

# NEWS ICSNEWS

INTERCONTINENTAL CHURCH SOCIETY

MARCH 2024 | ISSUE 87



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MISSION AND MINISTRY IN ENGLISH FOR EVERYONE

# ICS NEWS 2024

INTERCONTINENTAL CHURCH SOCIETY



## 200th Anniversary Celebration Event in Northern Ireland 8 May 2024

11am - 2pm  
Hillsborough Parish Church  
Main Street, Hillsborough, BT26 6AE

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## AGM & SHOWCASE

THURSDAY 20 JUNE  
11AM - 1PM

The Editor's Suite,  
Coventry Telegraph Hotel  
157 Corporation Street  
Coventry CV1 1GU

Please join us for the ICS AGM & Showcase and let us give you a glimpse into the world of ICS, meet team members and catch up with friends. We will also endeavour to live-stream the event on Zoom. **Advance booking** helps us to cater as tea/coffee and cakes will be on offer.

### Please sign-up via

**Website** [www.ics-uk.org/stories](http://www.ics-uk.org/stories) & sign-up

**Email** [Yelena Williams ywilliams@ics-uk.org](mailto:Yelena.Williams@ics-uk.org)

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Places will be allocated first to Members of the Society (Members have the right to speak and vote) then to Members' guests or other supporters on a first come, first served basis according to the order in which application forms are received. ICS Members will receive further mailings concerning the AGM.

**TRAVEL** The nearest carpark is the NCP car park at Ringway Hill Cross, Belgrade Plaza, Coventry CV1 4AJ. This is a 2-minute walk to the hotel. Coventry train station is a 20-minute walk away.



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Intercontinental Church Society (ICS) is an Anglican mission agency. Founded in 1823, we have worked in most parts of the world, ministering and reaching out to people from many nationalities and backgrounds. From the early days we have planted churches in mainland Europe where our work is still strong but also in and around the Mediterranean, North Africa, the South Atlantic and South America. English language ministry has a strategic part to play, alongside national churches, in outreach as increasing numbers for whom English is a second language attend English-speaking churches.

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Welcome to the

# SPRING '24 EDITION OF ICS NEWS

# Encouragement

**'Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing'.**

1 Thessalonians 5:11



Martin Reakes-Williams

**Welcome to our Spring ICS News, I hope this finds you well.**

A strange thing happened on my first day in the office after a break, almost by accident, I had something encouraging or positive to say to the people I work with, not that this is uncommon, I am an optimist by nature, but it did set the tone, and to be honest, it was just a nice thing to do. I was once told that for every negative thing said to a person it takes ten positive things to balance it out, I am not sure how they know that, but it rings true. It is with this in mind that I chose this bible verse to be our theme: 'Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing' (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

I would count it a success if people felt built up, encouraged, and better able to serve the Lord Jesus Christ after encountering ICS, our Mission partners, and members. It is with this in mind that we decided that the ICS Spring Appeal should be for the work that our mission partner Martin Reakes-Williams is overseeing in Ethiopia. Martin has become the Bishop of the Horn of Africa, which is terribly exciting. We want to support him by raising funds that he can use in some of the poorest and most needy churches we have links with. The churches outside Addis Ababa under Martin's care are in refugee camps around the city of Assosa, to the north of Gambella, close to the Republic of Sudan border. Many are Muslim background believers, and they come from different people groups with different languages. There are four clergy amongst them, all ordained in what is now South Sudan. Martin writes: 'I am very impressed with the uncomplaining way they have ministered to their flock with very little support: no stipend, no licence, rare episcopal visits - shepherds who love the sheep'. Life in the camps is not for the faint-hearted.

The UN provides a simple house, usually mud and wattle, and schools, and is supposed to provide food rations. This Spring I invite you to make a gift to this new ministry Martin is undertaking, to create a fund that he can draw upon for the poorest and most in need, as he ministers, church plants and cares for this emerging diocese. (You can read more overleaf.)

In 2023 we celebrated 200 years of ICS. This year, on 8 May, we will hold a similar celebration for our friends and members in Northern Ireland. We had hoped to do it sooner, but peoples' diaries made it impossible. Then on 20 June, we will hold the ICS AGM when The Revd Guy Diakiese of the Anglican Church of Liège will be our guest speaker. You are very welcome to attend these events, details on how to book can be found opposite.

Finally, some family news. I am delighted to welcome our new chaplains: Ben Johnson-Frow and his wife Teri in Versailles, Andy Brewerton and his wife Amanda in Cannes. As you read the stories and news in this magazine, I unashamedly want you to be encouraged, inspired, built up. I would count it a success that as you read this you smile. Thank you for your prayers, interest, and support.

Yours in Christ.

Richard

**Richard Bromley**  
ICS Mission Director  
rbromley@ics-uk.org





We have put ourselves in God's hands and trust that He will guide us; His will be done.



## P O I T O U - C H A R E N T E S

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**On 13 March, the Chaplaincy of Christ the Good Shepherd in Poitou-Charentes celebrates twenty years since the chaplaincy came into being. Richard and Rhiannon Beech, who arrived in 1996 and who initiated Home Group Services in the area, will return to the UK in April. Here they describe how it all started as they encouraged others in their journeys of faith.**

*'By the rivers of Babylon, we sat and wept...'  
'How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?'  
Psalm 137: 1,4*

Change the scene to the waters of the Garonne in SW France, and Babylon to Bordeaux and you find how the British commercial community in Bordeaux may have felt as they resettled in Bordeaux after the Napoleonic Wars. There is another river in SW France called the Charente and on it there is a town called Cognac, also associated with the wine trade. In the early 1990s British commercial interests and with it the arrival of UK citizens, had generated the need for an Anglican chaplaincy providing worship in English. When we arrived in France in 1996, the chaplaincy in Cognac had just closed. However, monthly services continued there with the support from the chaplain in Aquitaine. At that time, increasing numbers of British retirees were arriving in Charentes who settled in the rural areas outside the business and commercial centres, as had been the case previously. This was a significant change as the chaplaincies sought to serve what became very large areas.

To meet this challenge the then Chaplain in Bordeaux, David Gerrish, trained the laity to lead worship. When they were commissioned as Readers or Worship Assistants, they would start to serve in the rural centres of worship providing monthly services as an extension of the Bordeaux Chaplaincy. Before retiring to France, we had worked with David in the UK, taking part in his training sessions, and so, with his authority and guidance, we started a monthly Anglican service in our house in the north of Charente, a two-hour drive from Bordeaux.

From that small start, other centres opened through the four departments (think of them as counties) of Poitou-Charentes. The congregations came from all Christian denominations and although the structures of the services were Anglican, those from other traditions graciously accepted this opportunity to worship in English, and in return opened us to less formal presentation of the services. The range of churchmanship was very wide but focused

*continued...*



## POITOU - CHARENTES

The first chaplain  
Michael Hepper



Church at Cognac



Harvest

on the need to worship in English. ICS recognised the need for a more formal leadership (and discipline perhaps!) in this burgeoning area. They recruited a chaplain for what was to become the Chaplaincy of Christ the Good Shepherd in Poitou-Charentes, Vienne and Deux Sevres. Serving this area was, and still is, a demanding task for an area that is the size of Wales. The first chaplain of what was to become the Chaplaincy of Poitou-Charentes continued in the same principle: training from the bottom up.

The new chaplaincy grew very quickly under The Revd Michael Hepper, a case of the right man, in the right place, at the right time. We were also of a 'churched' generation who felt the urge to worship in familiar ways. Growth was helped by the presence of several retired clergy and an increasing number of lay readers. This enabled us to worship in both the Eucharistic tradition and the Service of the Word tradition. From the start there were problems, the sheer size of the chaplaincy has been a strain on chaplains, and the expenses involved in a self-supporting chaplaincy have been hard to meet from elderly, mostly retired congregants.

However, the biggest problem has been the COVID lockdown. With all centres of worship closed, the whole pattern of local worship was shattered. The practice of attending a building for worship has, for some, been replaced by worship online. Nor has the chaplaincy been spared the disputes over issues of sexuality, we have had groups breaking their link with the Diocese in Europe. These are the challenges a younger generation of leaders will have to face. Of one thing we can be sure there remains that need to sing the Lord's song wherever we live!

### ***Churchwarden, Wanda Mckerchar, continues the story...***

These are exciting times for our chaplaincy as at the time of writing we are about to hold the second round of Zoom interviews for a chaplain. We have been in a period of interregnum for several years when we struggled with the after-effects of Brexit and COVID and I think it's fair to say that morale was pretty low. However, since our AGM last April there has been an increasing sense of optimism, thanks to an enthusiastic and hard-working council and the ongoing dedication of our ministry team. Such was the strength of this feeling that the decision was taken in October to place an advertisement to recruit a Chaplain on a House-for-Duty basis. So how can we briefly present the life of our chaplaincy to the candidates?



garden party



sharing a meal

We now have four worship centres: Cognac, Champagne-Mouton, Courcelles and Chef-Boutonne, at each there is usually a monthly service of Holy Communion, and at Chef-Boutonne an additional service of Morning Prayer. Carol services were held in three of these, of which two were ecumenical bilingual services and were well-attended by our Catholic and French Protestant friends. In Cognac particularly, members of the chaplaincy promote ecumenical links and were involved in a special prayer meeting for peace held shortly after the beginning of the conflict in Gaza. It was a very moving occasion, attended by politicians and representatives of the Jewish and Muslim communities, with members of our chaplaincy leading the intercessions.

Two years ago, we decided to purchase a church building in Chef-Boutonne which is geographically central to Poitou-Charentes. This was possible thanks to a generous legacy, and it was felt that it would encourage a sense of unity, to be a focus, a 'home'. There are now two regular services per month with coffee being served after, giving people the chance to chat or browse a small library of Christian books and resources for private prayer or home groups, including Gospel CDs. Bishop Robert dedicated the Church of Christ the Good Shepherd in 2022 after improvements had been carried out to comply with safety regulations. We now have a kitchen and indoor toilet (such luxury!) and access for those with mobility issues but perhaps the most welcome improvement was the installation of an efficient, effective heating system! The garden was very wild but last year it was tamed professionally and has proved to be a great asset, extending the range of activities for fellowship and outreach we are able to offer.

Games afternoons, a Christmas wreathmaking workshop, beetle drives, concerts and afternoon teas are open to all members of the community and bring-and-share lunches after services prove popular in the summer months. Monthly Sunday lunches at a local restaurant have also become part of the Chef-Boutonne routine. Local residents have certainly noticed the activity at the church and have asked about us. We are trying to hold such events in other parts of the chaplaincy too, such as the recent 'Advent Antics' in Cognac, an annual Christmas fundraiser.

Over the past year we have seen long-term members of the chaplaincy return to the UK for a variety of reasons. However, certainly in Chef-Boutonne, we have also welcomed several new faces who have started to attend services regularly. In the summer months, those with second homes in France boost our numbers as do holiday visitors, many of whom say they will return next year and join us in worship.

Yes, we do face challenges in the coming year, particularly in trying to raise the profile of the chaplaincy and building our congregations. Our website [www.churchinfrance.com](http://www.churchinfrance.com) is kept up-to-date with information of services and events, and we have an attractive Facebook page. I hope that by the time you read this, we shall be a step nearer to having a new chaplain to take us forward. We have put ourselves in God's hands and trust that He will guide us; His will be done.

# MISSION

## SHORT TERM MISSION

BY TIM WRIGHT, ICS COUNCIL



**In 1 Thessalonians, Paul is writing to a church that knows loss (4:13f) and he is seeking to reassure the believers in the local church of God's goodness. He has heard encouraging things about them and urges them to hold firm to the end. One day the Lord will return (5:2) and all will be revealed and will be well. Encourage each other, he says (5:11), with these words.**

For nearly two hundred years, ICS has looked for ways to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to those away from home and to be a beacon of hope to those struggling with life. Alongside the provision of godly ministers to churches under our care and looking for new opportunities to plant churches across the world, 'short-term mission' has been integral to that. This ministry goes right back to our origins.

In the Victorian and Edwardian era, clergy were sent out for long periods of time to minister alongside those spending a season away from the UK. As skiing and camping holidays took off, our forebears recognised the opportunities these presented to us. Some may also remember the 'Young-at-Heart' outreach. There are multiple stories of people encountering God through our chaplaincies. To God be the glory.



St Bernard's, Wengen in summer





'Therefore encourage one another  
and build each other up,  
just as in fact you are doing'

Whatever we call it, be it Seasonal, Resort or Short-term Mission it is part of ICS's vision to be present in cultures where English is not the first language but where there is a demand for our ministry. This has enabled many through prayer, proclamation, and pastoral care to come to a living experience of God's love, the assurance of sins forgiven in Jesus Christ, the knowledge of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the hope of life to come.

Last November, ICS Council spent some significant time working out what Short-term Mission might look like in our generation. This is not a new work and previous Councils have periodically undertaken the same task. The last major review was the Truscott Report in 1998. Our world is very different from then. In 1998 the internet was just beginning but now there are adults who have never known a world without it. Cheap foreign holidays and city breaks were just an aspiration for most whereas today many will take multiple trips for business or leisure. Major sporting events like the recent Rugby World Cup and the forthcoming Olympic Games draw English speakers from across the globe into a short-lived but intense community. Some of our chaplaincies experience significant change as the 'swallows' descend for extended summer or winter periods, and this stretches the residents who see the need but wonder how to meet it. The churches in Wengen and Zermatt remain close to ICS's heart and many, like me, discovered ICS through them. This is a world that was unimaginable twenty-five years ago.

On Council we wrestled with the question: 'Is there still a need for short-term mission?', and if so, to whom should it be aimed? More work needs to be done to understand the possible shape our mission might take in 2024 and beyond. I am excited and I think that alongside others we can build on our heritage and existing skills to usher in a new season but of course, 'Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain' (Psalm 127:1).

I have been asked by the Council to convene a small group to imagine what this might look like.

Paul ends his letter to the Thessalonians by saying: 'Pray for us' (1 Thessalonians 5:25).

### Sisters and brothers encourage one another.



St Peter's Zermatt, and (R) chaplain with tourists

# A Q U I T A I N E

T O N Y L O M A S

Chaplain in Aquitaine

**After almost eight years as Chaplain of Aquitaine, Tony Lomas has decided to retire from full-time incumbency at the end of May. This will however not mark the end of his ministry in the Diocese in Europe, as he is now looking forward to offering locum ministry in other parts of France and Europe. Here he reflects on the time he and his wife Ingrid have spent in this lovely part of southwest France.**

Many of you will be aware that Aquitaine is one of the biggest chaplaincies in Europe with currently fourteen places of worship spread over an area of around 28,000 km<sup>2</sup>. It encompasses some of the world's finest vineyards and much-loved holiday destinations, especially along the Dordogne River, and it has strong historic links with the Kingdom of England: it's the birthplace of the Plantagenet royal dynasty.

In many ways, my time here has been somewhat overshadowed by two major issues: Brexit and COVID. We moved to France about a month after the Brexit referendum in 2016 and, as a chaplaincy, we were very involved in the process of helping British ex-pats to navigate through the bureaucracy of post-Brexit residency registration. However, after dire warnings about the number of people who would flee back to Britain to avoid these requirements, we actually lost very few of our members and indeed welcomed new members from those people who decided to flee in the opposite direction! Sadly though, there has been a particular impact on our 'Swallows' - the second-home owners who cannot now spend as much time in France as they would like.

Then, in March 2020, COVID hit. Charlotte Sullivan (then our Assistant Curate and now Chaplain of Maisons-Laffitte) and I hastily put together an online service for the first Sunday and arranged to meet on weekdays by Zoom to read Morning and Evening Prayer with anyone else who wished to join us. Little did we know quite what a fundamental impact this would have on the chaplaincy or that four years later we would still be maintaining this online presence. With the huge physical separation between our church communities, the use of online worship and meetings has allowed people from all corners of our chaplaincy to get to know each other and to regularly pray together. I believe that one of our most important developments over this period has been the depth and breadth of prayer in the chaplaincy. Supported by our amazing ministry team of retired Clergy, Readers and Congregational Worship Leaders we have maintained a regular 'virtual' prayer life including teaching on prayer, daily prayer times during the COP environmental summits and two 12-hour prayer vigils focussing on the mission of our chaplaincy and, more recently, peace in Gaza and Ukraine. I am greatly indebted to The Revd David Marshall who seems to have taken on the role of our Chaplaincy Prayer Champion. All in all, I truly believe that the chaplaincy is stronger and more focused today than at any time in my incumbency, very largely due to the fellowship and relationship building that has been possible through our varied online ministry.

There really isn't space to write about everything that has been of particular importance during my time in Aquitaine.



Ministering in the south of France has some fairly obvious benefits but the real joy for me over this time has been the wonderful people that God has drawn to this area. This chaplaincy really is a family that loves nothing more than coming together in prayer and worship. I know that whoever finds themselves called to come here next will receive the same level of love, respect, and support with which I have been blessed. Many of us feel that the Spirit is moving in a very exciting way here now and I look forward to handing the baton on to someone with vision and enthusiasm to lead the chaplaincy into a bright future.

Finally, I would like to say a very personal 'thank you' to Richard Bromley for his encouragement and support. It has never been particularly difficult to persuade him to visit Bordeaux, a city he seems to love, but his experience and almost boundless enthusiasm for mission and ministry has really been inspirational.



Baptism



Licensing of Anne Penfold with ministry team



Harvest Festival in Bordeaux 2019  
Tony and Charlotte with Richard



# Christ Church Rio de Janeiro

J O N N Y G U M B E L  
Rector, Christ Church Rio de Janeiro

**The Lord had said to Abram: ‘Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.’ (Genesis 12:1)**

**In August 2022, Jonny Gumbel, his wife Tara and their four children left Brighton and headed off to Rio de Janeiro, trying to be obedient to God’s call to ‘go’ and not knowing what to expect.**



In our first year, we were aware of all the things we were leaving behind: the culture and language we knew, the relationships which had held us and defined us, and the lifestyle we had got used to. We had loved our thirteen years in Brighton, the city we’d been in for the whole of our married life, where we’d had our children, and where we were part of a church that we loved.

We had felt a strong calling to St Peter’s in Brighton all those years before, and now we were starting again with another clear sense of call. It had all started with a tiny thought: ‘I wonder whether we should consider Brazil again?’. Tara had felt called to Brazil as a teenager, but it had never happened, and then suddenly it began to stir again. We remembered that we had received an email about Christ Church Rio three years before, and now there was a vacancy. There were some clear signs that this is what God was asking us to do next.

So, we came to Brazil, feeling convinced that God was sending us, but not knowing what we were supposed to do here. I held on to the words Jesus said to Saul at his conversion: ‘Go into the city and you will be told what you must do’ (Acts 9.6). It seemed like all our energy was spent on trying to get here, praying that God would show us what to do when we finally arrived. We knew we should pray, so we started by gathering anyone who was around to pray each morning. Then we increased it to three times a day. We didn’t really have a plan for the church other than to pray.

When Abram goes to Canaan, immediately there is a famine. His obedience seems to make things worse for him and his family, not better. Our first year in Rio de Janeiro was one of the hardest we have ever been through, with all kinds of problems that we never anticipated: relational problems, health problems, practical problems with our housing, and unexpected opposition. In addition, all our weaknesses seemed to be exposed. There were times when Tara and I asked one another whether we would have said ‘yes’ if we had known what it was going to be like and were not sure what the answer was!

As they respond to God's call, Abram and Sarai go through some difficult and painful experiences, but they also see miracles: angels appearing, extraordinary provision and protection, daring rescues, fire from heaven, miraculous births, promises fulfilled. Refusing to go might hide our weaknesses, but it might also hide God's power.

When God calls Abram, He promises to bless him. I held onto this in those early months in Rio de Janeiro: God had promised to bless us, and so He would bless us in this unfamiliar land. God has given us a wonderful team whom we love. He has provided for us financially in supernatural ways. And we have managed to do far more in our first year than we could have imagined, with changes taking place more rapidly and people arriving to join the congregation. There have been great challenges, but there have also been great miracles. It has been beyond anything we could have hoped for.



Encouragement

# Never too old..

BY KATHERINE FORTIER

Reader at St John and St Philip, The Hague

## Never Too Old to Learn; Never Too Young to Serve

There are so many ways in which our daily lives partition us into 'silos' with people very similar to ourselves. At school, or even university, our classmates are nearly or even exactly our own age. In our neighbourhoods we are surrounded by those of a similar income level. At work, we are likely to find ourselves interacting with colleagues of a similar ability range. In retirement, our leisure clubs tend to consist of fellow retirees who are free during the day.

But church life is different. The thing that binds us together is the love of Christ. Church is a truly multi-generational space where we meet people from all over the world, of different abilities and incomes. This is perhaps especially true of chaplaincies in the Diocese of Europe. It is certainly the case at St John and St Philip, in The Hague.

The Hague is a very international city; it brands itself the 'City of Peace and Justice', with many international organisations like the *Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons*, *International Criminal Court*, and the *International Court of Justice*. If you come to St John & St Philip's by tram your closest stop is the Peace Palace. It is no wonder then, that our congregation boasts members from over forty different nationalities.





In our church life together, we try to encourage everyone, of every age and ability, to get involved in the building up of our community. One of our favourite outreach projects is our contribution to the ecumenical *Straatpastoraat* (Street Ministry). Every Friday evening, a hot three-course meal is served to the unhoused folk of The Hague, following a chapel service. About 30 - 40 people come for the chapel service; 120 come for the meal. Our church takes it in hand one Friday each month to provide all the food, do all the cooking, and help with the serving. It has proved a wonderful way to especially draw new members into the life of the church, creating bonds of friendship and a sense of common purpose.

One of the joys of emerging from the isolation of the COVID lockdowns has been the return of Junior Church! From a pancake party on Shrove Tuesday to a shadow puppet Advent Service, the kids have been making friends and growing in faith – they are an encouragement to all of us.

Our chaplaincy has recently also become more involved with the Mission to Seafarers in nearby Rotterdam, one of the biggest and busiest ports in all of Europe. This means that there are opportunities even for those with less mobility or those who have busy schedules to do something as simple as knitting warm woollen caps for the seafarers.

In The Hague, we have found it important to look for ways for everyone to play a role. We have some quite elderly folk who are very good at reading out the Bible lessons: they know how to speak slowly, with meaning. Our university students have offered wonderful prayers of intercession: they have a passion for justice and care for creation. One member who is not confident speaking in English yet, is our most ardent gardener, and through the modern miracle that is Zoom, one of our most dedicated and faithful attendees of weekday Morning Prayer is someone who is shut in at home due to health problems and caring for a spouse with dementia.

**Encouragement is everywhere!**

ALL SAINTS AMERSFOORT

# A NEW HOME

G O D ' S P R O V I S I O N , G O D ' S T I M I N G

GRANT CROWE  
Chaplain of All Saints Amersfoort



Grant, Thirza, Jolanda and Callum Crowe

All Saints was planted on 20 December 2015. At the start, we were meeting in an unused Roman Catholic church building. The intention had always been for that building to be sold, and when the deal was completed, we were on the move. God provided a new home in October 2017. We settled, in a converted large barn which was used for cultural and community events *cultuurboerderij* in Dutch. Each week we set up everything from scratch – like many of our chaplaincies. When we moved, I think some were challenged as to what ‘church’ is. Perhaps we had thought that a church only met in a recognised church building.

When we read 1 Thessalonians where it says: ‘to the church’ we could automatically think of something like our own chaplaincy. Yet the first Christian communities often met in private dwellings – Paul writes about the ‘church that meets in your home’ (e.g. Colossians 4:15, Philemon v2). In one way, by being in our barn, an ordinary building, we were perhaps catching a small glimpse of those times.

God used that new home in many good ways. Our previous building had a capacity to seat 500+. We were a community of around 70 adults and children, so people were seated all over the place. And singing wasn’t so great. Our barn was much smaller. People were sitting next to each other; deeper community was being formed. Worship was greatly appreciated, as people could hear each other worship. One person offered to help with our music, simply because our venue was so ‘informal’. From then on, maybe we focused on what church is really about and grew further in that...



Now, another move beckons! This time a permanent one. Perhaps, in the past, we were not ready but now we are. In mid-2022 we made formal contact with the board of a church building, here in Amersfoort, which was no longer being used for Sunday worship. By the end of 2022, we felt God had led us to offer to take ownership. At the end of March 2023, we took formal ownership. Decisions were made about the renovation and a team was established to run this project. As I write, the main work will be completed in January. There are some final building tasks we will complete as a church community. So, God willing, by the time you read this, we will be about to move or will have moved into our new home in March.

It could have been said, this took a long time. However, the time allowed quality discussions and discernment over necessary decisions. There were meetings where we wondered how the redevelopment would go, and yet by the end of the meeting, God had brought a deep unity on the matter. It was a privilege to have the opportunity to consider: 'What do we really want to have in a church building, how does that building reflect our vision as All Saints?'

We look forward to the next chapter, a permanent home! Asking how we can be a blessing to the local community. What is God leading us into? We move, knowing that in His eyes we are ready. Maybe the words of Gandalf are appropriate: 'A wizard is never late, Frodo Baggins. Nor is he early; he arrives precisely when he means to.'

Our Lord's timing to bring us to a new home, was never late or early but when he meant us to arrive...



Church work party on building



Worship area, final stage January

'Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing!'



All Saints Worship, Kosmik, December 2022



The new church building

# A C O M M U N I T Y

MINISTRY AT THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN FREIBURG

BY CHAPLAIN VINOD VICTOR

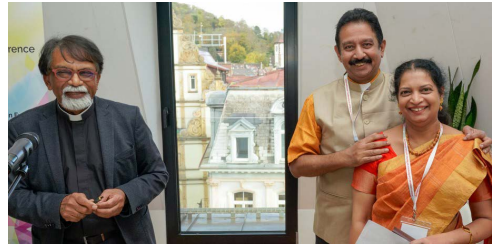
**At the Pentecost service last year, the Anglican Church Freiburg (ACF) provided opportunity for people to worship in their heart languages – we counted over forty languages formally used at the service. The multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-continental and multi-generational community caters to the English-speaking worshippers in the university town of Freiburg im Breisgau serving the Dreiländer region where Germany, Switzerland and France meet. The parish council represented by all the continents, is symbolic of the inclusive nature of the chaplaincy.**

A community of grace, welcoming, inviting, inclusive and caring for the congregation is committed to, 'building each other up, binding each other's wounds, becoming each other's refuge and being the fragrance of Christ in this little town'. While all the challenges that churches generally face in Europe are also true for ACF, the community is committed to face those with faith and resilience.

Worship is the core of the life of the church. Though completely Anglican in nature, conduct and content, an openness to different worship traditions from the whole Anglican Communion is worth mentioning.

Blessed with an array of music leaders who are able to include music from the world over, ACF tries to retain its unique Anglican identity fully aware of the context in which it is placed.

Age-specific ministry in small groups is the strategy of growth we are trying out. The children's church caters to the spiritual nurture of children. The younger and older teenagers meet separately with events that suit their tastes. The young adults group meets for bible studies and fellowship discussing challenges they face in the modern world. There are several events planned for men and women; they meet regularly for breakfasts, prayer, fellowship, hikes, and outings. The seniors have their monthly meeting of Wise Ones, and the singles



Archdeacon Dr Leslie Nathaniel with Vinod and Molly

also meet together to discuss their unique challenges. The home groups meet in different localities for fellowship and nurture. Fellowship groups like the Families in Faith, the Singing Group and the Conversation Group continue to offer avenues for people to meet around their interests. Our ecumenical engagement with the local communities, global partners and the combined services with the Old Catholics and the Landeskirche add beauty to our worship. The Chaplain shares the vicarage with the Old Catholic Minister in the same campus, and the worship space is shared with the Landeskirche.

Teamwork is another strategy that is working well in ACF. We have several teams: Welcome, Pastoral Care, Hospitality, Stewardship, Safeguarding, Communications, Inclusion, Vision, and Ecumenical. Our digital presence is maintained through an active website and weekly newsletters. The major challenges the chaplaincy faces are growth in numbers and financial viability. The core group that regularly attends church on Sunday is small and this needs to grow. Financial viability and stability continue to be a challenge. With people from all over the world attending services ensuring that *all* feel included, equally and justly, part of the life of the church, calls for persistence and concrete action. The potential of the congregation was evident when we hosted the International and Ecumenical Conference on Racial Justice in November 2023,

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organised by the Racial Justice Unit of the Church of England Diocese in Europe where over a hundred delegates from over thirty-five nations attended and deliberated on one of the key issues that the church is grappling with. Yes, the local church is always a unique collection of people. With ordinary eyes it could be easy to feel that you do not belong to each other. But that is exactly the beauty of being in Christ, and at ACF you find that beautiful community of Christ. The Victor family celebrated our third Christmas in Freiburg, and we can vouch, ACF is a community that encourages and builds each other up. Thanks be to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the corner stone and the soul and essence of the life of the chaplaincy!



Women's lunch



Walking Group



Confirmations

# DEVOTIONAL

BY SARAH-JANE KING  
ICS ASSOCIATE MINISTRY PARTNER IN LEUVEN

STAY ALERT *Stay alert!* STAY ALERT

'Keep your eyes peeled!' my parents used to say to me as a child. A reminder to be alert – to opportunities, or to threats. It struck me as a funny phrase. I used to think of pickled onions in a jar and imagine my eyeballs like those tiny vegetables, peeled and staring through my glasses.

Paul is telling his friends to be alert. Because Jesus died for us so that we can live together with Him. And not to try going it alone, but to encourage one another and to build each other up. Just as in fact you are doing. We're already doing this! The key is to notice and keep at it.

When I pray for the congregation in Leuven, my heart sings from encouragement. Who they are in Christ and how they do things. Whether that's the support of my PTO clergy colleagues and wardens, the warm hospitality of our welcomers, the wonder of seekers and new believers, the skill of our refugee support volunteers, or the desire for greater obedience to and love for Jesus, that's shared in our home groups – I'm filled with gratitude for the genuine encouragement they are.

These days, it's easy to find stuff to grumble about or get us down. That's where old Screwtape, or the spirit that is not of God, would have us: disgruntled with the world or the Church with a big 'C' or small; bored, overwhelmed, lacking in direction or confidence. We need to watch out for that because it's not what God wants. We have a gospel to proclaim. Paul is right: we need, through prayer, actively to be alert to the encouragement already around us. It's fuel for hope.

There are of course times when we might need support. Clergy well-being is deservedly beginning to receive attention. We need to look out for how we, and each other, are doing – and take action when needed.

Being part of the commitment to mission that ICS embodies, together with the prayers of the ICS family, is a huge encouragement to me. I know people are praying for us, and we are so grateful. Thank you. I'm looking forward to seeing you at Conference. Maybe I'll bring some pickled onions with me, too!

'Therefore encourage one another  
and build each other up,  
just as in fact you are doing'

