

# L'Église sur la montagne

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**Nos activités en confinement**

*Église Réformée Arve-Mont Blanc*

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## **Editorial**

Proverbs 22:13 "The lazy person says: There is a lion outside! I will be killed in the streets!"

Since I discovered this proverb, I have made it a criterion for personally evaluating my thoughts. And I use it often in my preaching ...

Because yes, there is a lion outside ... far away perhaps, but it is still very much there despite all the efforts by us humans to eradicate these and other magnificent creatures. Yes, there is therefore a risk of encountering a lion on leaving your house ... a greater or lesser risk depending on where you live, but the risk is still very much present.

So rather stay at home, sheltered where it is safe ...

And this powerful mechanism that is fear, which allows us to react or not to react in the face of imminent danger, becomes the universal pretext for our laziness ... Since there are risks that still exist, it is much easier and less tiring if we do not expose ourselves to them.

You only have to remember, once the adrenaline has passed, how exhausted you are after brushing with great danger or having some sort of panic attack.

Today, it is not just lazy, but everyone who says: Watch out! There is a virus outside, if you go out, you will die, and worse, you will kill other people!

And here we have an entire population, people from every continent who, hearing that, conscientiously obey, persuaded to act in the best interests of their safety and that of others.

We have evacuated death from public space. Since the hygienic 19th century, there are very few places where the death knell still rings, and where the shops close in respect of passing funeral processions. Rare are the families with whom the dead person stays in the

home for a night or two going to the funeral home. We no longer see our dead. We are no longer confronted with death. In our ignorance of actual physical contact with death, we feel relatively secure and shielded. This of course turns to panic the moment we can no longer ignore the prospect of our own potential mortality.

Is this an expression universal laziness? This fear of being face-to-face with death? I do not know.

But I admit to being shocked by the effectiveness of the “staying safe” argument. Which could be applied to our whole life – even without viruses....

- If I cross a road, I risk being run over by a car (which puts my life in danger).
- If I cross a road I could cause an accident if an inattentive driver avoids me at the last moment (which puts the lives of others in danger).
- If I touch public handrails, door handles, shop shelves and so on, I risk getting a disease. Or transmitting one.
- If I meet a thug, I risk being attacked.
- If I see uncivil behaviour, I risk of becoming an aggressor.
- If I have a ski accident, my knee sprain may take the place of the emergency room stroke ...

I will spare you the exhaustive list of the possibility of risk that being outside exposes us to, because you will have well understood.

So, if I want to take as little risk as possible for myself and others, I will have to stay home. And if possible in a place with padded walls, without annoying family members who would risk upsetting me, or risk that I might upset them (the majority of violence against people in France is carried out in the home).... I would need only to drink treated water and eat boiled food.

Seriously, if we all did this, there would be far fewer deaths in our country ...

At least at first, because these are “premature deaths” that we would avoid. But we can never avoid death itself ... so in the end there will be as many deaths ... But how much less living?!! If we really try to guarantee our total security, our freedom itself will wholly disappear.

It was Benjamin Franklin who said: "Those who give up an essential freedom for buying a little temporary security deserves neither freedom nor security "

Because locked up, how to meet people, fall in love, get together, possibly creating a family and a home?

And locked up in couples, in families, how to bear each other all day every day?

By locking ourselves up, it is not death that we dodge, but it is the life that we flee from.

And why do we lock ourselves in? For fear of death ...which amounts to saying: do not live to avoid dying. What would almost be a Lapalissade funny, if it had not become a present reality.

So, we who are believers, who are confident in the Word of embodied blessing in Jesus, we who say we follow as a model a man who has been touching lepers, who has allowed himself to be arrested without defending himself, who accepted his own death for the benefit of others...We could put reflections on death back into public space as necessary to life (as a grain of wheat falls to the ground), on life as an amazingly good thing, on our

mortality in relation to the infinite promise. In order to cry out, proclaim, display this recurrent exhortation of Christ: Do not be afraid!!!

Romain Gavache, Pasteur



## WAITING

In his sermon on Palm Sunday, held on video conference on 5th April, Romain Gavache reflected on the behaviour of Jesus during his entry into Jerusalem. Unlike the crowd, who were shouting and celebrating the arrival of this man of whom they had heard so much, Jesus stayed calm.

‘Not a look, not a word, not a gesture. Jesus is the only one not to fall in with the mood of the crowd, maybe the only one not to realise that all these cries are for him, as are all the palms waving in the air.’

Romain continued :

‘We often talk of the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, but the Gospel of John does not emphasise this triumph; what is important for him is not the story of the donkey, or the clothes and the tree branches laid on the road; what is important for John is the direction in which Jesus is looking, towards the week that is coming.’

From this moment on, the life of Jesus changes. Up until then he was very active; he travelled from town to town, he healed the sick, he spoke to the crowds. He talked with the Pharisees and the disciples, told numerous parables, and explained the reasons for his

actions. He never stopped teaching, talking of his Father, and showing the love of his Father to all he met.

Now, this changes. From his arrival in Jerusalem, and especially after his arrest, he became passive: he accepted and permitted all that happened and all that others did without any active reaction or resistance. He didn't try to resist his arrest, nor defend his innocence, and when 'the chief priests accused him of many things', and 'Pilate asked him again, 'Have you no answer? .... 'But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.' (Mark 15: 3-5) Jesus waited, maybe anxious, but calm, quiet, patient.

A few weeks ago, our lives changed. Up until lockdown we too were often very active. With means of instant communication, we ran here and there, always wanting to be in the process of doing something, in the process of producing something, in the process of organising our lives for the months and years ahead.

But now most of us have had to become passive. We can no longer run here and there, we can no longer work as before, we can no longer organise future activities. We don't know what is going to happen and when, we don't know when we will be able to meet with others, talk to others, eat with others. We don't know when we will have the right to travel and see our families, and it is hard not to know. Today we don't like waiting, we don't like being patient, we don't like not knowing.

During this time of lockdown, it is the time to follow Jesus in his Passion?  
In spite of our anxieties, can we stay calm, quiet, patient?  
Can we trust God with the future, whatever that may be?

Abigail Crofts, President of the Council

## **PRAYER**

### **The art of small steps**

prayer proposed for 8th April in the *Livre de prières*, Olivétan, 2008

Lord,  
I ask not for miracles or visions,  
but for the strength for today!  
Enable me to discern that which is essential  
and that which is secondary.  
I ask you for the strength, the self-control, and the capability,  
not to let myself be carried by life,  
but to organise wisely the course of the day.  
Help me to live and acknowledge as much as possible  
the present moment as the most important.

Enable me to recognise with clear vision  
that when life is full of difficulties and failures

they are moments in which to grow and to mature.  
Mould me into someone who is able  
to be alongside those who dwell at the base of life.

Give me not of that which I desire  
but of that which I need.  
Teach me the art of small steps!

### **Agenda**

While waiting to get exact details of how and when we can re-open places of worship, and above all, the possibilities of holding celebrations, we will continue to hold our daily Lectio Divina at 17h on Zoom, as well as our service every Sunday at 18h. If you would like to join us please email [romain.gavache@gmail.com](mailto:romain.gavache@gmail.com) to receive a link.

### **Our General Assembly**

Planned for the 22<sup>nd</sup> March, then the 19<sup>th</sup> April, it now seems best that we delay it until September. We will keep you informed of the precise date when we have more information about the "deconfinement".

### **Coronavirus, confinement and our church, the Protestant Church of Chamonix.**

Confinement: to be limited in movement, at this time, in our homes.

Church: comes from the Latin ecclesia, from the Greek ekklesia which means to assemble or gather together, it comes from the verb ekkaleo: which means to summon, to call outside; As you can see, obviously, church and confinement are totally contradictory.  
What can we do? We can act.

Our already widely dispersed Haute-Savoie community has been using the internet to solve the problem of not being able to meet up physically. Romain, our pastor, set up daily meetings at 17h for Lectio Divina. A Lectio Divina is the reading of a biblical text, listening in silence, trying to imagine the text afresh. Then listening again, and then finally discussing anything that arises in you from the text. We started with 4 or 5 people, and the group is growing daily! We can honestly feel a fraternal bond being created between us parishioners. At first, we used Skype, but now we use Zoom which is a little more user friendly. All the participants appear on the screen, we can see each other and chat! It is rather a lively gathering! We do the same thing for the Sunday service. The words and music for the songs are shared on screen and we can sing along together.

The daily meetings have allowed us to keep in touch with each other and share our news. It has built us up as a church, attentive to each other and making us a closer community. What is more, the regular reading of the bible together like this shows us that God can be alongside us in this "extraordinary" time.

And so the "eternal" word and our "modern" technology allow us to make up for the absence of the usual ways of connecting and have deepened our faith with a regular and rich exchange around these ancient texts.

A little something to make you smile:

"My God, my God I have such confidence in you that I want to call you Doctor" (Sempé)

CHRISTIAN VILLENAVE, CHURCH COUNCILLOR

## **SUMMER EVENTS**

The chapel in Argentière celebrates its centenary this year. Brainchild of Raoul Allier a Parisian professor of philosophy, who held conferences and spiritual meetings in the summer during World War I. This simple wooden chapel still stands after 100 years, a meeting place which is very much appreciated by the Protestants who holiday in Chamonix every year. It is also a peaceful haven for walkers and passers-by who enjoy the forests and walks around Argentière.

The conferences and debates that we will put on from August 7-9 this year will centre around Allier and his descendants. He was very invested in reflections on secularism, pacifism and faith, and his family continue this strong social commitment.

## **THE PROTESTANTS IN ARGENTIÈRE A FAMILY STORY...**

At the end of the 19th century, some French and Swiss Protestant families discovered the Chamonix valley, and in particular the village of Argentière. Amazed by this valley, they returned there regularly, and some built chalets there to be able to meet together in summer. They were the families Krug, Carmichaël, Seydoux, Schlumberger, Daechner ... some names that you can still see on mailboxes. Yvonne and Éveline Carmichaël having given their name to a route up the Aiguille des Pelerins.

In the summer of 1914, Roger ALLIER, an Alpine hunter, rented a house here to spend the holidays with his family. On Sunday August 2, he left by train with all the men of the village who were mobilized to join the Front. His family never received any news of what happened to him, and his father, Raoul, wrote in May 1915 to Désiré Charlet, Special Assistant to Argentière saying: I would like to know that our dear Argentière was not too badly affected by the war. As well as our son, we are looking for Arthur Ravanel who disappeared on the other side of Saint-Dié (...) If you are kind enough to write to me, I would be much obliged to know which families d 'Argentière have been affected by the war. (...) We would like to be hear news of all our friends from Argentière who are sad.

Raoul ALLIER returned every summer to Argentière, where he gathered many villagers around his war conferences. Meeting other Protestant families, he initiated a project to build a Protestant chapel in the village. He collected donations and have built it in 1920. A few months later, the presbytery was built, welcoming pastors and preachers who animated the spiritual life of the village in the summers which followed.

And a hundred years later, the chapel, still open in summer, offers a place of peace which is much appreciated by walkers, and the Sunday morning worship remains a very lively place of meeting and contemplation.

## REAL ESTATE PROJECTS

We have sent this information already to the members of the Church association for discussion at the AGM and for the vote on the decision to sell the Argentière presbytery. We were not intending to broach these projects before we got the opinions of all at the general assembly. However, because there is "talk" which needs clarification, it seemed important to us to present our reflections as they are, knowing that:

- for the moment, these are only reflections and studies. No decision has been made on the project.
- The financial implications are very big, but they correspond to internal changes in our fleet (sales / improvements / reconstructions). It is a way of making the most of what our ancestors left us, by increasing our possibilities of reception and witness, rather than letting this capital deteriorate by seeking only to preserve it (as the parable of the talents invites us to do. in Luke 19 ...)
- The only outside contribution that we seek is from the town hall, the project being to have a building capable of participating in local life.
- With the crisis we are experiencing, we are aware that we will probably have to review our ambitions, especially in the event of a fall in property values in Argentière. It could also be that we do not have the subsidies expected from the municipality, which must come first to help the inhabitants of the valley affected by the crisis.

## **RENOVATION OF THE TEMPLE OF CHAMONIX**

### **PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT & FINANCING PLAN**

#### **PLACES OF WORSHIP AND PRESBYTERIES**

Our parish currently has two churches and two presbyteries, in Argentière and Chamonix. Other goods have been sold recently: these include the church of Megève which needed major work and has been sold to an individual. Our community is now hosted by the Catholic Church in the town. The church of Saint-Gervais has been "given" to the town, though services are still held there in summer. The church in the Plateau d'Assy has been sold to individuals, and there is no longer a place of worship there. The ecumenical chapel of Flaine has been ceded to the town, there is also no of known community in Flaine. Services are also held in Cluses in property rented from the Catholic chaplaincy.

#### **The church in Chamonix**

It is an old Anglican church built around 1860 and located in the centre of Chamonix. It is a very popular tourist attraction during the holidays, and it is an ideal Protestant presence in the town. About 150 people can meet there, and it is surrounded by a pleasant and large, gently sloping garden.

Next to it is the presbytery, the pastor's place of residence. This house was built by "The Misses" (two women missionaries who lived in Chamonix in the early part of this century) to be a home. It was then refurbished on the plans of one of our architect parishioners, Mr. René Bouvier. It includes a public part with a meeting and worship room and the office of the Pastor, as well as pastoral accommodation.

#### **The temple of Argentière**

It was created in 1920 thanks to the philosophy professor R. Allier, all in wood with about 80 seats. It is wonderfully situated in a garden where there is also a large presbytery which welcomes pastors who come to help us with worship services in the summer.

#### **ERAMB ACTIVITIES**

In addition to the usual worship activities (worship, catechesis, Bible studies ...), our Church seeks to participate in the life of the community through social and cultural activities:

- ☐ Bilingual services: in Chamonix, services are celebrated alternately in English and French, and are systematically subtitled to allow the inclusion of all the community.
- ☐ ChamCats [Chamonix Carers and Tots]: weekly gathering of parents with babies for a time of meeting and sharing.
- ☐ Work with the social grocery store: festive meals for Christmas and Easter, setting up a shared vegetable garden for grocery beneficiaries, programming of solidarity concerts in the church.
- ☐ French conversation group: Noting that many foreigners have difficulty leaving English-speaking circles in Chamonix, we offer a weekly lunch where French is spoken. Without being a formal course, it is a moment of enrichment of the language.
- ☐ Organization of concerts, exhibitions, conferences around social issues at the temple of Chamonix.

For the sake of welcome and openness, we also welcome other activities organized by other communities:



- ☐ Reception of the Muslim community for Friday prayers, and every evening during Ramadan.
- ☐ Drawing, yoga, science lessons for children ...
- ☐ Choirs for their rehearsals

## **CONDITION of the BUILDINGS**

### *The church in Chamonix*

The exterior of the church is in good condition: the roof was redone 20 years ago, the walls show no major weaknesses.

The interior is more degraded: chipped walls, damaged floor, broken stained glass ...

The radiant chandelier heating system is very uncomfortable, and extremely energy-hungry.

The absence of insulation makes the building almost unusable in winter, except on special occasions.

The raised floor on both sides compared to the central aisle, and the solid furniture (around thirty benches) allow little modularity.

### *The temple of Argentière*

The exterior wooden walls would need major maintenance.

The roof was redone 6 years ago.

The interior is in fairly good condition, but very dark (absence of electric lighting, and fairly opaque windows).

It does not require urgent work and corresponds to its use (mainly worship services and exhibitions in summer).

### *The presbytery of Chamonix*

Including pastoral accommodation and a parish hall, it is in good condition. An important interior refreshment was carried out 4 years ago.

However, it is not insulated, and oil heating is very energy-consuming and polluting.

### *The presbytery of Argentière*

This house used to accommodate pastors on leave, and sometimes emergency accommodation, is in very bad condition: there is water infiltration through the roof, the carpentry is very damaged, electricity and plumbing are to be reviewed, it there is no insulation and most of the electric heaters have to be replaced.

## **REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS**

### *1. Renovation of the Chamonix temple*

Thinking about the relevance and use of its premises for ten years, the ERAMB Presbyteral Council considers this church as an exceptional place, by its architecture and its central location in a town like Chamonix. In summer it attracts around 100 people a day, and more people take advantage of the calm and the garden.

The wish of the Council would be to be able to use it all year round, and with greater modularity.

Also aware of the ecological challenges in the Arve valley, the council sought the most responsible insulation and heating solutions possible, avoiding fossil fuels and polluting materials.

Technical studies were carried out in 2019 to be able to insulate and heat it, and an architect's study (before summary project) is underway for the interior design (in particular adding accessible sanitary facilities for disabled people, mobile furniture and technical equipment to host concerts and screenings).

We plan to start insulation work as soon as possible (interior insulation of thermo-stone walls, installation of an underfloor heating system in an insulating slab, and insulation of the vault from above).

For heating, we chose a geothermal system by drilling, which, after studies, appears to be the most ecological and economical solution for use.

### *2. Renovation and transformation of the Chamonix presbytery*

Although comfortable, the presbytery of Chamonix would need major insulation work, as well as a new heating system (by being connected with the geothermal system planned for the church).

The current public part (kitchenette, parish hall, WC, entrance and pastor's office) will be transformed into accommodation of around 50 square meters to replace the lack of accommodation created by the sale of the Argentière presbytery. According to current regulations, the creation of a new home requires the provision of a covered garage. The latter will be built next to the current garage.

### *3. Construction of a new parish building in Chamonix.*

A new building of approximately 100 square meters will be built behind of the church, next to the old cemetery, near the SNCF station. We are planning a multi-purpose room of approximately 65 square meters, a pastor's office, a disabled toilet, a kitchen and storage space.

### *4. Sale of the Argentière presbytery*

The presbytery of Argentière represents too much work for our means, and also requires a lot of time and energy for its most current maintenance.

We therefore plan to sell it and develop new housing in the current volume of the Chamonix presbytery. The sale of the Argentière presbytery implies a division of the current plot because of course we want to keep the chapel.

## **FINANCING OF THE TEMPLE AND PRESBYTERY RENOVATION PROJECT AND THE CREATION OF A NEW CHAMONIX PARISH BUILDING**

Following the studies carried out, we opted for the most sustainable and energy-saving solutions for our Chamonix projects.

The first estimates following these studies and the specifications for the entire project give us a total amount of € 1,632,000 including tax.

This amount includes the costs of studies and fees, the insulation of buildings, the interior layout of the temple with the addition of sanitary facilities, the recovery of floors and walls and new furniture, the restoration of exteriors, the installation of a geothermal heating system for the three buildings, the transformation of part of the Chamonix presbytery into new housing, the addition of a closed garage and the creation of a new parish building. All the facilities have been designed to meet the needs of accessibility and comfort for disabled people, in particular with the installation of an acoustic loop, PRM sanitary facilities, a marked outdoor path.

1. The renovation of the Temple of Chamonix € 882,722.47

2. Renovation and transformation of the Presbytery € 389 587.50  
3. Creation of a new building € 360,000.00  
€ 1,632,309.97

We count on significant subsidies from the MAIRIE of Chamonix, as well as various other subsidies. We hope to receive 30% of the subsidies on the renovation and transformation project. The total amount of grants could reach € 347,924.99, rounded up to € 348,000.  
Total cost of operations including VAT € 1,632,000.-

Possible grants € 348,000.-

Total cost to us the Chamonix Church € 1,284,000.-

To be able to carry out this complete renovation of the site in order to ensure a more regular presence and to bear witness to the responsible energy commitments of the Church, we ask the National Council for authorization to dispose of the proceeds of sales made previously, which should amount to € 478,000.-

Sale Temple Plateau of Assy € 128 800.-

Sale Temple Megève € 310,000.-

Garages for sale Plateau d'Assy € 40,000.-

€ 478 800.-

Parish donation for technical studies € 10,000.-

Subtotal revenue € 488 800.-

In addition, we plan to put the Argentière presbytery on sale, which has been estimated to be worth around € 900,000.

Early sale presbytery of Argentière € 900,000.-

Total revenue € 1 388 800.-

The various recipes should allow us to cover the entire project while leaving a significant balance.

Total cost Reformed Church (reminder) € 1,284,000.-

Margin € 104 800.-