

ST ALCUIN OF YORK IN TOURNAINE

2016—a momentous year

Preliminaries

With two worship centres (Tours, April 2014, and Savigny-en-Véron, October 2015) up and running, our attention turned to becoming a full part of the Diocese of Europe. A meeting was held in which the terms (such as accepting the bishop's authority and agreeing to use Church of England forms of worship) were unanimously agreed. A proto Chaplaincy Council was set up and an electoral roll was created. The annual meeting was held in April in the correct Church of England fashion and included passing resolutions to become an Association according to French law.

Having completed the preliminaries, we were informed that Bishop David would come on from the Archdeaconry of France Synod to inaugurate the chaplaincy officially, license Fr John as priest-in-charge and swear in the churchwardens, Deirdre Lewis and Barry Williams, at a Eucharist on 22nd May.

Inauguration



The visit of Bishop David was a great success, with both congregations coming together for a Eucharist at Tours. It was a truly ecumenical occasion with lessons (in French) being read by a representative of the Archbishop of Tours and the pastore of the Eglise Reformée. In his sermon, the bishop recalled the first establishment of the Church of England in Tours in 1816, 200 years ago, and our patron, whose Feast Day is on 20th May. He also encouraged us in mission which is not proselytism.

As well as licensing the priest-in-charge and swearing in the churchwardens, Bishop David presented crosses to our two new servers, Louis and Mérovée.

In the best French tradition, the service was followed by a vin d'honneur and many repaired to a local restaurant for lunch together.

Although the Eucharist was, naturally, the high point of Bishop David's visit, he had on the previous afternoon visited the Archbishop and recorded an interview with RCF Touraine.

Bureaucracy

Having officially become a Diocese in Europe chaplaincy, we turned to the French association formalities. We used the information provided by the diocese to make our submission, but, although the information needed was correct we hadn't been advised that the application should be made on the official forms.

Once duly registered, CAVIMAC, which deals with health and pension contributions for clergy, pounced and demanded social security contributions in respect of our priest-in-charge far in excess of our total income. However, thanks to the hard work of our Treasurer, Roger Lewis, and the aid of the Revd Olaf Eriksson, the diocese's representative on the board of CAVIMAC, we were saved from this crippling expense: the end result was that no contributions are due as Fr John is a volunteer and entitled to health care under EU rules. What will happen in the future will depend on Brexit negotiations.

Daily life

Worship

We celebrate the Eucharist at 7.00 pm on the first Sunday of each month in Tours and at 11.00 am on the fourth Sunday at Savigny-en-Véron.

The core community in both places is very committed. Sadly, numbers at Tours are low, which owes much to the lateness of the service time, something we are determined to address. There are a number of children who attend at Savigny and a junior Liturgy of the Word has been established for them. At both places each celebration is normally followed by a 'verre d'amitié', local if possible.

At Tours music is provided by a young local organist, Alix Devienne. His closing voluntaries – often improvisations – are avidly listened to and greeted with applause. We are also very well served at Savigny by Barry Williams who masters the church harmonium with great aplomb and no little effort on the pedals.

Apart from the inauguration Eucharist, a Harvest Thanksgiving was held at Savigny in September and three of our young people made their First Communion in November.



We were delighted that during the year the Revd Canon Joyce Jones, an incumbent in the Diocese of Leeds who visits the area frequently, was given permission to officiate in the chaplaincy.

On the Sunday before Christmas, a Carol Service was held in Beaumont-en-Véron, the church at Savigny not being available, which was attended by members of both congregations and attracted other local people, some French.

Publications

As well as service sheets for each celebration, we publish a quarterly news-letter AlcuinNews. A website (www.churchintouraine.org) was inaugurated at the end of 2015 by Roger Lewis who handed over the reins to its current manager, Peter Eggleton, in the middle of the year.

Chaplaincy Council



gathering to discuss



on the way to lunch

Our Chaplaincy Council . . .

The Chaplaincy Council met four times in 2016, three times in Tours and once in Chinon. The composition of the Council and the distances members have to travel make morning meetings more convenient. Membership of the Council is evenly divided between our two congregations and, by sharing lunch together after meetings, a real sense of common mission is developing.

Ecumenical and Interfaith Relationships

The Anglican community continues to participate in “*Chrétiens en Dialogue*” an ecumenical bi-monthly gathering of Church leaders in Tours; Fr John led the service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity; we took part in a “Creation Day” at Rougemont in the autumn; we continue to be listed as ecumenical partners in the Diocese of Tours’ *Annuaire* for 2016 - 2017; Fr John was asked to make an English translation of their “*Guide du Pèlerin*”, published to celebrate the 1700th anniversary of St Martin of Tours; and St Alcuin’s was featured in a number of broadcasts on RCF Touraine, the local Christian radio station.

Fr John is a member of the Interfaith Group in Tours and as such represented our community at a joint event at the Basilica of St Martin in January.

Mission

Our numbers are small and we are well aware of our need to grow. It was therefore decided by the Chaplaincy Council to embark on “telephone book evangelism” and send flyers to local people with English sounding names. We are indebted to our bank, Crédit Agricole, for providing us with hundreds of copies of our flyer completely free of charge.

Partners in the Gospel

This phrase is often used to mean people of Churches other than one’s own. However in this context it should be taken to mean all those, in both our churches, who work so hard to ensure that our common life runs smoothly, thus enhancing our Christian witness. A big thank you to you all who help to make up our community.

