



*ST ALBANS.*

After over four years of interregnum we have just enjoyed a full year of having Mark Barwick as our priest in charge. We very much wanted "a priest in partnership," someone who would welcome and build on the abilities and vocations of everyone in our very varied multinational congregation. This is what Mark has done. To take one example, musically everything and everyone from Nigerian drummers, the Malgache choir, the perhaps more traditional singers and Taizé chants have found a place in our services.

One of the significant highlights of the year included the licensing by Bishop Robert of Catherine Emezie and Ozichi Baron as readers in September 2018. We were not given long to enjoy Ozichi's sermons as she made a career move shortly afterwards and is not usually in Strasbourg for the moment. Our strong ministry team had already been somewhat depleted, when Christine Bloomfield became the priest in Lausanne in August 2018.

It has been encouraging to see new emphasis being put on the work with young people and children. For some years our Sunday School has been given a slot at the end of every service to present to us what they have been learning that morning. The congregation has long since abandoned any stereotype ideas about God or Jesus as these parts in the dramas have often been taken by small Nigerian girls. The Romanesque pillars in the church have served as "rocks" for Moses's magic stick which provided water. We treasure such gems as the following verbal exchange in the reenactment of the story of the Annunciation. *The Angel* "You are going to have a baby!" *Mary* "Oh okay".

In the last twelve months some of the young people have enjoyed becoming servers and this is proving a useful step in teaching leadership skills and nurturing faith. The young adults group has also expanded and now meets together with young people from a neighbouring Protestant church. They have wide-ranging discussions on questions relating to living out their faith in today's world and the differences and similarities between Christianity and other religions – another question important for today.

The Church where we meet has an adjacent building where Sunday school and the social niceties following the service have always taken place. The loss of this space linked to a proposed 18 month renovation beginning this September caused some

anxiety. Fortunately we have been offered the use of an apartment next door thanks to the generosity of one of our community.

Our dedicated and hard-working group that raises money for charitable giving have once again managed to raise a sum equal to 8% of our annual budget. They produce a calendar, Christmas cards, traditional Alsatian Christmas biscuits, hold a "brocante" and run the bar at the local Burns night party. The money raised goes to organisations in Strasbourg working with migrants and asylum seekers, Pakistani Christian school pupils, the Bishops Appeals and other needy causes from time to time.

Frequent communication has taken an upbeat turn with the fortnightly news bulletins now produced and sent by Mark in email form to nearly 100 people. There was no significant loss of people during the interregnum, but it is still important to show that we are there and as ever a welcoming place.

In the near future it is vital that we recruit some new people as Sunday School helpers. Like many chaplaincies we also need a higher income and must soon have a focused stewardship campaign. We are lucky in that we have probably been less affected by Brexit than other communities as most of our congregation have worked and lived in France for long periods and several have already taken on other EU nationalities.

Ozichi Baron and Diane Murray

