord, and are willing to work and take on responsibilities within the church.

We have a strong Junior Church programme with committed teachers and families.

There is strong commitment both through prayer and financially to charity and missions led by an active team of volunteers.

With the measures taken recently we stand on a sound financial footing and are able to plan creatively for the future. Our church buildings are in good condition and we have effective administrative and other assistance.

1.2 Challenges

Our diversity of backgrounds makes for diversity in views and expectations about worship, ministry and pastoral care. This is a particular challenge with an expatriate community, who may have strong opinions, and who may expect their church to be "like church at home". Strong leadership and inclusive churchmanship are needed to ensure unity and a common direction. We have a multitude of ideas and energy, but lack a common goal and vision.

Many members are scattered across the greater region of Berne, with key people not living nearby. This can lead to problems in organizing and coordinating church activities. Moreover, as well as Berne, we also minister to smaller congregations in Thun and Neuchâtel.

We urgently need to develop a youth programme (possibly taking on a youth worker) - our 13+s are leaving an active Junior Church experience to find little or nothing to help them grow and mature in their personal faith. Youth work has been identified as a priority both by council and by the congregation as a whole.

Space in the church is sometimes limited, and we need to find a constructive way forward.

We have a good number and variety of housegroups which we would like to maintain and perhaps even expand. Currently they operate independently and could benefit from support and coordination.

Encouraging and developing a well rounded music group not dominated by one preference or another is essential. Many musicians of varying levels of proficiency are available, but we lack a leader willing to coordinate different styles of music.

2. History

With the advent of tourism in the 19th century, increasing numbers of English and American visitors passed through Switzerland. In the middle of the century, it was almost *de rigueur* for hotels to offer the services of an Anglican chaplain during the tourist seasons. Berne also had a diplomatic and a business community and, then as now, a substantial number of mixed marriages.

Regular Anglican services have been held in Berne since the 1830s. Soon afterwards, the Canton offered the English-speaking community land to build a church, but finance was not forthcoming. However, by the 1850s Berne had a full-time Anglican chaplain, financed at first by the hoteliers, for some years by the Colonial and Continental Church Society (now ICS), and from 1887 by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (now USPG). Throughout the 19th century, services took place in chapels, churches and schoolrooms in the city.

At the end of the century, the English-Berne Land Company developed the suburb of Kirchenfeld across the river from the city centre. In 1905, they offered a plot of land to build an “English and American Church”, and the present building was completed the following year and dedicated to St Ursula (the name alludes to the Bernese symbol, the bear). It had space for 100 worshippers. At times, especially during the two World Wars, congregations were far smaller, but in recent years the space has felt too confined, even with extra seating.

Until the 1950s, chaplains lodged in pensions or in rented accommodation. At the time of the Coronation, an appeal was launched to build the present church house and a spacious hall. The city council helped with architect’s plans and a loan. Though spacious, the hall was inadequate for the church’s needs, and thanks to a windfall grant from the Canton, a basement level was added in the mid-1990s, together with office and small group rooms at attic level.

Over the years, the church has enjoyed a variety of chaplains and congregations. Tourists have become a less significant part of our congregation, and the number of young and professional people has increased. Their wide range of backgrounds has proved a challenge to ministry here in the past, and hopefully also will prove an opportunity in the future.

3. Church Life

3.1 Church Family

St Ursula's has a long tradition of ministry to all English-speaking people in Berne and the surrounding area. We provide a home for Christians from many different denominations and cultural backgrounds.

However approximately half of our congregation do not have English as their mother tongue. We have a mixture of people with English as their main language, and many (particularly young people) who speak Swiss German – often heard in the hall and grounds during social times. Outside church life, a working knowledge of German would be helpful.

The largest single group is the Swiss. They may be part of a family with an English-speaking spouse or parent, or they may have spent time abroad and wish to continue worshipping in English. There are significant numbers of British and Americans, and smaller numbers from Australia, New Zealand, Africa and Asia.

As Berne is the federal capital, many diplomats attend St Ursula's. They are part of a transient community, together with professional and administrative staff working for international and local firms. This results in a noticeable turnover in the church community over time.

Most permanent or semi-permanent residents send their children to local (German-speaking) schools. There are also an International School and a British School for children of all nationalities, which are favoured by families staying temporarily.

There are a number of university students here on exchange programmes, as well as visiting professors.

There is a great range of ages. Compared to many Swiss Churches, St Ursula's has a high proportion of professionals between the ages of 30 and 50 with young or grown-up children. We also have a fair number of students and young adults. Perhaps a third of the congregation are families with young children, a third could be called middle-aged (perhaps with older children) and a third are retired. Members are spread across the canton of Berne and beyond, making a valid driving licence essential.

3.2 Staff and Ministerial Team

The ministerial team consists of the chaplain, a non-stipendiary honorary assistant chaplain and a lay reader. A retired archdeacon and a retired priest also live within the chaplaincy and can be called upon when needed.

St Ursula's employs two administrators who between them currently work 20 hours a week. They are responsible for maintaining schedules, ordering supplies, general coordination, preparing notice and service sheets and often form the first point of contact for outside callers.

We have a part-time caretaker in charge of odd jobs and maintenance in and around the church buildings for roughly one day a week. A cleaning lady is employed to clean the halls and church on Wednesdays.

Besides the paid staff, committed congregation members play a vital role in all aspects of church life.

3.3 Junior Church

The very active **Junior Church** meets weekly during the 10:00 worship service. Children begin worship together in church with their families. They then depart for their own age-appropriate teaching after the first 10-15 minutes. On Communion Sundays children return after the Peace in order to share in the Eucharistic meal. A team of fourteen dedicated volunteers does the teaching.

There are currently four groups:

- Sparklers ages 3-5
- All Stars ages 6-8
- Trailblazers ages 9-11
- Pilots ages 12+

There are about 70 registered children. Class sizes usually vary from 6-12 children per class.

In addition to the teaching on Sundays, various activities are organized annually in order to teach the children to grow in their service to God and others. Tear Fund is actively supported through the weekly collection, bake sales, special church lunches prepared and served by the children etc. Fun activities such as picnics, bike rides and other outings are arranged from time to time – one of the favourites is the “Sleep-Over” at church.

There is a **crèche** available to families with children 0-3 years of age during the 10:00 Sunday service.

Confirmation Classes for young people take place as required. The course lasts two years, meeting twice a month during the main service on Sunday mornings except during holiday times. The class is coordinated and led by lay people in cooperation with the chaplain. As well as the teaching, which is taken from a variety of sources, there are occasional social activities. Confirmation class members join Pilots when there is no confirmation class.

Coordination between the Junior Church leader, Confirmation leader and the Friday Night Bible Study children’s programme coordinator is excellent and enables growth and support of the young people until about 13 -14 years of age.

Unfortunately, we do not have a programme for older youth at the moment, but this is something that is urgently needed and should be developed.

3.4 Sunday Services

Our main Sunday service is at 10:00, and aims to combine traditional with modern, formal with informal styles, with differing emphasis through the month.

On the first, third and fifth Sundays this service is a sung *Common Worship* Eucharist (Order One, modern language). We use a setting commissioned for St Ursula’s centenary in 2006. Hymns and songs are from *Ancient and Modern New Standard* and from *Worship Today*. The organ plays a large part, while guitars, piano and other instruments normally lead the songs during communion. Children join in the opening worship and then depart for their own teaching until they return to share in the Eucharistic celebration. Children who have attended the communion preparation course are invited to take communion.

On the second Sunday of the month a less formal Service of the Word takes place. This service is often prepared by a team of lay persons in consultation with the chaplain. It is an opportunity to allow for alternative and less liturgical worship. Music, sketches, dance and commentaries have all been used in the past. The music group generally provide support, and singing is generally from *Worship Today*.

On the fourth Sunday the main service is *Common Worship* Morning Prayer (modern language), with organ, sung canticles, occasionally a psalm, and music mainly from *Ancient and Modern New Standard*.

On the second and fourth Sundays there is a said Eucharist service at 08:30, which has a quiet and intimate atmosphere. The alternative lectionary readings are used.

Some five or six services a year are devised as All-Age Worship, catering for young and old.

Lay persons participate in many aspects of all services, reading, leading the intercessions, serving at Communion and welcoming.

3.5 Activities

3.5.1 House and Study Groups

Seven house groups meet weekly or fortnightly in the Berne area, of varying sizes and types. They provide an opportunity for communal prayer and praise, Bible study, mutual support and encouragement and fellowship.

A church Bible study, open to all, meets at church on Friday evenings. The group begins by sharing a meal together after which there is singing and prayer followed by a time of Bible study. A children's programme takes place parallel to the Bible study time.

There is also a church-based Spiritual Classics reading and discussion group.

3.5.2 Prayer Meeting

There is a weekly day-time prayer meeting at church, attended by some three or four people.

3.5.3 Weekend Away

In August 2006 we held the first weekend away for the whole church family. This was a great success, which was repeated in 2007 and was equally successful. This could become an annual event.

3.5.4 Sales and Bazaar

There is a quarterly sale of English-language books and of British, American and Australian food, which brings outsiders to the church. At Christmas, this sale is incorporated into the Bazaar, which is an occasion for outreach, fun and fellowship.

3.5.5 Music

The music in regular Sunday Services includes hymn singing accompanied by the organ (a modern electronic instrument), and songs often accompanied by a music group with pianists, guitarists, flautists, violinists, other instrumentalists and singers. The singing by the congregation on the whole is very good.

The music group at present often leads the songs during communion and is usually involved in choosing and leading all the music for Services of the Word. It meets occasionally to practise and also to learn new songs for teaching the congregation.

There is also a choir of between 10 and 15 singers that is active on special occasions. The choir also participates at the annual Archdeaconry Choir Festival. They sing choral settings of the Communion service, motets, psalms and anthems. Practices are held on Saturday mornings when required.

3.5.6 Library and Bookstall

A well-used Christian library is open after the main Sunday service. It has a variety of spiritual reading and audio-visual material available for loan, as well as tapes of recent sermons.

Christian books for all ages and tastes are available for sale on a well-stocked bookstall in the church hall, where there is also a selection of appropriate cards.

3.5.7 Outreach

We have held two Alpha Courses over the past three years. Council have identified outreach as an area of priority for the future.

Bern Kids God's Kids (BKGK) is a day camp reaching out to children aged 4-12 in the Berne area. The camp is organised and run jointly by St Ursula's and the Bern International Evangelical Church and takes place at St Ursula's. The camp began in 2000 with about 30 children attending; in 2006 participation grew to over 70 children and some 25 adult volunteers. All children who are English-speaking or have English as a second language are welcomed to join. The aim of the week-long camp is to demonstrate and proclaim the love of Jesus by giving the children a compelling picture of Jesus and His Church through teaching, reinforced by games, crafts, singing, music and other activities. We desire to provide children with a way into the church and to foster bonds between children as well as with adults and Christ so that they can be part of our church community and family.

3.5.8 Charity and Mission

An active Charity and Mission team provide prayer support and information. We aim to have contact with many of the missionaries, who have addressed us during and after services, and whom members of the congregation have gone to visit. We give 10% of our pledged and donated income to charity and mission projects. Information about the charities we currently support can be found on our website.

In addition, the Junior Church collect money for and actively support a Tear Fund project.

3.5.9 Magazine and website

The church magazine appears ten times a year, and is distributed to some 450 addresses. It generally contains a variety of news and articles, running to some 30 pages, as well as advertisements which bring in added revenue.

The church also has a website, www.anglican.ch/berne, which aims to attract and inform.

3.5.10 Other Groups

A Patchwork group meets on Fridays. The group holds occasional exhibitions, and makes a significant contribution to the annual Bazaar.

The church hosts a number of other groups who regard St Ursula's as their home. Notable among these is a Parents and Tots group which meets on Wednesday mornings. Alcoholics Anonymous also meet weekly.

3.6 Finance

St Ursula's is financially self-supporting. For almost the last forty years, we have received no financial support from government sources, or from the Diocese, with the exception of grants for limited projects. Our total regular expenditure in 2006 was Fr372 341, or over Fr1000 a day, and in addition we spent Fr91 263 on building work, which was also paid for from our own resources.

Pledged giving by our congregation, donations and collections provide almost three-quarters of our regular income. Around a hundred families contribute amounts between Fr20 and several hundred francs a month through a pledge scheme. The rest of our income comes partly from book and food sales and our annual bazaar, and partly from contributions for the use of our premises by outside bodies.

There is a backbone of regular givers, but with a frequently-changing congregation, giving has fluctuated sharply in the past, as people's resources and their perception of our needs have changed. One result has been a reduction of our ministry team, by suppressing the post of paid assistant chaplain. This measure should ensure the soundness of our finances in coming years, and provide flexibility in deciding on future projects (perhaps financing another curate, or a youth worker).

The 2006 accounts may be viewed along with the 2007 AGM reports on our website.

3.7 Services in other Locations

3.7.1 Regular Services

Neuchâtel

We are formally the Chaplaincy of Berne with Neuchâtel. Neuchâtel is in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. The congregation there has its own Church Council and Wardens. They have regular services on the second and last Sundays of each month at 17:00, served by the Berne Chaplain or by a retired priest who lives locally. They also have their own Bible studies and social events. The attendance at their Carol Service is growing.

Thun is a daughter congregation of St Ursula's, which has grown from a house group. They meet every Thursday at 19:30, with the Eucharist celebrated on the first and third Thursday, and Bible studies on the second and fourth. (The fifth Thursday is for fellowship, discussion or out reach contact.)

3.7.2 Occasional Services

Göttibach Church, Thun

A Carol Service is served by the St Ursula's Chaplain, with participation by the local Old Catholic community.

Heiliggeist Church, Berne

December's Ecumenical Carol Service is a major event in Berne. It is led jointly by St Ursula's and the English-speaking Roman Catholic community.

Biel

An ecumenical Carol Service is held in English, German and French and attendance is growing. It is served from St Ursula's, with help from the Old Catholics.

Vevey

St Ursula's Chaplain is *ex officio* Chaplain to the British Ambassador, and as such, leads the Service of Remembrance at the War Memorial in Vevey.

Other

Hospital and home communion is administered when needed by the honorary assistant chaplain.

4. General Church Information

4.1 Numbers on the Electoral Roll and at Services

There are currently 106 members of the Electoral Roll. The Electoral Roll was completely renewed this year. In 2006 there were 136 members, remaining unchanged over many years since the number of people leaving is generally balanced by those arriving.

The church was originally built to seat 100 people. However we now have about 160 chairs. The church is comfortably full for the main service on most Sundays, which means that there are around 70 - 90 adults and 30 - 40 children. At Festivals, it can be full to overflowing. On the second and fourth Sundays, when the main service is not a Eucharist, there is a said Communion service at 08:30, which is normally attended by 5 - 15 adults.

4.2 Church buildings

St Ursula's lies some fifteen minutes' walk (less by tram) south-east of Berne's city centre, in the elegant 19th century suburb of Kirchenfeld. It is at the junction of a number of smaller roads at Jubiläumsplatz, half way along the busy Kirchenfeldstrasse. But it is a quiet location adjacent to the woods, which house a small zoo, and about 10 minutes' walk from the river Aare.

The church itself dates from 1906. There is a large hall, and an adjacent house for the chaplain. These date from 1960, and in 1993 the church hall was extended, with a basement level added. Over the last few years the roofs have been brought up to new insulation standards, and all the buildings are in good condition.

The upper and lower halls can each be partitioned into two sections, with a large kitchen and toilets on ground level and a smaller kitchen as well as a shower / toilet in the lower hall. The upper and lower halls are also used for private functions when not in use by us.

Above the halls are two offices and a small meeting room.

The chaplain's house faces south, with a kitchen, living and dining room, a study and a visitor's toilet at ground level. Upstairs are three double bedrooms and a newly refitted bathroom as well as direct access to the offices. In the basement is a laundry room, a cellar with gravel floor and several smaller areas, one of which includes the heating system for all of the buildings.

4.3 Ecumenical relationships

The congregation makes St Ursula's very much a World Council of Churches in miniature – very few members come from a purely Anglican background, but they are bound together by an affection for our own style of teaching and worship and by their desire to worship God in the English language. There are two other churches in Berne that also hold services in English: the Bern International Evangelical Church (BIEC) and the Roman Catholic Church of St Nicholas of Flue (Bruder Klaus).

We maintain friendly relations with the Old Catholic community in Berne, though language and cultural differences mean that this is not significant at ground-root level. At a higher level we are members of the Berne Council of Churches (AKiB), who are active in supporting care for the disadvantaged, in particular the Passantenhilfe, offering assistance to vagrants and refugees. AKiB also organize the annual ecumenical service in Bern's Münster (always partly in English).

In addition the church offers hospitality to a large and active German-speaking free evangelical congregation (the Delta Church), as well as a number of small independent foreign congregations – a Russian ex-catacomb church, a free Ethiopian congregation and a group from Brazil, who use our premises when we do not require them. Scandinavian Lutherans hold occasional services as well.

There is scope for expanding our ecumenical activities, especially at congregational level, not only with other English-speaking churches, but also with the Swiss churches.

4.4 Diocese and Archdeaconry

Before 1980 St Ursula's came under the Church of England's jurisdiction of North and Central Europe, with the Bishop of Fulham and Gibraltar overseeing the life of our church. In 1980 the Diocese in Europe was set up, of which we are now part. Within this diocese we belong to the Archdeaconry of Switzerland.

The Archdeaconry Synod meets twice a year, and Chapter also meets twice. In addition to matters of common concern, there is an annual choir festival, rotating among the nine Swiss chaplaincies, an annual retreat, and SACEP, the Swiss Archdeaconry Christian Education Programme, which organises meetings and seminars some two or three times a year. Four lay members of St Ursula's attend Archdeaconry Synod, one of whom does so *ex officio* as a member of Diocesan Synod.

5. Living in Berne

Nestled in a bend of the River Aare lies the city of Berne, the capital city of Switzerland. It was founded in 1191 by Duke Berchtold of Zähringen. The medieval city remains almost completely intact and has been declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. It is the city of government and administration and where the foreign embassies are to be found. Businesses in the city are mostly in the service sector. There is also a university.

The population of Berne was 128 196 in May 2007, so it is quite a small city. The city council lays great emphasis on socially and environmentally friendly policies. As a result of this policy there is also an extremely efficient public transport system. It is a very pleasant and safe place to live, with low unemployment and a relatively low crime rate. It is also a cultural centre, with concerts, theatre, film and much more to suit all tastes.

Berne, with its many trees and gardens, has the feel of a country town. Nature is nearby: favourite activities in the summer are picnicking and hiking; and of course skiing in the winter. The rolling hills of the Emmental valley, renowned for its famous cheese, lie close at hand. Only a short train ride away are the glories of the Bernese Oberland.

6. Stipend and Expenses

The proposed stipend is in line with the current Archdeaconry guidelines. It is subject to tax and social security deductions: the latter are 6.05%, the former depend on the chaplain's family circumstances. In accordance with diocesan guidelines, housing and health insurance (not covering dental treatment) for chaplain and family are provided, as well as the normal expenses of office: telephone, postage, use of computer, etc. In addition, the church provides electricity, cable television, heating and contents insurance for the house. The church has a broadband wireless LAN.

The stipend compares favourably with professional salaries, and is similar to that paid by the other larger chaplaincies in Switzerland. While the Swiss describe their country as a "high-price island" and estimate their cost of living as some 20% higher than in the European Union, this does not apply across the board – while food is relatively expensive, some other items are cheaper than in England.

There is a church car (currently a Seat Toledo) available for official duties. The chaplain may use this privately on a mileage basis. The church also provides a half-fare card for use on public transport.

Local law requires that the chaplain is insured in a national occupational pension scheme. It is proposed that the chaplain will opt out of the Church of England Pension Scheme for the duration of service in Berne, and that St Ursula's will buy back into the scheme at the end of this period, using the proceeds of the local scheme and making good any shortfall, to ensure that the chaplain is not disadvantaged.

7. Chaplain's Profile

The council and congregation, in considering this appointment, have raised the following points. We realize that no one individual is likely to fulfil all of the points listed below. We trust that the Lord will send and equip our next chaplain with the necessary vision, strength and ability to enable St Ursula's to follow God's path for us in this time and place.

We are seeking someone

- with a deep love for Christ and his body the church, who will teach the church to worship, pray, and grow in their understanding of scripture, in love and in service.
- whose life is characterized by prayer.
- with a commitment to God's will as reflected in scripture.
- with at least five years' experience, preferably with some experience in an expatriate community.
- who understands the expectations, and is able to integrate the needs, of members of a congregation with a great diversity of backgrounds, denominations, and cultures.
- who leads worship that moves people from an experience of God's love to a life long desire to serve and glorify God in their lives.
- who is eager to spread God's word beyond the existing church community.
- who is a good shepherd, caring and humble, positive, approachable, a good communicator and an understanding listener.

We are seeking a leader

- who will develop a clear vision for our church
- with commitment to spiritual growth in all areas of individual and church life.
- who can enthuse and encourage others and delegate tasks efficiently and sensitively.
- with a sense of responsibility towards allocating their own time and the church's resources.
- who trusts in and relies on God to provide for the material and spiritual needs of the church.

We are seeking a teacher

- able to provide biblical teaching which addresses a wide range of needs in relevant daily application and supports small groups in their study of the Bible.
- who can nurture a relationship with Christ helping people to grow in and share their faith.
- who will encourage young people to learn more about Christ, to actively live out their love and enable them to grow to be more like Jesus.