

## St Luke's Fontainebleau, FRANCE



*Serving Jesus Christ through welcome, worship and witness in an international community*

The report for 2018 looked forward to the licensing of our new chaplain, the Revd. Elisabeth Dean, after two and a half years of interregnum. She and Noël arrived on 1<sup>st</sup> August and the licensing service took place on 9<sup>th</sup> September. Bishop Robert Innes officiated, assisted by Archdeacon Meurig Williams. The congregation was swelled by friends and supporters from near and far, representatives from all the local and some Paris churches, and dignitaries from the mayor's office; the sun shone, and the reception was enjoyed by all.

In the Autumn we had a series of three parish-wide Bible studies on Mark's gospel, using a commentary by Archbishop Rowan Williams, and more recently a series of Lenten studies, working through his *Being Christian* with its emphasis on baptism, Bible, eucharist and prayer. Both books provided fresh insights into biblical passages and into the meaning and significance of the 'essential elements' of the Christian life. The studies made a deep impression on participants together with a huge respect for Archbishop Rowan Williams as a theologian and communicator of what it means to be a Christian.

We have always been blessed in having a core of confident and accomplished singers and musicians helping to lead and encourage Sunday worship. This year under the guidance of our Music Director the preparations for Christmas were particularly thorough and well attended. These occasions not only made a big difference to the singing, they also proved to be important opportunities for fellowship, becoming enjoyable social occasions in their own right.



Christmas saw the traditional celebrations of Nativity Play and Carol service. The Nativity Play, a repeat of last year's success, instead of being a stand-alone service was coupled with Holy Communion and the opportunity was taken to involve the 27 children who were invited to stand round the altar to watch and help with what was going on. Young and old appreciated the experience.

Late January saw the innovation of a Council Planning Day devoted to developing plans and goals to guide the ministry of St Luke's in the weeks and months ahead. The day started with an activity in which pairs of council

members were given four cards to arrange in any order, of their choosing. The activity provided an outlet for creative story telling. With this fresh in our minds we set to work on St Luke's and at the end of the day had developed goals and their associated working groups for ministry to young people, our spiritual life, mission and outreach and redesigning our Website.

On 9<sup>th</sup> February, during a visit from Archdeacon Meurig, we were shocked and saddened to learn of Elisabeth's decision to resign for personal reasons. This came as a surprise to everyone: so much had been achieved, due in no small measure to her working more than full time on a part time contract; so much had been planned for the immediate future; so many initiatives that will remain as significant legacies of her ministry. We are very grateful for her influence and instruction. She and Noel were a welcome addition to our church family and we are greatly saddened by her decision to leave St Luke's in early May. Given this announcement from Revd. Elisabeth of her departure, it was with enormous faith and trust in our St Luke's family that we were encouraged by a positive ACM where two church wardens and the PCC, joined by two new members, were elected. Many of our current church volunteers remain at their posts and are determined to continue their support and trust in a strong and united future for St Luke's.

Apart from the new officers and council other encouragements include the Bible study groups which continue to flourish, the women's outreach group, Sweet Friday which met several times this year and crafted a Sweet Friday banner that was paraded through the streets of Fontainebleau at the annual stations of the cross walk on Good Friday. Our ecumenical relationships in the town remain strong and we are looking at ways to become more involved in local community outreach with l'accueil du jour, le vestiare, l'EPAD and others. The work of "Les Amis" provide wonderful social occasions making us better known in the community and raising significant funds for our charitable giving. The recent table sale was no exception: tables loaded with jams and chutney, home-made tarts and cakes, mini-wreaths and flower arrangements, not to mention hot cross buns from every major supermarket chain. We look forward to our June event of the Classic Car Show at Chateau de Courances.



The Easter services on Palm Sunday, led by Revd. Elisabeth, started with our processing from the street through the school grounds waving greenery and singing All Glory, Laud and Honor to the Redeemer King. Once in the chapel we were led through a dramatic reading of the Passion story. The highlight of the service came about thanks to a 'happy coincidence'. Jonathan Story, an accomplished opera singer, offered to sing during the service. Given several choices he selected 'Were you there when they crucified my Lord?' He sang clearly, powerfully and with feeling. His acapella rendition of this beloved hymn reverberated throughout the chapel and in the hearts of all those present. It was profoundly moving. A member of the congregation remarked that there wasn't a dry eye in the chapel.

On Easter day the chapel was full to overflowing with 97 adults and young people and we enjoyed several innovations: The Paschal candle, which had been decorated by the Lenten study group at its last meeting. This candle, representing the light of Christ was used in the procession of the congregation into the chapel, and all who entered were able to light individual bees-wax candles. The young people who were baptized or confirmed on Easter Day last year had the opportunity of an act of remembrance and reaffirm their baptism vows in the sanctuary. Elisabeth also blessed those in the congregation with sprinkles from branches of rosemary in an act of our own renewal. Later on, the young people grouped round the altar during the prayer of thanksgiving as they had at the Nativity Play to share in the communion.

After the service the congregation spilled out of the chapel into the sunshine and lingered over the usual refreshments while the younger ones searched the school grounds for Easter Eggs.

We are saddened by Revd. Elisabeth and Noel's departure but remain grateful to them for all they have contributed to the life of St. Luke's and the many hours of dedicated service to our community.

We ask for your prayers for us that this period of interregnum goes smoothly and that we are able to take an honest look at ourselves and that we are able to find better ways of growing as a church family, supporting, loving and forgiving each other, and that we are able to open our hearts to this next stage in our Christian path that God has been set before us.