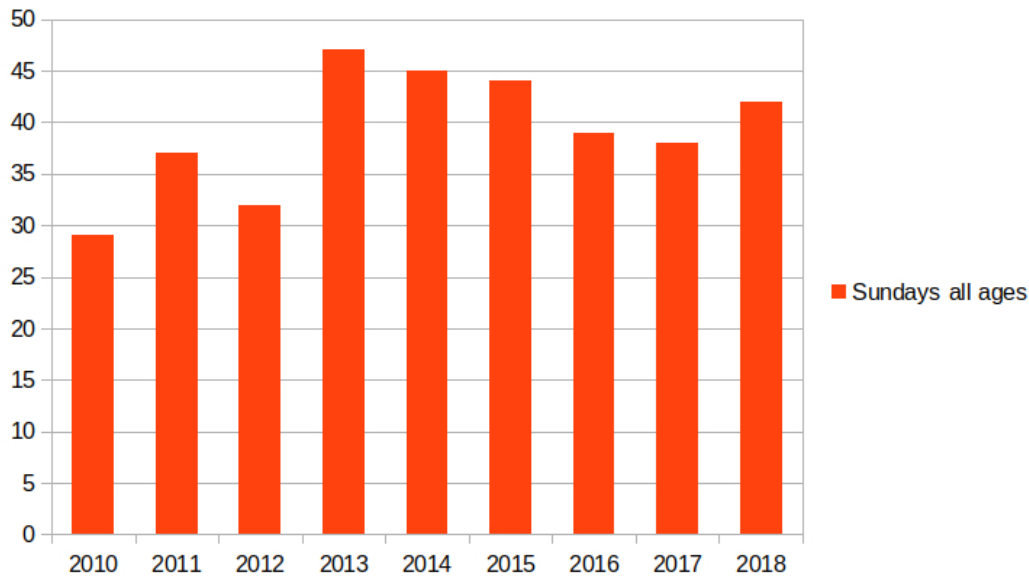


All Saints, Hérault: Chaplain's Report for 2018



I like spreadsheets and the chart above is my analysis of the average attendance at our Sunday services since records for the congregation began. The chaplaincy started in 2013 and you can see a gradual decline over its first five years. I'm sure that Brexit, or the threat of Brexit, had an influence on this.

So why did our numbers increase by 10% last year? I can find no obvious reason, except that we are probably getting better at publicity, particularly on the Internet, with our own website and outlets such as Languedoc Living. We had a record attendance of 76 on Easter Day 2018, but that only just pipped the 2017 figure of 75. Whatever the reason for the increase, it's great to have some good news for a change.

As I write, the UK, where many of us have strong connections, continues to pursue a divisive and damaging policy towards Europe. Personally I am fortunate, in that all four of my grandchildren are probably eligible to become European citizens and so live and work where they choose in Europe: but Britain seems to want to deny this freedom to most of its young people. I believe that our Christian faith requires us to build bridges between people, not walls.

It was very sad that Steven Hopkins was not recommended for ordination training by the Bishop's Advisory Panel in April. We all felt his pain. I know something of what it is like because the same thing happened to me at the first attempt. I encouraged Steven to test his vocation and so feel partly responsible for what he has gone through.

Julie Johnson is now a fully-fledged Reader and is already giving useful and competent service. I particularly value her preaching.

As it happens, my relicensing was delayed until November, when Julie was admitted as a Reader by Archdeacon Meurig. I am no longer your 'Priest-in-Charge' but your 'Chaplain'. I was licensed for three years, but what I said last year is still the case: I am happy to serve you until the beginning of 2021, God willing, and then will think again. Financial succession planning continues.

The electoral roll of 71 at the end of 2018 was our highest ever figure. Lent groups were again a great success. In our fairly large parish church in England we would have been over the moon to have had an average Lent group attendance of 13! I think we continue to provide 'unity in diversity' in our worship, which is essential considering that our 'parish' covers an area the size of Devon and our congregation is necessarily from a wide range of church backgrounds.

Thank you again to so many people who give freely of their time to keep our chaplaincy running, especially Patricia, Nigel, Francis, Andy, Jenny, Jac, Sue, Steven, Alison, Bobbie, Carol, Julie and Delia. Thank you everybody for your support to me personally: it really does mean a lot.

Onwards and upwards!

Roger Smith
Chaplain

February 2019