



Anglican Chaplaincy of
Poitou-Charentes, France
Christ the Good Shepherd

Annual report to Synod 2018 -19

April 2018 to April 2019 has seen the Brexit debate raging and seeming to get nowhere, and providing an uncertain backdrop to the life of the chaplaincy this year. In spite of the unpredictability around the relationship between the UK and France the work of the chaplaincy has continued to flourish. We have seen significant growth in attendance as well as a number of new worship initiatives, and the continuing work of running and building up this large chaplaincy. Financially things have been less rosy, as the chaplaincy has become more financially precarious. The effect of the falling pound and understandable nervousness has led to a standstill in terms of our income, although we have managed a small reduction in our expenditure, we are facing the reality that we will need to cut our costs significantly. The end of the year as a result sees the chaplaincy at a point of change, as our work is flourishing but we are spending more than we are being given.

Our strategic plan this year had three components: Invitation, Worship and Financial Sustainability. We ran a couple of sessions with Michael Harvey of Invitational Church on how to invite people to church and how to face our own fears and anxieties around talking about our faith. We also encouraged individuals to invite and considered what special services it would be good to hold in order to invite new people to.

Out of the ministry teams conversations about worship came a memorial service which saw many people from funerals we had taken attending to remember their loved ones and are holding a special mothering Sunday service. There were also a number of new services set up with a monthly all age worship service in Civray, and the 'encounter' service being set up on a twice-yearly basis to reach out to those on the edge of the church or just starting to explore their faith. Both have been well attended with many new faces in the congregations. We also held a couple of new Christmas services this year specifically aimed at children and families, both of which were joyous and full.

Financial sustainability has been the thorn in the side of the chaplaincy for some time, and matters have not improved significantly in spite of our best efforts. There has been a lot of work to start new fundraising initiatives and giving has been maintained but we are still running a significant deficit which we cannot maintain for much longer. The current model of chaplaincy has been trimmed as far as it can go, so we are looking at changing the model. In practice that will mean finding a part time chaplain and re-envisioning the role of the chaplain.

The chaplain has run a worship leaders training and refresher course this year, and a prayer course during Lent, both of which were interactive and produced some profound questions and insights. The chaplain has also attended a number of ecumenical events. The highlights being the synodical mass for the Catholic archdiocese in Poitiers with the cardinal presiding, and the crammed service for Christian unity in the Protestant Temple in Villefagnion with Pr Marc and the French protestant and Catholic communities.

We continue to receive a great deal of support from the diocese in the form of oversight from the Archdeacon Meurig, and from the various officers of the diocese especially the Area Dean Tony Lomas and the safeguarding team. We also continue to receive support from ICS who funded the invitational church workshops for us this year.

In conclusion, it has been a mixed year with good church growth, but looming financial concerns leading to a need to rethink our way forwards.



Ecumenical Service at Villejesus Church, Poitou Charentes.