

Dear Zürich,

I'm back, and it feels like home.

I never wanted to leave. I rejoice in your sounds and rhythms even as I grieve the twenty-seven years that were stolen from us. My heart feels heavy for the time lost, yet full of hope for the days to come. I can stay here for the rest of my life now — I pray that's God's plan for our family.

The air is clean; the rhythms clear; the processes work. The cobblestones let the ground absorb water, and the angel flies in the train station. The fountains still run with drinking water, and the church bells resound through stone streets that have witnessed centuries of human history.

Zürich, I love the spaces you hold between things — the courtyards bursting with flowers, the pauses between trams, the light that glows in the clouds at dusk. I love how your storm winds cross the lake with sudden authority, and still your buildings stand unshaken. I feel safe in them, knowing the air we breathe will not harm our unborn.

A new acquaintance who also came from far away told me Zürich feels like a city from her childhood imagination, a place where everything works. Even as she faces illness, the city brings joy to her voice. When she asked what I love most, I said peace — a lightness unlike anywhere else.

Thank you, Zürich, for holding space for my family to walk your streets in truth and love, for allowing us — amidst all our differences — to share our values of faith, family, and modesty amidst a world weary with fear and division.

Each return teaches me something new about grace. This time it was the faithful goodness of our Heavenly Father, who provides even when prospects seem impossible. Praise Him for food, shelter, and work when we came with nothing. Praise Him for sustaining us when grief seemed endless.

We have seen devastation — floods, tornadoes, landlords who neglected homes until their toxins took the lives of our three unborn children. Yet you, Zürich, received us gently. Your trains arrived on time, your doors opened to meet our steps, as if you yourself were welcoming us home.

Here, mothers are paid during maternity leave. Workers are supported when jobs run out. Systems serve rather than fail those in need. Thank you for the families who entrusted us with their homes, for the quiet dignity of work that restores peace.

Thank you, too, for your elders who keep good traditions alive — like the old man sweeping leaves with his reed broom, quiet and sure, his tools made of natural materials. No plastic, no noise, only care. His gesture holds the heart of this place: simplicity that endures because it honors creation.

I delight in the symphony of languages on your trams — Italian, Turkish, Swiss German, French, English — all spoken at once, and somehow it works. Your trees, too, speak of intention, grown to shade those who walk beneath them. You planned for comfort before crisis, and it shows in every leaf.

And your fathers — so many of them pushing baby carriages through your parks and bridges — move me deeply. I have never seen such tenderness in motion. Strength and gentleness belong together, and you remind me that this is what family can look like.

The contrast between where we lived before and where we stand now is profound. There, floods ruined homes, and generations now breathe toxic air from water-damaged walls. Here, when a similar storm threatened, hundreds of engineers had already foreseen it. They guided the rivers, reinforced tunnels, and balanced reservoirs so no one was displaced. That is what true foresight and love of neighbor look like.

Yet, with adult eyes, I see your burdens too. Fear and greed have carved quiet distances into families and hearts. Even beauty, left untended, can grow weary. Still, I see the hunger for renewal — and I know just the artist to bring it: my husband. Now I understand more deeply why God made it clear he was to be mine — his candle proposal a promise that he would be a light. A light for our home, for children, and for those who have not yet known grace, peace, and joy. Please, Lord, protect him and help me to support him well in this calling.

In this city, I am finding my voice again — a voice shaped by both song and spirit, grief and grace. In my valleys of darkness I learned how to heal by listening: to water, to wind, to the stillness between bells. I want to share that healing with

others — through song, art, and the simple courage to breathe clean air and begin again.

The wind in your trees speaks like scripture — a breath both ancient and alive. The seasons turn with sacred precision: leaves color just as the air cools, the kite birds circling above the riverbanks, testifying that your ecosystems endure.

Living here feels like dwelling in a national park — grandeur held within human restraint. Mountains rise beyond the city's edge, and yet trams glide gently between mossed walls. Here, the ancient and modern coexist: stone buildings and glass doors that open for you as if by grace.

Zürich, you are a city that listens. You remember. You keep your promises in the way your fountains flow and your people still sweep their streets. You are our sanctuary — a place where beauty and function embrace rather than compete.

In your quiet order, I see a reflection of divine design — of what humanity can be when it honors both creation and Creator.

I pray I may stay here, to raise children who breathe clean air and know truth, who listen for the sound of wind in the trees and who love others well. To live in the peace of your rhythms and the mercy of God's provision.

Thank you, Zürich, for receiving us — not just into your streets, but into your steady, living heart.

With enduring gratitude,
Dr. Rebecca Lesan (née Autenried)