**ST MARC'S GRENOBLE - 2022 ARCHDEACONRY SYNOD REPORT**

2021 began with us welcoming our new chaplain Nick Finlay and his wife Julia, after an interregnum of over 2 years. They arrived from Sicily on Boxing Day 2020 just before Brexit became final and in the midst of the Covid restrictions. At the time we were still holding services via Zoom and in the absence of any in-person meetings it was extremely difficult for them to meet members of the congregation or even to get a feeling for life in Grenoble. And they were not able to go and collect their belongings from England until October!

A major event in January was the annual ecumenical service held during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. In the autumn of 2020 France2 TV approached St Marc's Ecumenical Centre, where we hold our own services, to see if it could broadcast its weekly "Jour du Seigneur" programme from there. The multi-denominational commission, of which we are a key member, accepted the offer and after many weeks of online discussions and hard work, the programme was filmed on January 16th 2021 and broadcast the following Sunday throughout France, with members of our church taking part. The production team said they were amazed by the level of interaction between the different churches here in Grenoble and the wide spectrum of churches involved. Nick was able to attend and meet some of the leaders of the other churches.

Nick was licensed on February 14th 2021. Due to the complexity of travel conditions at the time, our Lay Chair David Bailey was appointed as commissary by Bishop Robert to perform the licensing ceremony.

We returned to in-person services at the end of February, and it was a joy to be able to worship together once again in the same place, though for many months afterwards certain members preferred to carry on using Zoom. Because some of our congregation had simply "disappeared", each member of the PCC was assigned 5 people to call as a way of staying in touch.

We were able to organize a Lent course online, with small groups discussing passages from Scripture.

A notable feature of 2021 was the large number of baptisms of both children and adults, including 7 on Easter Sunday and a further 16 later in the year.

Right from the start Nick introduced a number of changes in the way we conduct our services, encouraging more people – especially our Nigerian members - to take part and help lead. At the same time, he made it a priority to rejuvenate our PCC, many members being well over 70 and not always in the best of health. The AGM in April saw several much younger people being voted on to the PCC, and in November we held a council away day to get to know one other better and seek God's guidance for the year ahead.

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 because of Covid, they were able to arrange another one in June, which was well attended.

An ongoing problem is our lack of teachers for the Sunday School. We have a growing number of children and simply cannot provide the teaching and support they need. With over 50% of our congregation being of African origin, there are potential helpers in the church but performing the necessary background checks is a complex issue and a challenge for our safeguarding officer. These issues need to be addressed urgently if our children's work is to flourish.

Another ongoing problem is that of our finances. Though we have a relatively large congregation compared with many chaplaincies, the majority of our members are Nigerian immigrants and asylum-seekers with little money.

We were pleased to welcome Bishop Robert and Archdeacon Peter to Grenoble on November 18th as part of their lightning tour around SE France. They processed into and around the church accompanied by a choir of Nigerian ladies. Several people from both Grenoble and Lyon were confirmed at the service that day.

Last but not least, we held our annual Carol Service for the first time on a Saturday afternoon – but once again because of the health restrictions we did not serve the usual mulled wine and mince pies!

Penny Vincent-Sweet & David Bailey
Archdeaconry Synod Representatives