**CHAPLAINCY REPORT 2020**

Well what a year 2020 was! Covid19 has turned the whole world upside down and even now in April 2021 we are still not sure what the future holds for our Chaplaincy. Lockdowns, attestations, restricted travel in France and beyond the borders, it felt at times a very isolated existence living in a new territory but as our theme for 2020 was Hebrews 12: 2 *“we kept our eyes on Jesus who initiates and perfects our faith.”*

Our faith was perfected as a Chaplaincy by all uniting and coming together under the umbrella of Zoom! Our thanks to our inspirational Chaplain and our previous Assistant Curate Charlotte Sullivan for creating “Church Online” from scratch which has been so well received and essential during and beyond this pandemic and gave us as a Chaplaincy the foundation for many other projects.

Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer 5 times a week, and a Sunday virtual Holy Communion followed by coffee and chat has helped us stay connected at these challenging times and last spring we were blessed with live services of Iona and Taize. Many thanks and congratulations to the numerous members of the “Church Online” team and the whole Chaplaincy clergy who stepped up to the plate, spending time learning how to make recordings, to help produce such vibrant ministry.

It was very disappointing that the Chaplaincy did not have a chance to hold a proper farewell service for Charlotte, but are glad that she has settled in nicely at Maisons-Laffitte, and thanks to technology, she is able to preach as a visiting minister with Church Online.

Unable to meet in person, we studied together online: Barrie Green took his Lent Course online studying the book “Saying Yes to Life” by Ruth Valerio. Then in May he and the Chaplain ran a virtual study course entitled “Future of the Church” looking at Acts 2: 42-47. The “Mission and Outreach” team led a virtual Advent Course, and then again ran a Lent Course on zoom entitled “Caring for Creation.” Throughout the Chaplaincy, small groups began meeting via zoom, in fact so many, that we had to subscribe to a 2nd zoom account!!

A virtual Men’s Breakfast was held last summer, initiated by Tim Heathfield and in January 2020 the Woman’s Retreat (entitled “Today I Choose Joy”) moved online, as were unable to gather in person at the monastery, and we are grateful for Amanda Alchorn’s support in making this possible. All of this has allowed us to study and pray together despite the distance and the environment has benefited from the reduced travel across the Chaplaincy.

We have seen our Communications improve over the last year, with the implementation of our new communications system “Chaplaincy Connect,”, which has equipped the Chaplain, priests, worship leaders, Council, and Local Committees with a clearer sense of “who is the flock of Aquitaine” whereby peoples contact details can now be easily accessed. Amy our Chaplaincy Administrator (we call her our girl Friday!!) has given time, patience and training over the past year with Chaplaincy Connect, equipping many throughout the Chaplaincy in using the system.

The Chaplaincy now has a podcast entitled “At Home with Faith”, thanks to Ingrid Lomas, who spent time producing three episodes – Home Groups, The Flavour of Advent and Zoom land which have bought a range of discussions from different members of our Chaplaincy. Last summer, inspired by the ICS prayer videos, the Chaplain also diversified by recording a Prayer & News Update each week, which has enabled him to stay in touch with the Chaplaincy and keep us all informed. Each week, a “Weekly Update” Bulletin is sent out, to keep everyone updated as to events.

Owing to our lack of physical church Services, we had to think outside the box to find ways to raise funds for the Chaplaincy and Chap-Aid charities. We used the 'Hello-Asso' platform to create an online donation page for the Chaplaincy, and using this platform Chap-Aid also created fundraising pages to collect donations for the Bishops Advent and Lent Appeals, and the Emergency Disaster Fund.

The Communications Team led by Gill Sweetman devised two Chaplaincy quizzes both won by the same people, which raised over €700 for the Chaplaincy. The Lot-et-Garonne held several online quizzes for the Chaplaincy and Chap-Aid funds.

Over the past year, we handled postponements, cancellations and confusion from 35 wedding couples and many wedding planners. Looking ahead to future weddings, Ingrid Lomas created a new weddings page of the website as last year the Chaplain only officiated one wedding and one renewal of wedding vows ceremony.

We had become more flexible, accommodating, patient, and compassionate as a Chaplaincy especially when we officiated at 21 funerals accompanying the families in their grieving with one being held in a car park. Our Chaplaincy gave rise to the power of prayer when the Reverend Louise Courtney became gravely ill with the Covid-19 virus praying in unity for her recovery and after 4months our prayers were answered, when Louise was finally allowed to return home.

Christmas 2020 became a very different celebration with only 189 people actually attending 14 services, as well as an outdoor Christmas Eve Carol Service in the village of Bertric Buree by torchlight.

As we write this report ready for the Chaplaincy AGM we are now in a further lockdown for a month!! We are fortunate to have celebrated Easter Services in our churches but as our theme for 2021 is **United in Faith** “1 Corinthians 12: 27 reads: *“All of you together are Christ's Body, and each of you is a part of it.”* We are truly thankful for the part each person has played in the life of our Chaplaincy, and pray the Lord will continue to bless his kingdom here in south west France.

Reverend Tony Lomas

Chaplain of Aquitaine