

SYNOD REPORT 2020

What an unexpected year this has been! And what an extraordinary number of new words have been added to our everyday vocabulary. Coronavirus, lockdown, COVID-secure, Zoom – which some wit compared to a séance, with its constant refrain of “Is anybody there?”, “I can hear you but I can’t see you.”, etc., and someone else to the multi-windowed opening scene in The Muppet Show – as well as new meanings for fire-break, travel corridors, and self-isolation.



Our Congregation in El Cotillo is now looking for a new home

‘Being church’ in 2020 has involved steep learning curves that none of us could have foreseen. Our worshipping life in El Cotillo underwent a dramatic change just a week before lockdown in March, as the hotel that had been the Cotillo congregation’s home for nearly two and a half years announced major renovations that meant that they

needed access to the space that we used. Of course, within seven days, we couldn’t have used it anyway but as the year draws to a close, we are still looking for a suitable venue for what was, and can be again, a thriving congregation in its own right.

Like so many Chaplaincies we have learned how to offer our worship online, for those able to access it, and in so doing have found that we have reached many more people than those who would normally be in church on a Sunday. And we have been able to draw on the rich resources of those near and far – our Congregational Worship Leaders, our Reader-in-Training, our PTO’s both here and in the UK, and intercessors and readers from across the island and the UK. At the same time, the Chaplaincy team has worked hard to provide pastoral care for everyone connected with the Chaplaincy – initially by telephone, email, texts and messaging during lockdown, and latterly also by meeting weekly for fellowship in small groups on restaurant terraces. And our St James WhatsApp Prayer Group, which grew out of the Lenten study course on prayer that we completed just before lockdown, has gone from strength to strength and is now in the hands of our newly appointed Prayer Co-ordinator.

Of course, we are very aware that our online presence is not unique, as churches worldwide have responded to the need to provide ongoing opportunities for worship during the pandemic crisis. Neither are we unique in our continued involvement with charities, such as those that we support by



World Day of Prayer Service before the pandemic



Delivering food to the MCM church foodbank

giving away 10% of our income (AECC – the Spanish Association Against Cancer, formerly Fuerteventura Against Cancer; and Tear Fund, who work in international relief and development). And, similarly, neither is our our work alongside Misión Cristiana Moderna, the Assembly of God Pentecostal church in the Fuerteventuran capital of Puerto del Rosario, which cares for those who are refugees, homeless or living in poverty, where since the beginning of Advent 2019 we have

regularly donated food and toiletries and fresh food to be used in the daily provision of hot meals. But we have come to understand that what's important is not whether we are doing something that nobody has ever thought of before. What's important is that through our partnership with these organisations we are doing something to respond to the need that is right in front of us.

We managed to hold our delayed Chaplaincy AGM at the beginning of July, with 11 people socially-distanced in the Chaplaincy house and outside on the patio and 7 (non-voting) people 'present' on Zoom – via a laptop sitting on a turntable, so it could be turned to face whoever was speaking. Our new Wardens have found themselves doing unexpected things, as they formed the core of the team responsible for ensuring a safe environment for worship.

At the end of October, we returned to 'live' worship in Corralejo on Sunday evenings (alongside our continuing online worship provision). We continue to abide by local COVID-19 restrictions with restricted numbers, mask-wearing, use of hand gel, social distancing, temperature-checking, a track-and-trace system and thorough cleaning routines. Unsurprisingly our 'live' congregation remained smaller than normal for late autumn because some people are wisely self-isolating or shielding, and tourist numbers are much lower than usual. In our live services we are using the pre-



Our 2019 Carol Service overflowing the building.
And below it 2020 first sitting of two.

recorded readings, prayers of intercessions and sermon from the online service, alongside the other elements of the Communion service. So, whether people are joining with us via the YouTube service or in the church building, the church family in all its parts is sharing the same experience of worship, in as much as is possible.

As we look ahead to 2021, we are acutely aware that we cannot presume what the new year will bring. But we pray, we hope, and we trust that there will be a resolution to the current pandemic crisis that will enable us to pick up the threads of our lives again and weave them into something that will be fit for purpose in the future.

Rev Bob Horrocks
Chaplain for Fuerteventura