**Report of the Priest-in-Charge**

**2021 Annual Church Meeting**

**21st March 2021**

It is impossible to adequately describe all the troubles and disruption that we have had to face over the past twelve months. There have been many challenges. We have been fearful, annoyed, stressed out and just tired from it all. This you already know. It goes without saying that so many of our usual activities at St Alban’s – as so much of our lives – have simply gone on hold. Instead of going over the obvious, I’d just mention a few things that we’ve had to cancel over this past year – just to remind us of where we’ve been these months:

Coffee-hour, Sunday School, Children’s Corner in the back of the church, Alban Jam, the organ (we miss you, Katherine – and not just for the organ), pre-Christmas lunch and carol-singing, Baggersee, Liebfrauenberg, Advent concert, visiting with one another, praying with one another, sharing our lives with one another… we could go on.

We need to remember who we are, what we have done together and what we will do again – although one of the gifts of this time of pandemic has been an opportunity to look more deeply at all our activities, see what we will bring into the future and what we would decide to leave behind.

I am truly thankful to the Dominican community for their openness and spirit of collaboration during this time, which has been difficult for them as well. I am also grateful to our Churchwardens for their support and guidance, helping us to meet safely and keep on top of things. The Church Council and the Ministry Team have been super, even as we have not been able to meet in person. There were also many others providing hand gel, wiping down seats after worship, keeping the connection, our sacristans, welcomers and everyone who joins in to make St Alban’s what it is – even in these perilous times. Thank You all.

And even though many of our activities had to be severely limited, we’ve been able to weather the storm – some of us better than others. I am very aware of the difficulties that have experienced by those who have felt isolated, fearful, overwhelmed and even despairing at times. It’s not all behind us, of course, but we’re getting there. And we have done some things in 2020 nonetheless.

We celebrated seventy years of the restoration of Anglican worship to Strasbourg, somewhat muted, given the circumstances, but an important occasion for all of us. We were happy to have the Archdeacon, Meurig Williams, with us – one of his last commitments in that role before moving to return to parish ministry. We look forward to meeting our new Archdeacon, Peter Hooper, in due course. And we are still hoping to have Bishop Robert back with us later in the present year. We’re still waiting to confirm a date for his visit.

We’ve also been able to move a number of our activities online. Some worship services, regular prayer meetings and Bible and topical studies, discussion groups and meetings have continued. The Women’s Bible Study, under the leadership of Catherine Emezie, has also been meeting.

The Children’s Class has been ongoing, meeting lately at the Rivier apartment. For a time we were gathering at the Chaplaincy House. You can read about what we’ve been up to over this past year in the compendium of reports that you should have received this week.

L’ACAS has received a new burst of energy this past year, as people sponsored Frederick William-Smith’s walk-a-thon around the house ninety times for every year of life that the good Lord had given him thus far. Thousands of euros were raised in support of ACAS, and these funds are already being put to good use at home and abroad.

I also want to make mention of Sarah Palmer for keeping our website updated. Beth Zehr, our Safeguarding Officer, fulfills a vital role in helping to ensure that St Alban’s remains a safe place for the children and vulnerable adults that come among us.

And finally, another development this year has been a new home for the monthly Eucharist of our Malagasy members. It had been hosted for many years by the Pères Oblats in Robertsau. However, the building has been set for demolition, and we are no longer able to use those facilities for worship. We have now begun meeting at the Franciscan convent, a venue that had been used previously by the Malagasy community. I am grateful for the continued ministry of Voahangy Ramananjatovo, for her service as Worship Leader, and for Richard Razafindratsima’s leadership as president of the local Anglican Malagasy community.

The Annual Meeting is always an important time for us, aside from all the necessary business that needs to be done, to step back and look to our future under the Spirit’s guidance. Where have we been? Where are we headed? As I have done in the past, I have outlined in this report some specific areas for which I would plan to set out priorities for my own ministry over the coming year.

1. Post-Covid (?) Rebuilding and Spiritual Development

There is so much that needs rebuilding after this period of pandemic and sporadic lockdowns. We need to get back to the business of attending to the spiritual growth of our membership. St Alban’s remains a place for transformation into the image of Christ. That takes many forms: Sunday worship, special services, Tuesday Prayers, Effata gatherings for ecumenical prayer, *Frankly Speaking* discussions and more. Much of these have suffered considerably over the past year. Looking back at last year’s report, this was an area to which I had wanted to give more attention, but obviously other matters intervened! I will take it up again and see what we can do to be nurtured in faith, to be strengthened in discipleship and to encourage one another on our spiritual path. Please let’s talk with one another about this.

1. Areas of Diocesan Concern

The 2020 Diocesan Synod has raised concerns for the common life of our diocese for which Chaplaincies are requested to give input. Over the coming year I would like to dedicate some in-person sessions of *Frankly Speaking*, when public health conditions permit, to begin gathering comments to the following areas. These comments will be further processed and discussed by the Chaplaincy Council before giving our input to the Diocese. The objective is not that we reach firm conclusions on these matters but that we at least have a beginning conversation and consider possible actions. The three areas to be discussed will be:

* the Environment, piloted by St Alban’s Environmental Committee;
* Living in Love and Faith, concerning matters of human sexuality, relationships and identity;
* Diversity and Race.

Another area identified by the Synod is Clergy Well-Being, which will become part of a broader discussion in the context of Stewardship and Sustainability (below).

1. Stewardship and Sustainability Review

I would like to form a small committee, including some Council members, that would be charged with developing a long-term plan for the management of our God-given resources (stewardship) and in view of a more sustainable future for St Alban’s (sustainability). We do well to examine certain trends in our operations that need attention as we envision our future ministry together. These include missional objectives, leadership resources (clergy and lay), finances and all-around thinking outside the box about where God is leading us in the coming years. The Chaplaincy Council will begin discussing this process at its next meeting on 28 April.

Corinna and I are very thankful for your continued love and support. We look forward to more years of fruitful ministry among you as we grow together in the grace of Christ.

Respectfully Submitted,

The Rev Dr Mark Barwick, Priest-in-Charge