

In the Church of England's Diocese of Gibraltar in Europe
THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING CHURCH OF ANDORRA, ST. GEORGE'S
Box 113 Credit Andorra, Av. San Antoni 34, AD 400, La Massana, Principat d'Andorra

Churchwarden's Report on behalf of the Chaplaincy Council – 2008 - 2009

I have just entered my fifth year as churchwarden and so feel very responsible for the way St George's is developing. I am immensely grateful to my fellow churchwarden, Michael Derham and to the ten members of the chaplaincy council because we all work together so well and happily, and labours are very much shared. Our reason for existence is to worship God, which we do both in church services and in serving God within our community. This report will look at how we have managed to fulfill these duties since the last Annual Church Meeting.

Regarding church services, our aim is to hold three per month: Holy Communion, Mattins and Compline, though this pattern changes at Christmas and Easter. We really do enjoy wonderful support from our visiting chaplains, many of whom return year after year. At the same time, we have been contacted by a number of chaplains offering to come as locums, and so we have added a number of new chaplains to our list – and we have a waiting-list.

Including 27th April, 2008, our visiting chaplains here to celebrate Holy Communion have been: The Reverend Peter Jordan (Barcelona) 1 service: The Reverend Canon Cameron Walker (France) 4 services (May to August), and Fr Cameron Admitted Michael and me as churchwardens on 8th June, 2008: Archdeacon of Gibraltar The Venerable David Sutch, 1 service in September: The Reverend Tim Bravington (Oxford) 1 service at Harvest Festival in October (and Fr Tim will also lead the service before our ACM on 26th April, 2009). Our Harvest Festival offerings were given to our parish priest to distribute. The Reverend Barry Thomas (Wales), here in November for Remembrance Day also took the Funeral of Ivan Stansby. The Reverend Canon Ray Jones led our Advent service: and The Reverend Bill Maxwell was here in January 2009. In February The Reverend Andrew Tweedy came to us from Barcelona for 1 service, and The Reverend Bob Short (Ibiza) led 1 service in March. In sum, we have had 12 services of Holy Communion from the Book of Common Worship.

Michael Derham and I alternate month by month in organizing services and, since 1st May, 2008 we have read 9 services of Mattins from the Book of Common Prayer. From 5th May, 2008, I started reading traditional Compline on the first Monday of each month, and I have so far read 10 services.

From 6th April, 2008, we began using the lovely church at Erts as our sole church, rather than using La Massana Church in winter and Arinsal Church in summer. We are very grateful to the parish priests of La Massana – initially Mossèn Jaume Soy and now Mossèn Jordi Miquel – for giving us use of Erts Church. We moved there because the church has no steps and so is very accessible, and also it allows us to keep to one location and predictable times for services. The only problem is that the church is very cold in winter, but we have a plan to improve the heating, and will present this project to Mossèn Jordi for his approval. We need to act because the cold does discourage older church members from attending in winter. We have not held any services of Evensong this past year, nor have we had a service of Songs of Praise.

When we expect a congregation too large for Erts church, we return to La Massana parish Church and, on Christmas Eve 2008, Michael led a service there of Nine Lessons and Carols (attended by 200 adults and 45 children). On Good Friday, 2009, Michael, Clare Allcard, John Pinnell, Barbara Melville and I read the Passion story at Tenebrae service at Erts Church (attended by 20 adults). As is our custom, we braved the snows on Easter Morning and celebrated our open-air Sunrise service in the mountains above Pal at 7:15am, read by John Pinnell, and attended by 13 courageous souls. (We recovered afterwards at our Easter Breakfast, where we were joined by those unable to attend the Sunrise service.)

When arranging funerals, Clare Allcard really is to be thanked for her unstinting, dedicated work with grieving families, and her liaison with our local priest. Sadly, Clare had to prepare two funerals this last year: for Ivan Stansby (as stated above), and for Dennis Woods (former church auditor), which was taken by Mossèn Jordi. This was the first service Mossèn Jordi has taken for us and it shows how much trust there is between us.

St George's paid for cushions for the benches in Erts Church and for a curtain for the

confessional, which we use as a cupboard. Mossèn Jordi was very pleased with this, and in return, arranged for the church carpenter to make a standing Lectern for us. Michael and Elsa Derham brought back from Peru a beautiful, embroidered altar cloth, church linen and a silver ciborium with cover, which we first used at Erts Church in June 2008.

Although we are not in any way charged for our use of churches in Andorra, we give an annual gift to the parish priest of La Massana for him to use in his parish. At Christmas 2008 the chaplaincy council agreed to raise this sum from €400 to €500.

Thanks to John Pinnell, who wrote up the information, our church website now explains how St George's can help with Baptisms, Marriage Blessings and Funerals, and what the costs are.

We are very grateful to Marc Pià for being the organist at most of our services, though Questa Naylor has played at 2 services, Gerry Scott at one service, and Robert Bailey has played at 3 services.

In summary, since 27th April, 2008, St George's has held 34 worship services – an average of one service nearly every 11 days. The average attendance at Holy Communion was 31, with an average of 23 taking Communion: in addition, the chaplains have taken Communion to 13 people unable to get to church.

The average attendance at Mattins was 16, and at Compline it was 6. Children have been brought to 6 of our services.

Every Friday we have Bible Study which is usually led by me, although Yen Tan and Jo Hine have also led the study. Nearly all of our visiting chaplains lead Bible Study when they are here. We are very grateful to Mary Crowe for letting us use her home most Fridays. The Bible Study group visited an exhibition: 'Viatge a l'orient biblic' on 13th March, 2009.

By holding the range of worship and services described, with both modern and traditional language, and with the support of very fine chaplains, I hope we have provided something for everyone and served as a church welcoming to all English-speakers, of many denominations, who want a centre of worship in Andorra.

Our relationship with the Roman Catholic Church in Andorra continues to flourish, and we were greatly honoured when, as part of a week-long pastoral visit to the parish of La Massana, Bishop Joan-Enric Vives, the Bishop of La Seu, spent an hour and a half with us on the evening of Wednesday, November 5, 2008. Eight of us went (all chaplaincy council members, though I had invited non-council members to join us), and we sat in the parish priest's parlour with the priest, Mossèn Jordi, and the bishop. The bishop was delightfully warm and friendly and put us all at our ease. He was impressed that we have been having weekly Bible Study for years.

We explained our church and community activities in detail (raising money for Andorran charities; hospital visiting; organising events for the wider community etc.) and gave the bishop samples of our posters and information leaflets. The bishop was fascinated that although we are the Anglican Church, our members are also made up of Methodists, Congregationalists, Dutch Reform, and even Catholics. I think he had not realised we are quite so open and varied. We really felt we could speak easily and that our differences were of far less importance than the fact that we must hold together as Christians. We finished with prayers and we could not have been treated with greater kindness.

I must now turn to the subject of how our church has been involved with the wider community. Clare Allcard and I were asked to help draw up the service plan of an Ecumenical Service, and on 23rd January, 2009, St George's participated in this annual Ecumenical Service at Sant Esteve Church, Andorra la Vella, led by the Arxiprest Mossèn Ramon. On 6th May, 2009 we participated in the annual, interfaith service at Meritxell Hospital to celebrate the Day of the Sick. Those of us who speak Catalan/Castilian attend meetings of the Interfaith Group organized by UNESCO.

Our major contribution to the local community is our yearly Christmas Charity Fair, held in La Massana on 30th November, 2008, and made possible by the work of many people inside and outside the church. This event gives local enjoyment and entertainment as well as raising a large sum for charity. The raffle ticket sellers worked very hard, and we raised €19,500, which was distributed to 10 local charities and the 2 supported by St George's: 'Infants del Món' and 'The Rural Development and Research Centre, Chiapas, S. Mexico. Cheques were distributed to

the charities at a party on 10th December, 2008, and real bonds of friendship are growing from this annual event.

As always, church stalls at the Car Boot Sale in Arinsal (29th June, 2008) and at the Arinsal Street Market (24th August, 2008) were made possible and successful because of the labour of many, and we are very grateful for all the help provided by church-goers and non-church-goers alike. On 29th June we raised €1,355, and on 24th August we raised over €520. The Treasurer's Report details how we organize our charitable donations.

Although we support our chosen charities for only two years each, we do remain very interested in them. We were, therefore, very pleased when the Patchwork Group of Andorra made a large patchwork and raffled it on 24th September, 2008. €2,576 and £188 were raised and donated to The Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, Ethiopia.

We try to organize fellowship events around the visits of our chaplains so that people have a chance to talk to the chaplains. In addition, people outside the church are often attracted. We sometimes go to restaurants (with reasonably-priced menus) and we also have pot-luck meals. Most of our meals are lunches because our ageing population is increasingly unwilling to come out at night, particularly in winter. We held a Harvest Festival lunch with Fr Tim Bravington: a Remembrance Day lunch with Fr Barry Thomas and Delyth: an Advent lunch with Fr Ray Jones: and Leela Herriman hosted lunch at her house in January for Fr Bill Maxwell and Agnes. The Reverend Bob Short gave a Talk after lunch on 8th March, 2009, bringing us up-to-date with the Rural Development Fund in Chiapas, and we were delighted to be able to give Fr Bob a cheque for \$5,000 for the Fund in Chiapas.. On 10th August we held our annual church picnic in Mary Crowe's beautiful garden, with Fr Cameron Walker and Moira present. John Pinnell organized the picnic and the food, and the event was a really happy occasion.

On 30th July, 2008, Anthea Buckler gave us a very knowledgeable, guided tour of 3 churches in Andorra: Santa Eulalia Church, Encamp: Sant Romà de Les Bons, Canillo: and Sant Joan de Casselles, Canillo. Thirteen people took the tour and enjoyed lunch together afterwards.

Over the weekend of 19th – 21st September, 2008, we had the absolute pleasure of welcoming sixteen friends from Toulouse/Cahors chaplaincy. Various activities were arranged: on Friday, 19th September, a picnic lunch: a country walk: a visit to the Caldea: and a pot-luck supper with entertainment. On Saturday, 20th we organized a guided tour – with the excellent Sue Gresham – of La Seu d'Urgell and the Cathedral, followed by lunch. That same evening, our new Archdeacon, The Venerable David Sutch and Megan paid us the honour of coming to stay, and a Reception for the Archdeacon was hosted by Antoni Zorzano at his Museum of Iconography and Christianity, in Ordino. A Buffet Supper was held at my home, and John Pinnell and Christine Hansen organized all the food. Following Holy Communion on the 21st, there was a lunch for the Archdeacon and our guests. The only planned event which did not occur was a meeting between Archdeacon David and Bishop Joan-Enric of La Seu because neither was free at the same time. We did invite several Andorran priests to meet the Archdeacon, but sadly this did not happen. We really were happy to have resumed our custom of meeting with friends from Toulouse/Cahors after a considerable gap.

Clare Allcard is authorized by the Meritxell Hospital to visit patients, and she is particularly dedicated to doing this, especially for visitors and tourists in Andorra who are away from home and worried by the language. There have been some really terrible accidents suffered, and Clare's work keeps the church in touch with what is happening in the community. Other members of the church work quietly away: giving people lifts, taking them to appointments, encouraging, advising and generally doing things which take time and effort. They do not go on behalf of the church, and yet their active caring is seen as reflecting upon the church – and the absence of such good deeds would definitely be held as a reproach against the church. We are few in number and it is a pity we cannot do more – but I am immensely grateful to all those who care for their neighbours, friends and strangers because that is what every community needs.

There are so many tasks that people take on willingly, without which St George's would be diminished. Michael Derham prints our church service booklets – and takes wonderful photographs for the covers. Whenever we need a special service booklet, Michael produces it without a word – and visitors to St George's ask to take them away on a regular basis.

When Fr Cameron Walker asked us to collect plastic bottle tops for a group in France which uses the tops to raise money for wheelchairs, Val Rylatt offered to organize the collection.

No-one guessed that hundreds of kilos of bottle tops would ensue – but Val has gamely tried to keep control of this growing mountain, and Fr Cameron will be transporting carfulls for several months!

John Pinnell, as well as being a cool-headed, but warm-hearted, Treasurer, and a wonderful cook and organizer of fellowship meals, took over the church Newsletter from me in December 2008 after I had edited it for two years. We shall reduce the issues from four to three per year, and try to encourage more people to receive the Newsletter via email. But we think it is important to keep in touch with our readers – especially as many of them do not attend church, but seem keen to maintain contact with us.

We are all very grateful to James Anderson who keeps our website up to date even though – because he does not live in Andorra – he enjoys none of our events or fellowship.

Jo Hine and John Pinnell have agreed to be committed to three years each as our Synod Representatives and, from their report on the Synod on 3rd – 6th February, 2009, it is clear they are excellent representatives of St George's.

Leela Herriman, whenever she is here, chooses hymns and anthems, collects the church key, encourages the choir and organist, and takes on all sorts of tasks.

I cannot imagine how the church would function without the ten, dedicated members of the chaplaincy council who all carry their weight in many ways. They often think they do not do enough, but I can assure them that they each have different gifts which Michael and I could not manage without. I am very glad indeed that they have all agreed to stand for re-election at our Annual Church Meeting on 26th April, 2009. Council members and I will need to pull together all the more because Michael and Elsa will be spending from October to March each year in Peru, and we shall really miss both of them.

If there are two things for which I thank God they are: that we all work so well and happily for each other and the church: and that whenever there is need, people get on and do things without fuss and with willing hearts. We could not operate as a chaplaincy without a chaplain if it were otherwise.

I hope that all I have described above shows how we try to be an active, valuable part of our local community, the international community, and the country of Andorra, where we are privileged to live.

What are our plans for the future?

We hope to organize a Retreat in 2010.

We have to make the Erts Church warm and winter-proof if we are to continue using it all year round.

It is a pity not to have Evensong services: perhaps we can find a way to say – or sing – Evensong occasionally during the year.

A Songs of Praise service is planned.

Our congregation is not really growing, and it is aging. We need suggestions as to how we can reach those who are here and want to go to church, but have not found us – and those who are younger and have not developed the habit of church-going.

The last two years we have planned to have Welcome Packs for people moving to Andorra. We have also hoped to make an information leaflet about the church, and a card which visitors to the church can complete if they want any kind of help or service from us. These three ambitions have yet to be fulfilled – we all take turns at everything, so something falls through the cracks. Our lack of a dedicated Secretary is part of the problem, and we need to find an answer.

We very much hope to organize a visit to Toulouse/Cahors before too long.

I hope that at the Annual Church Meeting we shall receive support, inspiration, helpful criticism and suggestions to help us.

May God bless us and keep us all safe in His care.

Valerie C. Rymarenko,
Churchwarden of the English-speaking Church of Andorra, St George's
21st April, 2009