

St John's Church Menton Report for Archdeaconry Synod 15-17 April 2021

This report goes up to 31 March 2021. In that time we have had no baptisms, no weddings and two funerals. In interregnum since April 2017 we have been very grateful for the help of Locum Chaplains. In December 2019 Revd Mica Pajunen arrived with his wife, Liina, from Finland, and stayed with us until end January 2020. On 25 January Archdeacon Meurig Williams made a two day visit to St John's, when he presided Sunday Eucharist and had a meeting with the Chaplaincy Council, later sending his report of comments and recommendations.

In February Revd David Houghton came from the UK to be our Locum. Everything was going very well until we suddenly found ourselves in lockdown from 15 March. During lockdown Suzanne Prince, our Secretary and Communications Officer, produced an on-line service each week and Fr David prepared a sermon. Fr David decided to return home while a flight was available but returned in July when we held our first Eucharist on 12 July 2020. He left again end September.

From October 2020 Revd Keith Bretel and Revd Chris Parkman travelled from their homes to take services, and Fr Keith kindly came on Christmas Day for the Eucharist. They continued to come until end February 2021 when Revd David Houghton was once again our Locum Chaplain until 02 April 2021. When no Chaplain was present, the Church Wardens conducted Morning Prayer.

During all his time, and in spite of the lockdowns, restoration work continued on St John's, which had suffered damage from a nearby building site in October 2010 and had been closed by the Mayor as being dangerous. While unable to use the church, arrangements had been made between the Bishop of Nice and our then Archdeacon for us to rent the Chapelle St Roch for our services. We left St Roch, due to the lockdown, on 15 March 2020 and did not return as we were able to return to St John's in mid-July when all bans had been lifted.

We endeavoured to raise funds and - in true English style - put a thermometer in front of the church showing progress. We were greatly helped by William Waterfield, stated by the local press to be "le plus Mentonnais des jardiniers anglais" whose gardens 'Le Clos du Peyronnet' were often opened for visits and where fairly recently many of us had enjoyed tea in the garden. William wrote to his friends asking for funds and raised a considerable amount of donations. William died in January and his funeral, taken by Revd Chris Parkman, who had met William, was held on 5 February 2021. The church was decorated with mimosa, 30 people were present in church and 80 followed the service on Zoom.

All being well, and restrictions allowing, Revd David Houghton will be back at St John's in June. Few people are able to attend services at present - many unable to travel locally, and others cannot leave the UK. We look forward to better times when we can get together and praise God in our beautiful, restored St John's.

Valerie Aucouturier