

2021 AT ST ALCUIN'S

THE YEAR IN THE TOURAINE

THE YEAR CAN BE CATEGORISED IN FOUR WAYS: CONSOLIDATION, LOSS, JOY AND EXPECTATION. The particular challenge was, of course, the pandemic.

Consolidation was the major task we first had to face in 2021. The rules of the second “confinement” meant that some people were unable to celebrate with us because of the distance they would have to travel. Their return was a matter of deep joy for them and for us all. We could once again celebrate ‘the Lord’s own Service for the Lord’s own People on the Lord’s own Day’ as a community.

In addition to the distance regulation, the curfew imposed for a number of months, adversely affected Tours. We are still in process of reassessing what it means for us to be the Anglican presence in the city.

When we were unable to celebrate the Eucharist together, we produced online Acts of Worship in pdf form. These, strictly Anglican in form, used each week items from the wealth of material offered in Common Worship.

The original intention was to let them lapse when restrictions were eased, but, by popular request, they have been reintroduced and now circulate much more widely than the chaplaincy—as far as the south of France and the East Midlands of England.

The lockdown also saw us producing interactive material for our younger worshippers, but these have not been subsequently reintroduced.

We were pleased when distancing restriction were sufficiently eased to allow them to have their own sessions again.

The **loss** was of a family who removed to a different part of France. They had been very active in our Church, with them all, apart from young David, being lesson readers at the Eucharist, Maurice being on the Chaplaincy Council and Mérovée and Aliénor part of our loyal company of servers. The loss was the more poignant as, had Covid not got in the way, Mérovée and Aliénor would have been able to receive the sacrament of Confirmation at St Alcuin’s before they left.

Mitigating the loss to our Council, there was encouragement both that two new members joined us and that we could resume meeting in person. We normally meet in the Salle Paroissiale at Savigny-en-Véron, but we did have one meeting in the Salle des Fêtes at La Roche-Clermault. It helped that one of our new Council members is the wife of the maire!

We continued our good relationships with our ecumenical partners. That we could once again meet with them for Carol Services was a matter of deep **joy**. As previously they were bilingual and, in Chinon, we celebrated with the Catholic parish and, in Tours, with a wider group – Catholics, Orthodox, Eglise réformée and évangéliques. In both cases full churches testified to how these celebrations resonate with other confessions. Indeed there were more French than English speakers at Tours.

Particularly notable was that at Chinon the Catholic priest ensured that he and Fr John wore identical stoles to emphasise their equality and that at Tours the regional Président of the Eglise réformée also participated.

The happiness of the celebrations was well summed up by the Orthodox priest, who had participated by chanting the Prologue to the Gospel according to St John in the manner of his tradition, when he wrote afterwards, « *J’ai été ravi de venir prier avec vous ce rite si anglais et si beau des Carols.* »

We now move into the new year with **expectation**, in particular that circumstances will soon be right for Bishop Robert to visit us and celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation for our remaining candidates.

Laudamus Deo!

