

EASTER SUNDAY AT AIX-EN-PROVENCE

29 March, 2016

The Easter Sunday worship service was held as usual, at the upper room Chapel in the Oratoire on the grounds of the Roman Catholic cathedral in the centre of Aix. The cathedral has graciously offered us the use of the little chapel for our once-a-month service, on the fourth Sunday of the month, for almost a decade now.

On 27 March 2016, Robert Reilly was at the chapel early to open up, as is his usual custom. His wife Françoise had already been by to drop off some flowers for the altar for our service before heading downstairs to her service with the Roman Catholic community in the cathedral. Anglicans gather at this little chapel on the fourth Sunday each month and this Sunday just happened to be Easter Sunday. It was expected that our priest-in-charge would stay with the larger congregation at Marseille, but instead we were honoured that Fr David Greenwood chose to arrange for an honorary assistant priest to take the service in Marseille and come to us in Aix. Joining Fr Greenwood was his wife, Cynthia, who also brought beautiful potted flowers for our worship altar.

In our congregation we were pleased to have a family from Washington DC with us. For the past few months, our Warden Amanda has placed a conspicuous sign in the square outside the chapel indicating that an Anglican English language service would take place at 11h00 and this has on occasion resulted in seekers finding us and joining with us in prayer and we are always overjoyed when this form of subtle evangelism works!

Father David Greenwood was joined by Fr David Pickering who was finely vested in his white Easter stole presented to him when he served in Hong Kong on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of that Province of the Anglican Communion. Both Fathers David were also joined by one of our Readers, Mrs Christine Portman. So it was quite a fine ministry collective for our small chapel. Our service started with the acapella singing of "Jesus Christ is Risen Today" and our opening prayers. Father Pickering read the gospel and then we were delighted that Christine delivered our Easter morning sermon. Fr Greenwood explained that he had asked each Reader to preach twice in the calendar year and he had asked Christine to preach on Easter morning so that he could hear her. If this was an evaluation of sorts, Christine passed with flying colours



Holy Communion on Easter morning in Aix-en-Provence.

as she shared with us the theme of unity and Christ dying for us all. This is an important message as Europe seems to be questioning its unification and citizens and countries are questioning their call to aid "others" who are seeking refuge from terrible situations. All this was summed up in Christine's reflective and intelligent sermon.

Our service ended with an unexpected blessing: both Father David and Reader Christine laid hands on Amanda and Tim Haste as Fr Greenwood prayed a prayer of blessing upon them as it was revealed this was also their wedding anniversary.

Following our morning worship, many of us gathered in the town square and joined with members of several congregations for an Easter morning ecumenical gathering. The religious leaders of all these churches took part in leading the reading of scripture and prayers before all the clergy together, Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican and Protestant gave us an ensemble Easter morning blessing! What a visible symbol of unity indeed! Then we Anglicans headed off together for coffee and sweets at our regular nearby shop..



Reader Christine Portman and Fr David Greenwood in front of the Aix cathedral.



Fr David Greenwood leading prayers during the Easter morning Ecumenical gathering in the Aix town square.