

St John the Evangelist, St Raphael, Chaplaincy Report 2018

The congregation did a wonderful job of updating the Chaplaincy flat for our new chaplain, the Revd Dr Tom Wilson and his wife Professor Dawn Cornelio at the end of September. We began our journey in faith together with our new chaplain on the first Sunday of October, and then celebrated his official institution with a special Eucharistic service at the end of October with the Archdeacon of France, the Venerable Meurig Williams presiding. We had wonderful representation from both the chaplaincies along the Cote d'Azur as well as our a large number of ecumenical partners in St Raphael/Frejus.

December saw St John's us hosting the Riviera Anglican Churches annual Carol Service with great music sung with gusto. We also hosted our own Lessons and Carols Service that was very well attended. Time, and perhaps the Brexit situation meant that our Christmas Day service was less well attended than in the past, but we still celebrated the birth of our Lord and Saviour in a wonderful manner.

We have been trying some new ideas to build community. This has included two Film, Faith and Fellowship gatherings, where we view topical movies and strive to see gospel and religious themes in them. During the Lenten Season, we had both a tour of Frejus Cathedral and its cloisters, as well as two Lenten Study days related to how music is an integral part of our worship and can serve as an evangelistic tool as well. We also held an Ash Wednesday service as is our custom, but with a very small attendance and this may encourage us to try something different next year. We did have a fun and delicious Shrove Tuesday Luncheon and Quiz again this year with great participation. We have had good attendance at our Holy Week observances, including holding a Maundy Thursday service for the first time in a number of years that including the washing of hands for the first time, along with the stripping of the Altar in preparation for Good Friday. We observed Good Friday using the 7 Last Words Of Christ as our focus, and this year added the harsh, pounding of nails into a block of wood, to help us remember the horror humanity perpetrated on our Lord and Saviour, and of course then a glorious Easter Day Service with a larger attendance than we have had in a number of years

Ecumenically, we have participated each month in the Groupe Biblique Oecumenical (GBO) meetings, that are made up of representatives from some of the various denominations in the Frejus/St Raphael churches. We also had good congregational representation at the Week of Prayer of Christian Unity Service held in Frejus Cathedral. Our chaplain accompanied Archdeacon Williams to a luncheon meeting with the Roman Catholic Bishop of the Var (Toulon/Frejus) and established some good contacts that may bear fruit in the future.

As part of our outreach, we hosted a meeting with the deputy British Ambassador to France, Matthew Lodge sponsored by the British Association of the Var. It was a full house in the church that evening, and again, many attended who had never been in our church before.

We continue to provide outreach and support to Les Amis de Paola, providing food and a place to clean up for those living rough in Frejus/St Raphael. By rough estimate, we have provided over 150 kilos of food stuffs and personal toiletries since October. We are also supporting the Les Amis du Paola from our congregational funds with a cheque for €250 each quarter. We continue to support the micro-loans project in the Philippines which is permitting those less fortunate there, to improve their way of life. We are contributing €250 per quarter to this worthwhile endeavour. We have also supported Danielle Green, through both personal donations, as well as a very successful coffee morning, a UK teaching assistant in St Raphael this year, who, later this spring will be going on a three month mission to rural Cambodia, arranged by Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO).

Safeguarding has featured heavily in our congregation this year and while there has been some grumbling about it, it is part of modern church life to ensure no one is ever hurt again in our churches. Health and Safety, has also been central at St John's this last year. We have ensured that we have quick and easily accessible emergency exits from the church, and have even been able to designate a door for disabled access providing easy access. Insurance continues to be an issue, as we learned that our insurer, has now indicated outside groups using our building are not covered under our policy. This has meant that we have developed contracts for those using our church and requiring them to abide our Policies, as well as ensuring they have their own insurance cover. With this in mind, we have taken the St Raphael English Library back under the umbrella of St John's and therefore they are covered by the Church insurance. Even with the changing realities of the English speaking Christians in St Raphael/Frejus and the wider Var, we continue to provide both weekly worship, outreach and Christian education as we have done in years past.

Submitted by Revd Dr Tom Wilson, Chaplain