

All Saints, Hérault: Priest-in-Charge's Report for 2016

Our Chaplaincy Council's report for 2016 tells a good story about how we have shared our Christian journeys together over the year. The team has done well: the Council has vacancies for new members in 2017 and I look forward to an already great team being renewed and strengthened.

I'm going to mention just a few things in the report that I think are important.

Safeguarding is often a subject that people complain about having to deal with, all the paperwork and time involved. But please believe me when I say that this is not a paper exercise only, designed just to give a good impression. I can think of three or four examples of people who were convicted of abuse in parishes near to ours in the UK. We are very fortunate to have Jenny Morgan as our expert Safeguarding Officer: she is thorough and sensible.

From time to time the rumour that I am retiring soon has come back to me. This is just a rumour! Succession planning is a sensible thing, to prepare for when this eventually does happen. God willing, I shall give plenty of warning.

I feel that I must mention Ros and Terry Heley, who have returned to England, after living here for several years longer than they had originally planned. They were very supportive to me personally in the early difficult days and I shall always be grateful to them.

My final comment on the report is to say how pleased I am that Steven Hopkins is exploring his vocation for ministry. Please continue to pray for him and for Nadia and the girls as they embark on this great adventure. There's always an element of risk in any adventure, otherwise it wouldn't be an adventure.

As always I thank very much our great team for their terrific work over the year and for their personal support to me:

- Patricia and Nigel, our hard-working churchwardens;
- Francis our treasurer and Barbara before him;
- Andy for the ever-improving website;
- Jenny for looking after our safeguarding;
- Chris (Marshall) and her team of helpers for their work on our events;

- our harmonious music team, Alison, Bobbie, and Carol;
- Julie and Delia for representing us at Synod;
- all those others who just muck in when they see that help is needed.

I say again that admin is not my thing, so thank you to Delia for keeping me on the straight and narrow.

As for next year, I hope that we shall continue to be positive, tolerant and honest with each other. Let me unpack that sentence a little!

Positive I think that 2016 was a dreadful year for Britain and for the world. Brexit and the American election result are examples of a negative and inward-looking attitude that I think is profoundly unhealthy and dangerous. So, first of all, let's keep working to make our fellowship in Christ positive: let's think the best of each other instead of the worst.

Tolerant Let's not give in to the current fashion for discrimination and thinly-veiled racism.

Honesty has been particularly lacking in public life during 2016. People believed in lies told them by politicians despite being given proof that they were lies. People no longer trust facts, apparently, but instead believe what they read on Facebook or Twitter. Let's reject this preposterous notion of the 'post-truth age'.

In continuing to follow these basic principles we shall be following the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's go forward into 2017 with confidence!

Roger Smith
Priest-in-Charge

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