

REPORT FROM A FRENCH GATHERING OF ANGLICANS

27 June 2016

By Helen Brooking with detailed background info from Fr David Greenwood



Fr David taking a selfie of himself and me in the Synod lecture hall.

Last year, at the 2015, Anne Roumieu and I were elected as the All Saints' Representative for district within the diocese known as the Archdeaconry of France. The main duties of this office of the church is the consult with our Bishop in Brussels and give the Lay (non-ordained) perspective of the needs and issues facing the Anglican churches in France and to attend the annual four day gathering known as the Archdeaconry Synod.

From May 18th to 21st, Father David Greenwood and I attended the Archdeanery's Synod in Saint Jacut-de-la-Mer up in Brittany. Anne Roumieu was unable to attend.

The Synod had a lot of components. There were about 125 of us from all the congregations in France. We worshipped together with Morning Prayer, Holy Communion at noon, and evening prayer each day. This year, the evening prayer took the form of Prayer and Praise which was by clergy modern music. The Morning Prayer services were more traditional and led by Readers.

There is a strong business component of Synod. The Archdeacon spoke with us about new happenings in the church in France. A new chaplaincy, Saint Alcuin's in Tours, opened on Sunday 22 May. This will be an exciting new venture into an old and historic region. The archdeacon also announced that he will retire at the end of September and that the bishop will appoint a new archdeacon during the summer. We, as Archdeaconry Reps will be consulted as part of that appointment process. Bishop David Hamid, our Suffragan Bishop spoke about new ministries in the diocese and answered questions raised from the floor. We have two bishops – Bishop Robert is the head of our diocese and Bishop David is his assistant bishop. They work together but also each has a special focus on different districts (archdeaneries) of the diocese. For the past 12 years Bishop David has overseen the ministry needs of France and Bishop Robert has focused on Italy and Malta. On 1 June, they have switched and Bishop Robert will now be the lead bishop for France. That means that as the summer progresses, our All Saints' Wardens and our Chaplain, Father Greenwood, will report through the new Archdeacon to Bishop Robert. And Bishop Robert will be more closely involved in any clergy staffing and the clergy wellbeing in France.



The Synod was held at l'Abbaye, 22750 Saint Jacut-de-la-Mer in Brittany along France's north coast. It was a beautiful place in a garden setting.



The rooms at the Abbaye were very simple but comfortable. We were one per room.

Several Diocesan Officers spoke to us. There was a major presentation on Safeguarding by Mr Ian Carter, the lead Safeguarding officer for the Diocese. There are 43 dioceses in the Church of England. 42 of them are resident in England. We, the 43rd diocese, the Diocese in Europe is the most complex as we cover 45 different nations with different parliaments and governments with different cultures and civil legislation. We at All Saints have been working on our Safeguarding policy. Roxana Teleman is our Safeguarding Officer. But the Diocesan Policy is also changing. Our church officers have taken Level 1 training online but now Level 2 training, an in class, face-to-face one day seminar will be coming later this year. The bishops and all archdeacons have received Level 2 training already.

Adrian Mumford, the Diocesan Secretary also spoke and we had reports from the diocesan representative on the Anglican – Roman Catholic Dialogues. We also had short greetings and comments from our ecumenical observers: Fr Emmanuel from the French Bishop's Conference and Pastor Jane Strantz, the Ecumenical Officer for the French Reform Federation. And of course there was the required financial report from Mr David Bean, our Archdeanery Treasurer.

We also attended two interesting bible studies. The Rev Dr Richard Briggs, a deacon of the Church of England and a theology professor spoke to us about the Book of Daniel and the Book of Jonah. I found the bible readings were very relevant and merited enlarging. Jonah's whale is a nonsensical embarkation just like the refugee boats, whether from Libya or Turkey. The Daniel readings reflected the pressure exercised on immigrants of whatever nationality and geographical location to accept and integrate the local language and customs - it's worldwide but often an ignored part of any immigration history.

But the main theme for the Synod was an educational event on Migrants and Refugees.

Presentations were made by Mr Max McClellan, a human rights lawyer who has been hired by the diocese to work with the chaplaincy in Greece and by Ms Doris Peschke from the World Council of Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe. Max gave us the emotional impression of what it is like in the C of E churches in Greece, who are working with all the other churches to help the migrants and refugees as they arrive. There have been hundreds every day. Migrants "are people who live in another country for more than one year". Seasonal workers and tourists are not migrants. Most of us at All Saints' are migrants if we originally came from a country outside of France. Refugees are those fleeing war and persecution. Migrants who are in Europe *illegally*, who are looking for work (economic migrants), have no real standing before the law – just their basic human rights. They can be returned to their country whenever the host country decides. Refugees, however, have standing before the law and we, the citizens of the host nations, are obliged to provide them with shelter, food and clothing, and education until their refugee claims can be adjudicated. Currently there are 232 million migrants in the world – most of All Saints congregation included. There are 20 million refugees in the world.

Max McClelland the lawyer from Greece told us about being on the front lines of church pastoral care. The Anglican Chaplaincy in Greater Athens is just like us in Marseille but they have responded amazingly. Once a month the congregation brings some items for collection and distribution – toothbrushes and toothpaste one month, 10 per congregation member. The next month it will be diapers. The next month woolly hiking socks. 40% of those arriving are children. 20% women and 40% men. The men come to flee from being drafted into the Syrian army or into the rebel army. Most come from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan - those are the top three and in that order. By far most refugees from the Middle East are in Lebanon, Turkey and Kenya.



Max McClelland told us about being on the front lines of church pastoral care to migrants and refugees in Greece.

The Chaplaincy in Greece is small, just like us but they are working together with the Greek Orthodox Church, the Salvation Army, the Evangelical Church in Greece, the Jesuit Relief Service, CARITAS, the Scandinavian Church of Athens and several others and together they are making a difference. They work with, and through, non-Governmental Organizations to make sure needed items (dry clothes, tents, shoes) get into needy hands. They also have a voice into local municipal, regional and federal government. They congregation members have a voice and a presence to lobby their government for a responsible, compassionate, and legally required response. That takes a lot of coordination and sacrificial giving.