

# ST ALCUIN OF YORK IN TOURAINE

## THE YEAR IN VIEW: 2020



**A**S WITH ALL OTHER ASPECTS OF LIFE, THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC SEVERELY IMPACTED THE LIFE OF OUR COMMUNITIES IN 2020. For that reason you can relax: this report is shorter than usual! We hope the situation will be normal enough to resume the usual length next year.

The year began on a note of hope as three of our young people expressed a desire to be confirmed. The date of 22nd November, the Feast of Christ the King, was settled on and Bishop Robert agreed to come that day to preside at the Eucharist and celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation.

But then the virus reared its ugly head and we were plunged into lockdown. In Tours the last Eucharist was celebrated on 1st March and did not resume during the rest of the year. Subsequent curfews made our evening Eucharists impossible. At Savigny the first casualty was Mothering Sunday, which would have had major participation by our young people.

An imaginative scheme of food bank collections had been devised for Lent, though that had to be largely abandoned. However, our usual food bank donations were made following our September harvest thanksgiving.

During the lockdown, an Act of Worship was produced each week as well as material for the young people. These have now become regular features of our life, except the Sundays when we actually come together, and are also distributed by a local independent English-speaking Church.

Worship at Savigny was able to resume, following the guidance, at the end of June, when we were delighted to record 100% attendance, demonstrating that pdf is no substitute to receiving Holy Communion.

At that Eucharist we used the Common Worship 'Call to Discipleship and Presentation of Confirmation Candidates', which included the presentation to them of bibles: in French, of course, their first language. In later months we presented them with core texts again according to Common Worship. In this way we keep their preparation and confirmation as part of the life of our whole community.

We sadly lost one of the founder members of St Alcuin's during the spring lockdown. Under the regulations then in force, this meant the number of mourners at the funeral was strictly limited. So, as the funeral was a Church of England one, in the generous spirit of ecumenism which exists in this area, his widow decided to have a memorial Mass at a local English-speaking

Roman Catholic Church, in which Fr John took part and with the sermon preached by a Baptist pastor. Many of our community were present.

By the autumn, it was becoming clear that the prevalence of Covid was leading to the probability of there being more travel restrictions, particularly international. For this reason the Confirmation has been postponed until a later date. We ask you to hold our candidates and their families in your prayers in what is a particularly trying time for them.

Further casualties were our highly successful bi-lingual Carol Services, which have been held both in Tours and at Chinon. Among other things, this has meant that we have been unable to forge a relationship with the new curé at Chinon, whose predecessor was a good friend to St Alcuin's. However, with no actual Carol Service, the local radio station in Tours broadcast an interview on Christian Christmas traditions in Britain.

We continue to treat safeguarding with the utmost importance, and in the autumn Fr John, as acting safeguarding officer, completed the Level 2 training.

In sum, we have a very committed and loyal Christian community, many of whom travel long distances to worship with us. Journeys of up to an hour are not uncommon, and, just before the lockdown in March, we were pleased to welcome a new worshipper who had had to travel for nearly an hour and three quarters to reach us. Sadly Savigny is even further from her home.

We think it important to maintain a base at Tours, even though attendance there continues to be challenging. The awkwardness of the hour is a contributory factor: anglophones live in rural areas rather than the city, so are reluctant to travel at that time. It is to be noted that the core

congregation is not anglophone, who are there for Anglicanism rather than English-language worship. We need to reflect on this as we evolve policy for the future.

We thank God for his goodness to us for yet another year and pray for the grace to continue faithfully in his service.



Confirmands (with their mums) celebrating their Call to Discipleship