

Franco-English Catholic-Anglican surprise

Christopher Morgan has lived in the village of Saint-Saturnin-lès-Apt, Vaucluse for 30 years. About 14 months ago, he and a friend, Duncan Goodwin decided to set up Church of England services in the Luberon area.



From left : Verger Philippe Sabet, Père Emmanuel Kinda, and Father John Smith, with Christopher Morgan and Duncan Goodwin

Their efforts resulted in a successful bringing together of the Church of England and Catholic churches – but in a way they had not anticipated.

First they negotiated with the Catholic Church and met twice with the Archbishop in Avignon.

“He very generously gave us permission to hold Holy Communion once a month in Oppede, a pretty village at the base of the Luberon Mountains,” said Mr Morgan.

They then decided to come under the Chaplaincy of Marseille. After about a year an incident happened which strengthened ties between the two Christian faiths.

Mr Morgan said: “Sunday, September 9, was our slot in the RC Church in Oppede.

“The Reverend John Smith, new to the Chaplaincy, was going to officiate, and celebrate the Church of England’s Holy Communion.

“As we were getting prepared, into the church entered a rather worried verger the new RC priest for Oppede, Father Emmanuel, who had not been informed of the situation. What was perhaps more disconcerting was that the church was filling up and had more than 80 Catholics and Anglicans sitting side-by-side waiting for a service. The two priests decided to hold a joint Mass which was possible as our service sheets are printed in both English and French.

“The RC verger Philippe Sabet got together with our organist Duncan Goodwin and organised hymns in both French and English.

“Both priests cooperated superbly and both shared in the distribution of the Host. Their homilies were inspired blending to acknowledge that there is only one God.

“When all was explained to the two congregations there was instant applause and the singing matched the enthusiastic acceptance of what might have been an embarrassing non-event.”

And, as it was such a success, they hope to hold more joint masses in the future – only this time planned!

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