

## **St John The Evangelist Anglican Church, Saint-Raphael/Frejus, The Var**

Here at St John the Evangelist, Saint-Raphael, we are blessed with having a regular congregation, which swells and ebbs with the seasons. However, even when not with us on the Cote d'Azur, many continue to support our mission and ministry both in prayer and financially.

A first for us, in quite a few years is that we have 4 children, under the age of 6 attending worship regularly. While this has changed our worship dynamic a bit, we give thanks for having these youngsters enlivening our worship and have created a special children's corner that is inviting and has a selection of toys and books for them to explore while the services are taking place.

Our weekly worship follows the patterns of the church year with observances of all the major feasts. We have also had special services including one to commemorate the end of the First World War with a special service of music and reflection. We also offer a mid-week said Communion service once a month in the winter time, and weekly from Easter Day until mid-October. Besides offering a more quiet service, there is also the opportunity to discuss those we commemorate in the service (according to the CofE calendar). We also are pleased that our church is available for community concerts and other activities. This has included our annual Shrove Tuesday Luncheon Quiz that is very well attended and raises funds for the Resto de Secour. We also had a tea morning to support a young British university student who, after working as a teaching assistant in Saint-Raphael, was going on a mission trip to Cambodia. We were able to assist her with 800€ to help defray her costs.

We sometimes forget, in the day to day bustle of a congregation that we live in a part of the world with thousands of years of history. In the Lenten season of 2018 a tour was arranged for our congregation of Frejus Cathedral and its 5<sup>th</sup> century baptistry, and its historic Bishop's cloisters. It truly was a learning experience for us all, to realize that over 1500 years ago, people were becoming Christians in our town.

Our congregation continues to be active in the Saint-Raphael/Frejus/Eastern Var Groupe Biblique Oecumenical (GBO) meetings, that are made up of representatives from some of the various denominations in the area. As part of this membership we also hosted, for the first time in 10 years, a bilingual service for the Week of Prayer of Christian Unity, and had our own Archdeacon Meurig Williams as the officiant and preacher.

St John's continues to provide outreach and support to those less fortunate in our twin communities through our ongoing support of the local charity, Les Amis de Paola, providing food and a place to clean up for those living rough in Frejus/St Raphael. We estimate over the past year we have donated over 150 kilos of food stuffs and personal toiletries. We are also supporting the Les Amis de Paola from our congregational funds with a cheque for €250 each quarter. We have also continued to support the micro-loans project in the Philippines which is permitting those less fortunate there, to improve their way of life. We are contributing €250 per quarter to this worthwhile endeavour.

As in most congregations, change is a gradual thing. This past year, we have had two of our more elderly, long time parishioners move from the community to be closer to family members who are caring for them. However, we have been blessed with new people coming to worship with us on a regular basis. These new people include native French persons, who find our worship both spiritually uplifting, as well as an opportunity to practice their English.

The congregation at St John's is pleased to have been part of the English language worship in the Var since 1880, and in the same location in Saint-Raphael for the past 112 years, and we continue to plan to be here for the foreseeable future.

Yours in Christ,



The Rev. Dr. Tom Wilson

(Chaplain)