

Christ Church in the Manche



Gratot Church

Synod Report 2019



Virey Church

As we come to the end of our 5th year in interregnum and the start of our 6th we remain positive about the future. With no sign of a new Priest in charge we have continued to minister amongst ourselves with the help of our two retired Priests, Chris Probert and David Jackson. Chris, along with Donna Derrick our Reader-in-Training, have taken on jointly the lead minister role at Gratot whilst David with his Reader wife Mary have taken the lead minister role at Virey. The last year has also seen the Revd's Martin Dryden from Jersey and Christine Smith from the UK helping us with services when they have time, a much-appreciated contribution. They will continue to do so as and when they can. We have also trained up a number of Worship Leaders in both Churches which is an obvious help and provides variety to our services.

Unfortunately with an ageing congregation our numbers have dropped, through both death and people returning to the UK. Brexit is also causing many members to review their situations here in France. This obviously has an impact on our finances and resources which is causing some concern. But on the up-side we have also welcomed new members of a slightly younger generation who are bringing new ideas and vitality to our Churches. The most recent being an Easter workshop of artistic floral decorations and displays. The culmination of which was the beautiful Easter Cross decorated with spring flowers. Something very new for our Easter celebrations.

The recently refurbished Ministry Office in the Presbytery at Gratot now has a permanence once a week when one of the Lead Ministers is in residence to take calls and visits from those needing to speak in private/confidence. It has also been the home of our recent Lent course run for the first time by the Reader-in-Training, Donna. With a subject matter of Living the Trinity and the Holy Spirit's role, it has proved to be a lively and interesting course, with Fr. Chris joining us via the wonders of modern technology – Skype. It is hoped that these Bible study days will continue throughout the year.

Also in the Presbytery we have an English Library open once a week and a coffee bar. This provides an important source of outreach and a chance for congregants to come together more than just once a week on a Sunday.



Christ Church in the Manche

Our small catering team have also instigated Soup lunch Sundays after communion services. This provides an important time of fellowship amongst our scattered congregation. These Sundays are looked forward to by all who enjoy them and certainly help to cement our fellowship. It is hoped to build on this during the coming year with Sunday afternoon teaching sessions on a range of liturgical, religious and pastoral subjects.

Our ecumenical involvement continues to grow with Donna acting as our ecumenical liaison officer. We have built up a good relationship with the Roman Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox and Evangelical churches in the department and are regularly invited to participate in ecumenical events as their 'Anglican sister'. The recent week of Christian Unity is also an example of that good relationship when the Bishop of Coutances and Avranches acted as duty driver giving Donna a lift to the service in the South of the department. As he said, it



made sense taking just one car instead of two. (A tiny step in reducing our carbon footprint!) This coming year will also see many ecumenical events commemorating the 75th anniversary of WWII, starting with the International March for Peace and Evening service at the end of May in Saint Mère Eglise, (with its famous airman hanging from the spire) at which we will be an active participant.

So, whilst our numbers may be somewhat down and we are battered by ill health in many quarters, we continue to be positive for the future. We are God's children and He will provide us with what we need when we need it. We will continue to minister amongst ourselves both liturgically and pastorally, until such time as a new Priest-in-charge feels drawn to this part of Normandy. But until then, we are determined not to be downhearted, and instead look forward to seeing what God will provide, and where He and the next year will take us.

Donna DERRICK
Reader-in-Training