

2019 REPORT FROM ST MARC'S GRENOBLE CHAPLAINCY

This last year has been one of considerable change and has involved the Council and its officers in much work. This report is based on that by David Bailey, churchwarden, for our AGM.

Shortly before last year's AGM, Archdeacon Meurig Williams informed us that, in part because of our financial difficulties, Bishop Robert had decided to renew Bob Hurley's licence only until the end of 2018. The Council had hoped it would be renewed for longer. However Bob had said he and Jane could not live off the reduced stipend we were offering, and Bob finally announced in July that he would be leaving us at the beginning of September. Fortunately we were able to have a locum, Revd Canon Stuart Broughton, from mid-September until the end of October.

When the Hurleys left, the cost to us of their removal, £6000, not only depleted our reserves, it determined that in future we would offer a *furnished* apartment, which was also necessary to accommodate the locums we would need. Thanks to members of the congregation who contributed many items, some of which were bought, and to those who carried out repairs and cleaned, the apartment, which we own, was made liveable by the end of the year.

We have been blessed to have a series of locums since mid-January: Revd Michael Selman until the end of February; Revd Clifford Owen for part of March; Rt Revd Peter Lee in April; and Revd Chris Martin since then; all of these with their wives. They have all provided much support and wise advice: we have been helped to see our strengths and weaknesses!

Our strengths are: a congregation that has not decreased during this interregnum, but newcomers have joined; one in which many contribute their help: before, during and after services and in various other ways, including financial, to their ability; and making the church a welcoming place where visitors feel at home, and where some real caring takes place between members.

Our weaknesses partly reflect our composition (nearly 50% are African migrants with little resources) and that we are a widely scattered congregation. But we have still to overcome some of the cultural divides between us; fellowship outside of church services, for prayer and bible study, is only shared by a few; similarly, evangelistic outreach is not felt to be the church's *raison d'être*, except by a few, mostly women, who *are* active in this. We are also weak in the area of our children's work, which needs more to help, and better support from parents. We could do with new leadership that encourages and emboldens us in all these areas.

Archdeacon Meurig came to Grenoble in November, and Richard Bromley, CEO of our sponsor society, ICS, in December, to help us with the process of thinking about and advertising for a new chaplain. This entailed discussion of the package we could afford to offer; preparing a detailed profile of the church, and drawing up the actual advertisement to appear in the *Church Times*, in this present month. We are offering 'house for duty' with all expenses paid, but no stipend. We are trusting the Lord to provide for the needs of His church here: we pray for someone of vision whom He will call to minister to this diverse multinational, multicultural congregation, leading us to a closer fellowship with our Lord, a deeper love and commitment to Him, reaching out to the students and others in this lively, university city.

The safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults is rightly a priority of the Diocese, and we are appreciative that a 2nd stage course has been held recently in Lyon, which several of our church attended, along with others from the Lyon chaplaincy. We hope this course may be repeated there in the future.

St Marc's Ecumenical Centre, which we share as one of the three participating churches (the others being a Roman Catholic parish and a Protestant Reformed Church congregation) agreed to inaugurate a drop-in centre for the *quartier*, to be called *L'Escale* ('port of call') and opening next month. To this end one room in the Centre has been transformed into a comfortable and welcoming space, and the adjoining kitchen (which we also use) enlarged and fully re-equipped. Two of our members have already volunteered to be part of the team serving in this outreach. We were asked to contribute financially to this project, and were promised a grant of 6000 € by the Diocese for this, but we are still waiting for the payment to be made.

The above project is an example of how we may work more closely with the other churches that use St Marc's. In addition to two annual shared services (in French), members who are fluent in French, including David Bailey, have represented us on various committees that meet regularly at St Marc's, including the *Comité d'Animation*, which organises the programme of events held in the Centre, and the *Comité des Eglises Fondatrices*, which comprises the Centre's three founder-members.

We are very thankful for being able to use this Centre and its facilities; for our good relations with the other churches here; for our congregation's present unity and mutual support; for the willing contribution to our worship of our musicians and singers; the devoted work of our Treasurer, our Secretary and Wardens, and many other blessings. And, in my case, for strength and health to continue to lead services and preach, when this is needed.

Revd Alan V. Golton, Assistant

Chaplain.