



The Chaplaincy of Aquitaine

The Anglican Church in
Dordogne, Gironde, Lot-et-Garonne & Gers

Synod Report - May 2017



Newly baptised members of the Eymet congregation

Nine months after arriving in South-West France, it is a hugely encouraging exercise to look back at all that has been happening in the Chaplaincy of Aquitaine. It is a tribute to the vitality and resilience of the Chaplaincy that the 12 months of vacancy were a time of continual growth and development. This has meant that, as the new Chaplain, I have been able to get settled remarkably quickly and have really enjoyed joining in with the many exciting things that are going on around the region.

Spiritual life has been enhanced by a wide variety of events throughout the year. There were two retreats - one for the whole chaplaincy in the peaceful surroundings of Belloc Abbey in the Pyrenees and a second, for women entitled 'The Prodigal Daughter'. The highlight of a well-attended Alpha Course was a Holy Spirit Day held at Echourgnac Abbey providing great encouragement and inspiration for all. Inspiration was also at the fore in the two musical events, a Chaplaincy Day at St-Avit-Sénieur and 'WorshipFest' held at the Elise Evangélique Libre in Bergerac.

The ministry in our 14 centres was wonderfully maintained by the ministry team lead admirably by the Chaplaincy Wardens and Rev'd Bramwell Bearcroft who stood in as interim Chaplain during the vacancy. During the year the team was also strengthened further by the licensing a two new Readers, Patrick Sturges and Michael Torne and by the presence of a series of locus chaplains at the church in Bordeaux. When my wife, Ingrid, and I arrived in August, we had the pleasure of hosting Bishop Robert for a splendid Licensing Service marking the start of what has proved to be an exciting and enlightening few months.



Licensing of Patrick Sturges as Reader at Synod in May 2016

Now looking forward there are certainly several challenges facing us but there are even more opportunities. A real desire throughout the Chaplaincy to reach out to the English-speaking community places us in a uniquely valuable position at a time when so many British ex-pats are feeling unsettled and unsure about the future in France. Our theme for the year of "Hold Fast" - inspired by Paul's words in 2 Thessalonians 2:15; "*So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings passed on to you ...*" - reminds us that the Gospel gives us a strong anchor even when things seem to be in turmoil all around us. We also have the joy of strong ecumenical links with our local French churches with regular meetings and events in conjunction with Roman Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical and Orthodox colleagues. I am convinced that is in this outward looking and inclusive attitude that the greatest strength of the Chaplaincy of Aquitaine lies. It is an honour and a privilege to play a part in this journey of faith.



In Christ,

15/7

Tony Lomas, Chaplain



Ecumenical celebration in Bordeaux during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity