

NEW MISSION INITIATIVE IN THE LUBERON

15 April, 2017

On Palm Sunday 9 April, something new happened. After a year of planning and organizing, the first Anglican English language worship service took place in the Luberon region of Provence.

It all started last May when Chris and Sarah Morgan and Duncan and Francis Goodwin approached All Saints to say that a sizable community of English speaking people has been steadily growing in the two valleys of the Luberon north-west of Marseille. They had a vision and came to ask, if they were able to obtain a worship space and develop a congregation, would All Saints' "loan"

them a priest on the second Sunday of each month. Fr David, our Priest-in-Charge, agreed that he would come to the Luberon three times, the second Sunday of three consecutive months, as a trial to test the waters and see if there was a need and a desire. The Luberon is within the extensive "parish boundaries" of our chaplaincy of Marseille with Aix-en-Provence.



Over the summer the small planning group checked out local worship places. They found in the town of Goult, a beautiful but seldom used Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic congregation of Goult uses their church building only once a month for their service on the fourth Sunday. And so our offer to fill it with regular prayer and praise at another time was received with some excitement but also apprehension. The permission of the Roman Catholic bishop was sought. The town mayor was consulted as he pays for the church's maintenance and uses it frequently for community centre activities. All Saints' was requested to provide an attestation of a Liability Insurance coverage for three planned events. The local parish priest agreed that having an Anglican worshipping group was within their vision of Roman Catholic ecumenical hospitality.

Finally, on Palm Sunday, all was in place and 38 English speaking visitors and residents of the Luberon gathered to bless the palms and olive branches, sing "*All Glory Laud and Honour*", to hear scripture read, the word preached, and the sacrament celebrated and shared. John Calvin wrote, "Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists."¹ Similarly, Martin Luther wrote, "Now, anywhere you hear or see such a word preached, believed, confessed, and acted upon, do not doubt that the true *ecclesia sancta catholica*, a 'holy Christian people' must be there."² This was picked up at the time of the English Reformation by our Anglican theologian and Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, who wrote in 1553 that "the Visible Church of Christ is a congregation of all faithful men [people], in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinances, in all those things that of necessary are requisite to the same."³

During the service, a choir of eight people led in the singing while Duncan played the organ. Chris and William read the scriptures. Our Reader Jane Quarmby opened the service with the reading of the gospel of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and the waving of palm branches and led us in reciting the psalm of the day, and Fr David Greenwood preached and celebrated Holy Eucharist. It was a delight to gather for the first time with this emerging church community and we look forward to the second worship event of the gathered church in Goult on the Second Sunday in May - 14 May at 10h30am. Come and join us if you are in or near the beautiful Luberon town of Goult.

¹John Calvin, Institutes Number IV, 1.9. In the Confessio Augustana, art. 7 published 1536.

²Martin Luther, "On the Councils and the Church", 1539.

³Thomas Cranmer, Articles of Religion 1553, and later published in the Book of Common Prayer, as Article XIX "Of the Church" 1662.