

THE CHAPLAINCY OF ST ANDREW'S, PAU



Chaplain: Rev Canon Robert F Dennis.

During the final weeks of 2017 we had neither Chaplain nor a boiler. Both arrived within a few days of each other and January 2018 saw a wave of physical and spiritual warmth flow over us. The year that began with the splendid ceremony of Canon Robert's installation passed very quickly. Robert set himself an ambitious programme of 'parish' visiting, extending to the farthest reaches of our enormous area. He has worked closely with our Reader, John Errey, to support him in his ministry and Robert now visits the Chaplaincy outreach centre of Hères & Mazères on a regular basis. He has written a new service booklet for our young people to be used once a month at St Andrew's and revised and republished our standard Eucharist with a French translation. He has introduced us to the *zucchetto* and his command of scholarship and liturgy is delivered with great warmth and lightness of touch. Robert's wife Diane has joined the rota for Chalice Assistants and also deputizes as Sacristan. She also now hosts the Chat n' Cha English Afternoon Tea sessions which provide English conversation practice as well as raising funds for our FOSTA organisation (*Friends of St Andrew's* which helps us look after the heritage of the building).

During 2018 we had to say 'Au revoir' to several members of our church family, some returning to the UK, others being transferred with their work. That being said, our numbers remain fairly constant, the average 'usual Sunday' attendance at St Andrew's is 35 with 9 children and at the outreach of Hères & Mazères, their monthly 'usual' service averages 26. Our recent 'departures' seem to be matched by the arrival of new English speaking families from other countries, mainly due to the principal technical and scientific research centre for Total being based in Pau. The children's Sunday Club continues to flourish under enthusiastic leadership; we regard it as vital that we continue our

ministry to young people as well as giving due consideration to the needs of our older members.

Our Chaplaincy continues to work with local French churches participating in and hosting in turn throughout the year, ecumenical services with the Groupe Œcuménique de Pay as well as the World Day of Prayer. Our link with the Petites Soeurs des Pauvres continues to strengthen, with members of St Andrew's attending and supporting functions held at the home and some of the Sisters participating in our services and attending our functions. The Sisters always collect the produce from our Harvest Thanksgiving and the 'Ecumenical Soup' is now eagerly anticipated. Links are also being strengthened with the Diocese of Tarbes and Lourdes with Diacre Crozat robing and participating in our Christmas Carol Service in December.

Events as well as services enable the members of St Andrew's and Hères & Mazères to come together and the major Church Festivals provide an opportunity for both congregations to worship together and share a meal after, as on Easter Day near Pau and a BBQ following the Ascension Day service at Pallanne which was led by Archdeacon Meurig Williams. Regular workshops and a house group led by our Reader continue up in the Southern Gers. Canon Robert held a Healing Mass/Eucharist in September and on November 4th there was a special service for All Saints and the Dedication of St Andrew's Church 130th year. The Christmas Carol Service by Candlelight once again attracted a full capacity congregation in spite of heavy rain and another Carol concert being held in the centre of Pau. The traditional festive treats of mulled wine and mince pies were served after the service.

Our church choir gave a concert on the Sunday afternoon of the Journées du Patrimoine featuring and celebrating the 'Musique Anglaise de la Belle Epoque'. The concert was very much appreciated by the 84 visitors who attending. Around 200 people visited St Andrew's over the JdP weekend. We have continued to welcome guided tours and there is always a high level of interest in our church, many come, initially at least, because of the beauty of the building and a certain curiosity of the eucharistic liturgy it enables, but also because it is valued as being an important part of the Anglophone history of Pau.

Maintaining the fabric of a beautiful church can sometimes be problematic and come at great expense to the Chaplaincy and to the congregation. In August we finally reached the 20,000 euro target of our replacement Boiler Appeal. It was hoped that refurbishment of the porch and the provision of a handrail on the external vestry steps would be achieved during 2018, however due to ongoing discussions following complications because of listed building regulations this work remains outstanding. Important renovation and repair work was also needed for the chaplaincy apartment, a new boiler needing to be installed and 2 sets of ageing patio doors replaced.

Having survived our period of vacancy both financially and in numbers and that currently our departures have been matched with new arrivals we are very aware that we cannot become complacent. Brexit certainly still causes concern for many ex-pats and this may have implications on our giving and indeed for some as to whether they will be able to remain in France. Our finances have certainly taken a bit of a battering over the last 12 months, although we managed to raise 20,000 euros from generous donations, it was necessary to take the other 20,000 euros from our reserves to cover the cost of the Boiler Project. Continuing to maintain the ageing fabric of the church and the upkeep of the chaplaincy apartment all come at a cost and this does not even take into consideration the need to plan for stipend reviews and increasing costs of contributions. Our new accountant has issued a warning that we need to give some serious attention to this matter. Therefore, we will need to focus our thoughts and approach to stewardship over this coming year.

Recently when preparing the figures for the Statistics for Mission, I started to think about the members of our church family and that although we are an Anglican Church we are now no longer, to coin a phrase that I read recently, 'just a UK passport holder community'. People from nearly every continent are represented in our church family and isn't that wonderful. Somehow it breathes new life into our community; it is an opportunity to share Christian traditions and customs and to learn new things and that through this there is a real love for our Lord clearly visible. Having young children in church makes us think differently about things and it certainly keeps 'us older kids' on our toes. But what is most striking is the support and encouragement, the love and the friendship which is shared amongst us all.

