**ST MARC'S GRENOBLE - 2021 ARCHDEACONRY SYNOD REPORT**

2020 was our second year without a resident chaplain in Grenoble. We had been blessed with the ministries of several resident locums in 2019 and at the beginning of 2020 Peter Pimentel and his wife Sue were with us. They left, as scheduled, on March 16th, the very day President Macron announced the first lockdown.

Like many chaplaincies, we then went into a very steep learning curve, setting up services via Zoom and discovering both the blessings and the frustrations of using that particular technology to continue functioning. Our retired assistant chaplain, Alan Golton, and secretary Elizabeth Cherhal, did sterling work in organising online services, and we continued to enjoy sermons preached from afar by locums John Dinnen (Ireland), Chris Martin, Clifford Owen, Nick Finlay, Stuart Bell and Richard Venn (UK) and Ben Johnson-Frow (New Zealand!). Though we were saddened to lose contact with many of our members, who simply "vanished", we were delighted to have many past members and locums join in the online services, even from as far away as Australia.

Even when churches were reopened for services, we decided that in the absence of a resident chaplain and with several key members living far from Grenoble we preferred to continue "meeting" online. When the situation seemed to be improving after the summer, we resumed live services in September -October at the Ecumenical Centre we share with the local Catholic and Protestant communities but the second lockdown put an end to that once again. The only exception was our Carol service in December, which was attended by around 50 people and very much appreciated.

Keeping in contact has been a real challenge. Many of our members - particularly those from the very large Nigerian community - simply went off the radar completely. We decided to set up a WhatsApp group so that all those who use that app. receive regular news updates and details of online services, plus a daily Bible verse. We also held a phone-around campaign to check on members we had not heard from since the lockdown in March. Our Sunday school teachers organised short virtual classes for the children before Sunday services, and we kept up fortnightly midweek Bible studies via Zoom. Our PCC continued to meet each month and we were also able to hold our much-delayed AGM in October, again via Zoom.

Several young people from our church are involved with members of other Grenoble churches in an ecumenical group that has organised numerous praise and worship evenings at St Marc's. In spite of the difficulties in rehearsing, they were able to arrange another one in October; it was well attended and broadcast on the local Christian radio stations.

We continue to be actively involved in the many committees that run the Ecumenical Centre, along with fellow Christians from many different denominations.

In the autumn the Ecumenical Centre was approached by France2, which wanted to broadcast its weekly "Jour du Seigneur" programme from Grenoble during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January 2021. The multidenominational commission, of which we are a key member, decided to go along with this and after many weeks of online discussions and hard work, we were thrilled take part in the programme filmed on January 16th 2021 and broadcast the following Sunday throughout France.

Finally, after more than 2 years without a chaplain, we were delighted to receive an application from Nick Finlay, who had been our online locum in September. At the interview in November, our representatives, along with those from ICS and the diocese, all felt that he was the right person and so he was offered the job. The problem was, he was serving as locum in Sicily at the time and he and his wife Julia needed to get to Grenoble before the Brexit deadline in order to register for residency here. That meant not going back to the UK. Nick and his wife Julia arrived in Grenoble on Boxing Day with just a couple of suitcases and they were able to do all the necessary paperwork that week, Brexit and Covid-19 notwithstanding. We feel that God really took control and we are now looking forward to their ministry here as we resume Sunday services at St Marc's.