

# European Anglicans

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Diocese in Europe | July 2020



Focus on June Diocesan Synod Gathering





## **European Anglicans (July 2020)**

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@ DioceseinEurope



Damian Thwaites

*Dear Friends,*

Welcome to this issue of *European Anglicans*, our online magazine for the Diocese.

Our first two issues last year were just beginning to find a sense of balance and content. Another offering had been planned for March ... and then Coronavirus lockdown came into effect. During the past three months, our web coverage has prioritised Diocesan guidance and updates on managing Covid-19, health advice from public authorities, resources for prayer and reflection during these times, information on digital resources available to support virtual worship, and great stories of chaplaincies' digital innovations!

Given where we are with lockdown now and its very gradual easing across continental Europe, I thought it would be good to focus this *European Anglicans* specifically on the virtual Diocesan Synod Gathering on 23 June, sharing perspectives and preaching from Bishop Robert and Bishop David, and reflections from our Archdeacons on the impact of Covid-19 in their areas across the Diocese. In addition, you are invited warmly to share your experiences with us for the video we're planning on life under lockdown in the Diocese.

I hope you like the content and new look design of this issue, and I welcome your feedback on it.

*With good wishes,  
Damian*

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**Presidential Address  
for Diocesan Synod Gathering  
23 June 2020**

**By The Rt Revd  
Dr Robert Innes**



I remember the encounter well. It was early March, and I was meeting an old medical friend for lunch in Brussels. But as soon as I met him, he behaved strangely. He refused to shake my hand, instead offering me his elbow. He enquired more than usually about my health. When I told him about my travel plans, he wanted to know whether my visits were essential and whether I couldn't cancel them. Then he began explaining to me in great detail about the Coronavirus, infection rates, morbidity rates, and how much all our lives were going to have to change. It was a wake-up call! At that moment I realised the seriousness of the crisis that was coming upon us. And a week later we were all in lockdown.

So it is that, since March, for the great majority of us, our lives have been transformed. We have been physically isolated from one another, and our church buildings have been closed. At a personal level, my niece's church wedding has been cancelled, and the funeral of a priest in our family is taking place at the crem. with max 20 people present. The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have been massive on physical wellbeing, mental health, on our elderly, on our children, on our young people. Covid-19 is a social, health and economic crisis across Europe of a magnitude unparalleled in our generation.

In these conditions of fear and uncertainty, church life has been especially important. Our buildings have been closed. But the community of the church has been meeting virtually and pastoral care has continued

through phone calls, appreciative messages and acts of kindness. Jesus is alive, and so is his church.

“ **I want to extend my sincere thanks to all** ”

members of our chaplaincies and congregations who have adapted to these changed circumstances with remarkable agility, and who have sustained community life through these strange times. Many of us live in countries that are not our maternal home, and that poses additional challenges in terms of making sure we understand local rules and expectations. It can feel particularly lonely when travel is banned, when you can't visit family or when you are confined to your own home. So I am truly grateful to the whole baptised people of God in each place for the way you have adapted and cared and prayed and stayed faithful

to God and to each other during these strange times. I want to extend my sincere and appreciative thanks to our clergy and lay officers, who have sustained church life in very difficult circumstances. Many of you have shown an extraordinary ability to adapt to an on-line way of working, and you have created imaginative streamed or Zoom-based acts of worship. Work with children has continued with on-line gatherings, Godly Play and Minecraft. Members of chaplaincy councils have been gathering by Zoom. I am especially grateful to locum clergy who in some cases have kept up their pastoral and liturgical responsibilities even after returning 'home', and to churchwardens managing their chaplaincies during a vacancy. I am very aware that this work is tiring and that relationships are harder to maintain over the ether than face to face. Thank you all so much for your skilled and patient service and leadership during this first half of 2020.



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# 2019 was a very difficult year...and yet, in many respects our Diocese more than survived – it thrived!

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2019, when things were 'normal', now seems a long time ago. But we recall that 2019 had its own stresses, most particularly the uncertainty of the 'whether', 'when' and 'how' of Brexit. Many in our Diocese faced real fears regarding residence status, health care rights, pensions and employment. It was a very difficult year. And yet, in many respects, our Diocese more than survived – it thrived! Along with Bishop David, I had the privilege of visiting many chaplaincies over the year and it was a joy to see at first hand the vibrant life of our congregations and to hear stories of people coming to and growing in Christian faith. At a diocesan level we continued to strengthen our commitment in particular to safeguarding, archidiaconal ministry and communications. Andrew Caspari took up his post as Chief Operating Officer and Susan Stelfox as Head of Finance, whilst Grace Fagan joined us as Safeguarding Manager. Leslie Nathaniel and David Waller became free-standing full-time Archdeacons and Ian Tarrant was appointed to be our new Dean in Gibraltar.

The strengthening of our Diocese that these new appointments represent has, I believe, been vital for us to meet the challenges of our time. During the crisis, both bishops, the Chief Operating Officer and Director of Communications have been meeting weekly. In addition, a wider Coronavirus Co-ordinating Group that includes the archdeacons have also been meeting weekly. Bishop David and I have been writing every two weeks to our clergy, readers and churchwardens to give you what advice we can about operating chaplaincy life properly and safely. We have held a number of pan-diocesan Zoom events for clergy, readers, churchwardens, most recently in connection with Black Lives Matter. These have been well attended and have been important in building our sense of being a part of the wider diocese. In our Brussels office we have had twice weekly meetings by Zoom for all staff, and in our London Office these meetings have happened daily. All organisations whether public or private sector, charitable sector or churches have found these last months deeply challenging. The fact that our diocese

has weathered the storms so well is a tribute to a strong and cohesive senior team, and to office staff who have adapted cheerfully to very different patterns of working, I am very grateful to all our diocesan staff for their dedicated efforts to support the mission of the diocese in trying times.

But to run an effective Diocese costs money. And two-thirds of that money comes from Common Fund contributions from our chaplaincies. 2019 represented the second of three years of increases to Common Fund in line with the Financial Plan approved by Diocesan Synod.

I am delighted, humbled and thankful that, despite the very uncertain wider environment, chaplaincies contributed 94% of the requested Common Fund in 2019.

This is a huge achievement, and I am greatly heartened by your generosity. Moreover, some 20 chaplaincies made contributions to the Hardship Fund, in addition to the Common Fund. Please know my deep appreciation for your generous gifts, freely given.

During the crisis, we have all felt financial stresses. Those chaplaincies that rely on income from plate collections, special events, bookings of premises and visitors have been particularly badly hit. Because of these stresses, the Diocesan Board of Finance took the exceptional decision to give back £0.5m, made up of an across the board Common Fund rebate plus hardship grants to those chaplaincies most in need. It is, of course, very good that there is sufficient financial resilience that we can help one another in this way.

And now in late June our chaplaincies are re-opening. But with physical distancing, hygiene regulations and bans on singing, this isn't quite church life as we knew it. We are having to discover a new normal for life in a world where Covid-19 is still a threat. Having negotiated the complexities around the 'whether' and 'how' of re-opening, there are some matters that we will want to pick up and issues with which we are re-engaging.

Brexit hasn't gone away. Many of us will need to be working out our residence entitlements, healthcare and pension status in a post-Brexit Europe. As a diocese, we have identified a particular opportunity to contribute in helping retired people in France and Spain to access national registration processes. We are in the process of agreeing a contract with the UK Foreign Office, fully funded by them, which will deliver software and telephone advice to British residents particularly in the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region of France. Recruitment for a team

of staff to deliver this project will begin very soon. At the same time, we hope to contribute to a similar project run by Age in Spain and based in Barcelona.

I am going to say more about future challenges and future plans a little later. But for now, the Archdeacon of Switzerland will be talking to us shortly and will mention the Setting God's People Free agenda. This is also being billed in the national Church of England as 'Everyday Faith'. We were all set to pilot this in Switzerland and will very much want to pick this up again as soon as we can.

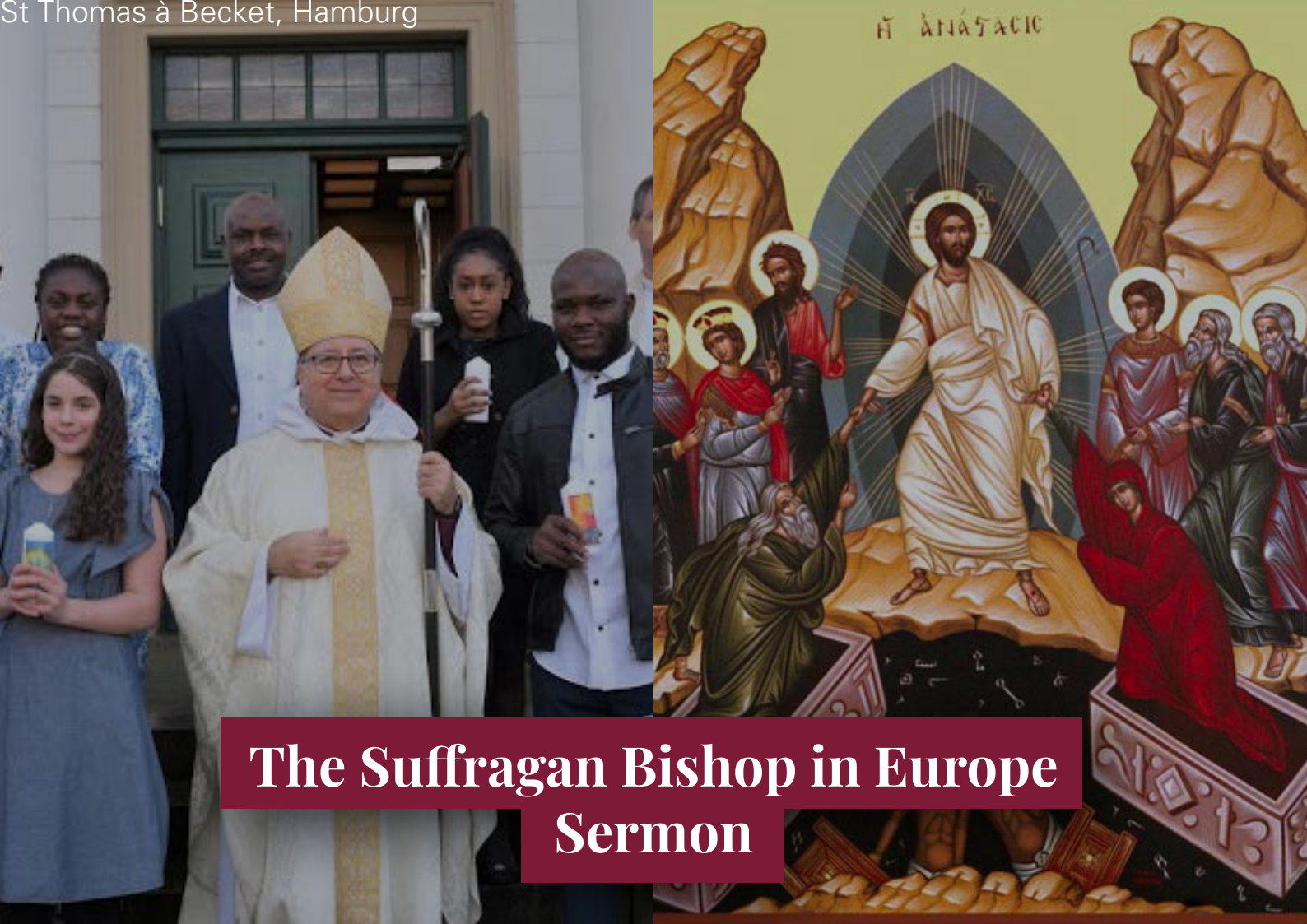
Those of you who are General Synod members will know that the Summer Residential Synod in York has been cancelled though there is to be a one day virtual gathering. I know that members of this Diocesan Synod will be keen to know what has happened with the Living in Love and Faith project relating to human sexuality. The team of 60 people involved have been continuing with their work

and a draft of the book has been sent to external readers ranging from academic theologians to lay people in the Church of England to readers from the wider Anglican Communion. However, precisely because of the importance of the project, the bishops have felt that the work should not be published until the pandemic situation allows us to give it proper priority and consideration.

As we now enter a period of deconfinement, Archdeacon Paul Vrolijk has a very apt headline for restarting church which encourages us to restart in a way that: 'all are kept safe and none are left behind'. It is all too easy to lose people. There will be opportunity a little later to think about the challenges that lie ahead. But I want to conclude this address with one of the best known parables: 'the lost sheep'. 'Which of you', says Jesus, 'having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?'







**The Suffragan Bishop in Europe  
Sermon**

**By The Rt Revd Dr  
David Hamid**



The Anglican Church of  
St Nicholas, Helsinki

**Jeremiah 31.7 – 13;  
Ephesians 2.11–22**



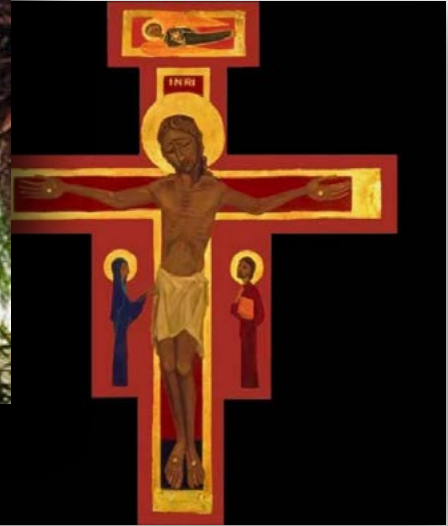


Location: St John the Evangelist, Izmir

Dear sisters and brothers, since our last diocesan synod a catastrophe has changed the entire world. The Church has been affected by this upheaval: the central activities of Christians have been suspended or altered. At this virtual gathering of Synod members, I hope we will have on our minds questions and ideas about how the experience of the last months can be used by God to enhance our future life and mission. So, at the start of our gathering I offer a couple of thoughts to get the juices flowing.

When I was the Canadian Church's mission director for Latin America and the Caribbean my boss was the Canadian Primate, Archbishop Michael Peers. Michael was fond of quoting his friend Desmond Tutu who once said that the most important thing about the Anglican Communion is that "we meet." But that is precisely what we have not been able to do for the past months.

Nevertheless, it is central to the Church's life that we meet. The elements of our liturgy – the bible, preaching, sacraments, hymns, prayers, creeds – all presume an assembly of God's people. The texts of the New Testament are addressed to you, plural, assuming they were proclaimed in the assemblies of the Church. The Creed begins, "We believe". We pray "Our Father". (Private reading of the bible was virtually unknown until the invention of the printing press, so even when we open a bible or our daily office book alone in our room, we are actually taking up in our hands the whole community of voices of the people of God, and uniting our solitary voice with theirs). The sacraments of course need an assembly. You cannot baptise yourself – you need at least a baptiser as well as the candidate.



A solitary priest might celebrate the eucharist alone, but the word "you" in "my body given for you", "my blood shed for you" is plural. So, to be able to meet is essential for the Church's worshipping life.

But our assemblies are not simply for worship. Our assemblies – and this is so important – our assemblies are also the hub of our mission. People are not made into disciples through a zoom meeting. They are made disciples through the converting power of true spirit filled community.

Rodney Stark, a US sociologist, wrote about how important it was in Church history that Christians came together to meet. He writes: Christianity did not grow because of people working miracles in the marketplaces. It did not grow because Emperor Constantine said it should. Christianity did not even grow principally because the martyrs gave it credibility and inspiration. The Church grew because Christians constituted an intense community. Stark says this intense community gave care and dignity to the homeless and poor.

The community gave strangers a place in a new city or territory. And particularly relevant these days as we strive to root out racism in our societies and in our churches, Christian communities were havens of ethnic diversity, harmony and peace. And here is a particularly relevant point from our history: Professor Stark says the early Church grew because the values of love, dedication to social service and community solidarity, before, during and after pandemics was so strong that nothing could break them.

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## **The local assembly in each place is also the one universal assembly of Christians everywhere.**

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Our assemblies which we seek to restore are essential to our worshipping life, but as intensive communities they are essential to our missionary life.

Lockdown made us think about time. Normal rhythms of life are or were suspended. Gone were daily routines of going to school or work, our regular gatherings with friends and family, our weekly assemblies as Church. A witty journalist said, in the sameness of day to day in lockdown, the only differentiating factor is whether it's time to drink coffee, or wine!

But seriously, to lose our markers of time is deadening and inhumane. That is why torturers hold their victims in a place where they cannot experience the passage of days or weeks. Thus, in lockdown we invented new ways to mark time. In the UK on Thursday evening we went into the street to clap to show our appreciation to the NHS and other essential workers. My family has virtual cocktails every Sunday evening at 5 o'clock (or more or less that time, as we usually struggle to help my 87-year-old mother get her Zoom working).

So, one thing we can carry into the next phase of our mission as a diocese is a new sensitivity to those for whom time is almost permanently stopped. How can we be more responsive to the needs of refugees stuck indefinitely in camps? To those trapped in vicious circles of modern slavery? To those awaiting months and years to get legal papers, bored as they cannot work even though they want to, migrants like us, but completely vulnerable, stuck in an uncertain holding pattern?

We can also be more sensitive to those who find time flattened and deadened: the housebound; those with chronic illness or disability;

and the many lonely in our communities. Friends, our own small taste of life in limbo has prepared us to reach out to those who do not have the privilege of restoring normality to see how we might find ways to be with them, and they with us.

Some have remarked, ironically, that during lockdown we have experienced more deeply being part of the wider diocesan family. This is also something to carry forward. St Polycarp is a great martyr of a city in our diocese, Smyrna, or Izmir. In the 2nd century he wrote about how a local assembly or congregation is joined to the Great Assembly of the Church. He wrote letters like this: "from the assembly of God which sojourns in Smyrna to the assembly of God which sojourns in Philomelium and to all the sojournings in every place of the holy and catholic assembly".

Polycarp reminds us the church is more than the local congregation: The local assembly in each place is also the one universal assembly of Christians everywhere.

This is the great mystery of the Church: because of the presence of God, our local assembly is also the whole catholic church of Christ at that moment.

Anyone who comes into our local assembly meets the whole assembly of the Church in every time and in every place. That is why the eucharistic prayer contains the words, "with angels, and archangels and all the company of heaven". When we meet again, the "new normal" should be the old normal revitalised, with a fresh sense real connection to each other; our local communities more explicitly and joyfully an expression of the wider, indeed, the universal Church.



Upon returning from exile in Babylon, the Jewish people eagerly set about restoring the glory of the temple and resuming public worship there.

There was a new optimism and spirit that we read in the lesson from Jeremiah; "I will turn their mourning into joy, I will comfort them, and give them gladness, for sorrow". Ephesians our other lesson reminds us of the nature of our new temple – it is a community, where none are strangers, where no one is excluded because of race or origin. All are of one household, one family, all citizens with the saints, within the Church which our Lord has founded.

Friends, we can carry forward this optimism and this commitment as we move back to meeting once again.

As we emerge from the pandemic, our Lord invites us to be renewed and reformed, to be that very community that Jesus envisioned, more dedicated in our mission to reach and embrace everyone, to extend the love of God among every human being. Let us carry forward in each congregation that sense of connection to each other congregation, so that every sojourning community of this diocese can truly be a confident and joyful manifestation of the Catholic Church of Christ.





# Archdeaconry of Switzerland Report for June 2020 Diocesan Synod Gathering

By The Revd Canon  
Adèle Kelham



Early in 2020 Switzerland was preparing to launch a pilot scheme for the Setting God's People Free (SGPF) initiative of the Church of England. The initial task involved the creation of an archdeaconry-wide core Team with members from each Swiss chaplaincy. Over a three-year period, the pilot scheme would aim to assess the feasibility of introducing SGPF throughout the Diocese. Members of the Team were attending a training and information event in Bristol when lockdown struck. Fortunately, all were able to get back home.

The pilot scheme continues, but at a reduced pace, as other more pressing matters assailed our chaplaincies. Despite this, SGPF has made unexpected progress as the Covid-19 Crisis encouraged some of the culture changes envisaged by the initiative, with all church members, lay and clergy, working together as equal partners facing a common challenge.

## **There have been many other positive experiences, no doubt common to all archdeaconries**

- Online worship of various kinds has been enormously creative and meaningful; and has helped people to keep in touch. Some chaplaincies have experienced a boost in attendance sometimes with

guests from overseas, others have noticed a decline in numbers. Online worship has been particularly appreciated by those with mobility problems.

- Other online activities include study groups and social gatherings. Geographic location is no longer barrier to participating. Cutting out the need for travel is beneficial for the environment.

- Contact has been maintained or improved by regular eNews (as necessary, also available by post).

- Congregations have been caring in their response e.g., phone and email networks/ blogs, which include not only the whole church community but also those beyond.

- Younger church members have offered practical help to the housebound, e.g., shopping, explaining how to use the computer to access online services.

Inevitably there have also been negative aspects:

- Bereavements, whether Covid-19 related or not, and the restrictions on funerals.

- Many felt deeply the lack of Eucharist – and of hymn singing and choirs.

- Some chaplaincies experienced a reduced attendance at online worship, particularly by church families, it was difficult to maintain youth and children's programmes.



Location: St Edward's, Lugano, Pentecost 2020



**Archdeaconry of  
Eastern, Germany and Northern Europe  
Report for June 2020  
Diocesan Synod Gathering**

By The Venerable  
Dr Leslie Nathaniel



Picture by: Julia Solonina  
Location: Berlin, Germany



*“So the Church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. Living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it increased its numbers”  
Acts 9:31.*

This narrative of the early Church continues to hold before us the model for the life and witness of the local church in our day. The book of Acts of the Apostles is often described as proclaiming the Acts of the Holy Spirit, and in terms of its content, is also referred to as Acts of the Local Churches. Each congregation in its specific place was growing in faith. The energy that was generated through fellowship, prayer, hearing the Word and through the breaking of bread, moved the church into action-based initiatives. The Church not only grew in numbers and geographically, it was also growing in spiritual depth which led to the release of enormous local energy.

The local church in question for this brief report are the numerous chaplaincies in our Diocese. In terms of my report it refers to the two archdeaconries I am responsible for. All the chaplaincies are seeking, in a time of change and the enormous challenge of coping with the Covid-19 crisis, to meet the local needs in an engaged, creative manner, confident in faith, expressing the love of Jesus, sharing responsibilities, discovering the potential in the other and moving forward with our calling to be Christ’s witnesses. This is the understanding, that I elicit in all areas of our day to day life and witness, despite these trying times of hygienic guidelines, situations of stress and in some cases increased relational problems. I would therefore like to express gratitude for the excellent cooperation and goodwill I have experienced. The diversity of worship material which has been produced is amazing. The ability to respond positively and the use of digital platforms (Zoom, Skype, Cisco Webex Meetings, GoToMeetings, pre-recorded services, live streaming etc.) to keep the chaplaincies present and engaged in their local context, has been an eyeopener. Some who are without a priest and technical support, have been linking into online services in other chaplaincies.

As our chaplaincies take stock, the silver linings that were obscured by the grief of the situation they were living through, are emerging.

## **For example:**

- In some countries there are now closer working relationships with other churches, especially in places where we do not have our own church buildings.
- The numerous gatherings of members of chaplaincy councils on digital platforms have made business by correspondence easier. Concerns and important matters are discussed, and a common mind found, before obtaining approvals through correspondence.
- Outreach through services and bible studies via digital platforms to those who were physically unable to get to the usual services through disability or distance, has found good resonance; friends of chaplaincies from other parts of the world are able to link in and be part of a service in their former congregations.
- As chaplaincies across our Diocese come out of lockdown and churches are free to reopen and hold physical services, a few things emerge: many services continue to be livestreamed or pre-recorded; where physical services are possible, the chaplaincies adhere to the Bishops guidance; some increase the capacity of their churches through use of their outdoor premises; furthermore, either a pre-registration or a ‘registration at the door’ option is being used for those wishing to attend physical services.

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**We have a lot  
to be thankful for.**  
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- People are indeed returning to church. Many have missed the physical gathering. They may not yet be able to sing together nor to touch each other while sharing the peace; but as one of my colleagues mentioned, they are returning to a beloved sacred space in which the people of God have been coming together and praying together over the years and in some cases for many centuries. Some of our churches may not be architecturally significant, nor beautiful, but all of them have inspired affection and people have discerned in them a beauty which reflects the beauty of God.



# Archdeaconry of France Report for June 2020 Diocesan Synod Gathering

By The Venerable  
Meurig Williams

RUE  
DU PONTIN  
CARRIERA  
DOU POUNTIN.

RESTAURANT  
MORENA

Picture by: Robin Benzrihem  
Location: Nice, France



## Before the Covid-19 Crisis

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Prior to the introduction of confinement in France, two areas of challenge and opportunity were already coming into clear view.

First, talking to chaplaincies in Western France south of the Loire, it is becoming evident that there is a discernible shift in the English-speaking population. Many of our chaplaincies in this part of France have served large rural areas, with worship-centres in Roman Catholic churches, serving worshippers who moved to France (mainly from the UK) several decades ago. Some of these chaplaincies are now facing a testing time in terms of resourcing and sustainability. An emerging pattern suggests that the growth in numbers of English-speakers is happening in the urban centres (e.g. Toulouse, Bordeaux, Poitiers, Angoulême etc). Coupled to this, we have no chaplaincy in some university cities that attract large numbers of international students (e.g. Nantes in the West – and, further afield, Reims, Troyes, Rouen, Dijon etc). This is an aspect of the Diocese's mission in France that could benefit from a degree of strategic energy and resourcing – not least to support those chaplaincies that are keen to respond positively to these changes. Due to the Reuilly agreement, there is energy in the Eglise Protestante Unie de France (The United French Protestant Church) to explore some of these possibilities with us.

Second, there is an emerging pattern that suggests a period of extended locum ministry in some chaplaincies, to bridge the period between the departure of one permanent chaplain and the arrival of a permanent successor, is beneficial – both to the chaplaincy and the in-coming chaplain. It is especially helpful to receive the ministry of pastorally (and institutionally) experienced clergy, who can identify the issues and focus minds locally, as a community is encouraged to resolve past difficulties and plan a more sustainable future. However, attention to governance issues (often relating to the legal status of a chaplaincy in France) continues to be challenging in some places. Engaging with our context of mission and ministry will always benefit from a good grasp of French.



## Since the Covid-19 Crisis

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The impact of confinement in France has had two broadly contrasting effects on our worshipping communities.

On the one hand, it has harnessed the existing goodwill, energy and generosity of those who worship and who hold office in our chaplaincies. I sensed a real determination to maintain levels of pastoral care and contact, as well as impressive creativity in providing continuing patterns of worship, prayer and nurture via social media and other online platforms. The range and depth of ministry being offered has been an encouraging and engaging reflection of the spiritual energy and transparent humanity that often underscores the life of the Church of England in France.

On the other hand, the demands of virtual life in our churches, coupled to longer periods of isolation than have been hitherto normal, has left many people feeling tired – if not exhausted. With some people having more time on their hands, coupled to the ease of electronic communication, there have been some 'hot spots' of time-consuming conflict. For some of our chaplains this has added to the strain of life during confinement. As our churches begin to re-open for public worship and other meetings, even in limited form, and plans are tentatively made for an emerging future, one question we might usefully discuss is 'How has the Gospel been evident in our life together during this time'? That might be a question for our chaplaincy councils, if not the Church of England as a whole.



# Archdeaconry of Gibraltar, Archdeaconry of Italy & Malta Report for June 2020 Diocesan Synod Gathering

By The Revd Canon  
David Waller



Picture by: Karl Muscat  
Location: Saint Julian's, Malta



Italy was the first European nation to enter lockdown (9th March) with various regional governments having instituted their own regulations in the preceding weeks. Spain and Portugal followed soon after and between them have had some of the highest reported numbers of Covid-19 cases. Morocco followed suit but a few weeks later still and their lockdown has been among the most restrictive. While the European parts of Gibraltar Archdeaconry will come out of emergency regulation during June, for Morocco this point is mid-July.

From mid-June Italy has relaxed entry requirements into the country. Most of Spain is in the last two week phase of the easing of lockdown.

The initial phase of the lockdown – perhaps the first two months – was characterized by an enthusiasm amongst clergy to get to grips with the new challenges. From this time onwards a broad variety of different online worshipping patterns have been established and maintained, from recorded or live acts of holy to written material emailed out. Much of this has focused on Sunday provision but there have been some constant and well received daily offers as well, although inevitably less complicated to produce.

Online congregations have often been rather large to begin with, decreasing somewhat as the lockdown has continued. Notably people from outside the previous congregations have participated, often from the UK but also from other parts of the world.



Many of these have had previous links with a chaplaincy but some have been new since the beginning of the lockdown.

There have been several accounts of an increased sense of maintain contact with congregation members as people have used social media more frequently than they might have attended church.

Chaplaincies in vacancy have been a particular concern in terms of ongoing support for worship, but Church Wardens have often also been very creative, either accessing worship for others or providing prayer time themselves.

As the lockdown has continued the need for a sense of resilience among many people has become more open.

On an archdeaconry level two weekly zoom gatherings have been offered. One for clergy and one for Wardens and Officers. Again both have been well attended at the start but have reduced in number as the lockdown period has extended. These 'opt in' forums have provided a chance to share ideas, ask for information, discuss issues and

developments and to gather a picture of how chaplaincies within a diverse body such as an archdeaconry are coping. These have now moved to fortnightly zoom meetings as the lockdown is being lifted.

Two vacancies have been filled use zoom interviews and in each case this process seems to have gone well.

Three further appointment processes are planned using this medium.

One further Chaplaincy in vacancy has opted to wait until it becomes possible to meet candidates face to face.

Information from our Bishops and Diocesan Officers has been well received on the whole. The hardship fund disbursements and the well organised and swift process that allowed this to happen have also on the whole been well received.

The annual Synod for Italy & Malta will occur in September as planned but as a zoom gathering instead of in person, to take account of proper social distancing. This decision was received by some with relief. A decision regarding the Gibraltar Synod, due in February 2021, is still pending.

Zoom gatherings will be a feature of future church life but there is a fatigue that goes with this that affects all of us but the clergy as point person in a Chaplaincy. The economy of worship provided is a question for Chaplaincies now with the spectre of increased workload for those who are called to provide this alongside worship 'in person'.



# Archdeaconry of North-West Europe Report for June 2020 Diocesan Synod Gathering

By The Ven  
Dr Paul Vrolijk





Events as a result of the Covid-19 crisis have been momentous the world over. When the lockdown started in Belgium, The Netherlands and Luxembourg mid-March, it was a scramble to make the necessary adjustments. Now, mid June, we are busy with the gradual re-opening of our churches. Both in the lockdown and in the re-opening phase it was and is vital that everyone is kept safe and no one is left behind. Obviously this is easier said than done. Guidelines vary slightly from country to country, something that is a reality for the Diocese at large.

For North West Europe I would like to reflect on activities in four areas:

- Pastoral care: congregations everywhere have tried hard to stay in touch with everyone through calls, emails, WhatsApp etc. It has been really encouraging to see how people have risen to the challenge.
- Worship: people have been quick to adapt. In a matter of days on-line worship was being provide through YouTube, Zoom, Facebook etc. This continues to evolve, especially as churches now prepare for a gradual re-opening. Many churches are working on ways to provide 'hybrid worship' to cope with the social distancing restrictions on numbers and to serve those who cannot return to church till there is a vaccine.



- Communication: Churches have been creative in their communication efforts. 'One size' does not fit all. It is encouraging to see various elderly participants on Zoom. However, it must be noted that not everyone has the means to thrive in the new digital normal. **No-one must be left behind!**

- Finance: there are serious financial implications of the Covid-19 crisis:

1. The most vulnerable will be hit hardest. It is encouraging that church communities are mindful of this and have responded well. This will need ongoing attention as financial pressures will not go away quickly.
2. Chaplaincy income will take a hit this year. Churches have been reminded of the value of regular giving. Churches that overly rely on plate giving and events have discovered how vulnerable they are.
3. Finally, it has been wonderful to see how generous chaplaincies have been regarding Common

Overall, people have responded well. Whether it's by looking after those in need or by taking on new responsibilities. Church communities have really pulled together, also in the sharing of ideas and best practices. Regular Zoom meetings with lay leaders and clergy have been useful to support one another.

The story of the Covid-19 crisis is a big one, but the story of God's love flowing into the world through Jesus and his followers and friends, is an even bigger one. The lockdown period has been a steep learning curve in various areas, but we give thanks how God's people have responded and how God's grace has been poured out.

Chaplaincies large and small are working hard to adjust to new realities, but our God is the same for ever.... faithful, loving, abundant in grace and mercy.

However, rapid adjustments take a lot of mental, emotional, spiritual and physical energy. Therefore I hope that everyone will be able to get a good rest over the Summer. Coping with Covid-19 may well be with us for quite a while.

“  
**Rejoice always,  
 pray without ceasing,  
 give thanks in all  
 circumstances; for  
 this is the will of  
 God in Christ  
 Jesus for you**  
 ”  
*1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*



A wooden cross stands on a rocky mountain peak. The background shows a vast valley with a river, forests, and distant mountains under a blue sky with light clouds. The cross is made of weathered wood and is the central focus of the image.

## The challenges that lie ahead

**By The Rt Revd  
Dr Robert Innes**

Picture by: Hugues De Buyer Mimeure  
Location: Lac d'Anterne, Passy, France



A gathering of the members of Synod provides opportunity to look back on the year that is past, to recognise what is taking place in the present and also to look forward to the future. For our Chaplaincies: Deconfinement is good news. It enables us to meet physically, to gather in fellowship, to celebrate the eucharist together. But the 'new normal' will be different: pre-registering for attendance, social distancing, hygiene regulations, no congregational singing will mean a different experience of church. We won't have the festivals with packed church buildings for the foreseeable future. We will be church in smaller gatherings.

There are amongst us those who are extremely vulnerable to the virus and who won't be able to join us physically. It is important they are still included. So it's likely we'll be moving from virtual worship to hybrid worship. That means physical church services for those who can attend, but with availability of streamed worship for those who can't.

But here's the rub. Many of our clergy are already working harder than we would like. Online worship can be very demanding to produce. And the combination of providing both physical worship and streamed worship risks overloading of our people.

So we will have a challenge to manage this move to hybrid church. I wonder: Can we be smarter at sharing online resources? Is there a way in which deaneries could ensure that there is streamed worship available somewhere in their region but not necessarily in each chaplaincy? Over the next few months our chaplaincies will be under pressure as we work out what the new normal looks and feels like and as we keep our congregations together in a period of change.

**At the level of the diocese**, we have for some time prioritised communications, safeguarding and archdeacons.

**Communications** becomes ever more crucial for us. We have a good number of willing volunteers, but only one paid Communications Director – and he is only half time in the role. Invariably this means he receives more requests than he can meet.



Location: Holy Trinity, Brussels

So we are in the process of submitting a bid to the AllChurches Trust which, if successful, will expand our communications capacity very significantly. It will enable us to create networks for church officers and for youth work, it will facilitate the rebuilding of our creaky web site; it will help us respond to the demand for online lay education. I very much hope this bid will be successful because we badly need more central communications resource.

Having said that, over these past months, we have learned much that is good about being a digital diocese. We have found we can arrange meetings on Zoom very quickly. And, to our surprise, we have found that we can do business meetings at least as well by Zoom as we can in person. So we will in future be using Zoom much more as a diocese. And that will save a great deal of time and money as well as cutting our ecological footprint.

**Safeguarding** remains a priority. Our safeguarding team continues to grow in skill and expertise. Our senior safeguarding staff, along with Bishop David in his role as safeguarding lead, are dealing with a number of complex safeguarding investigations, and these are enormously demanding. The routine checking of clergy and office holders

continues. Amongst our clergy the level of completed checks is close to 100% as it should be. Amongst some lay officers, levels of compliance aren't so high, but we are working on that. This coming year we have the added challenge of managing Past Case Review 2, for which we will bring in specialist reviewers. And a big thank you by the way to all who have returned their PCR2 questionnaires ahead of the reviews!

I want to say something about safeguarding training. Face to face training has had to stop during the crisis. Indeed, we have furloughed the member of staff responsible for this. But one thing the National Church has learned is that more of our training could be done online. We now realise that 'face to face' doesn't have to mean physical presence; it can mean Zoom. In particular, the National Safeguarding Team is developing a Zoom based level C2 training course. That could be particularly interesting for our diocese, with big savings on travel time and money as well as widening access to the training. Overall, safeguarding has to remain a priority and that is necessarily costly.

**In terms of archdeacons,** it is a joy to have two full-time freestanding archdeacons in Leslie and David in post. They bring vast experience to their roles and we are very much feeling the benefits of their appointment. You will know that the diocese has committed itself to funding three full-time freestanding archdeacons. We had to defer the appointment of an Archdeacon of France and Switzerland, but that appointing process will now go ahead in October. We know that good archdeacons who are able to make skilled interventions

are crucial for supporting clergy wellbeing, addressing conflict, and developing mission. En passant I re-iterate our thanks to the excellent and remarkable Adele Kelham who has continued as Archdeacon of Switzerland on a voluntary basis.

I am sure we are all aware that our diocese faces significant challenges in regard to demographics and inclusion on a number of fronts. Firstly, in common with much of the Church of England, we have much more to do in regard to encouraging ministry amongst young people. As is often said, you are 10 times more likely to come to church if you are 80 than if you are 18. A few of our churches have thriving ministry amongst children and young people. But not enough. I would love to see youth networks further developed so good practice can be encouraged and shared. Children are the church of the present as well as the church of the future.

Secondly, we face a challenge in regard to women in ministry. I am sorry to say that we have the lowest proportion of women in ministry at incumbent level of any Church of England diocese. What is more, from my perspective I observe that women are not thriving in ministry in all parts of the diocese. So I would like to look into this. Where are we getting it wrong, and what can we do to enable gifted women to apply for posts and to thrive once appointed.

Over the last few weeks, the Black Lives Matter protests and movement has reminded us all of the scandal of racial prejudice. The recent Zoom service gave us all an opportunity





**“ We together express our corporate thanks for one another and to God for all that was shared and achieved in 2019, and for the grace that goes before us in 2020. ”**

to express our solidarity with those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds in our determination to eliminate discrimination on grounds of race.

The Church of England has made frankly lamentable progress in fostering minority ethnic representation in its synodical structures and in senior posts. As a diocese, we can, I think, be proud of the progress we have made in generating a diverse range of candidates for ordained ministry. But there remains far more to do to encourage minority ethnic ministry and representation. In the first instance, I have asked Archdeacon Leslie Nathaniel to work as a matter of urgency with our BAME reps, Smitha and Augustine, to look at our policies and structures in this area and to report to the Bishop's Staff Meeting.

The biggest challenge that faces us, the biggest challenge that faces the planet, is that of the environment. As is often said, to escape the virus you can hide away in your home, but there is no escape from catastrophic climate change. Last year the General Synod took a vote that would have committed us to becoming a carbon neutral church by 2045. Many people in this diocese lobbied me and our synod reps to say that wasn't ambitious enough. Their lobbying was successful, and Synod eventually voted for a net zero carbon church by 2030.

That is very ambitious and means the environment now has to be a serious priority for our diocese, and something to which we pay much more than lip-service. Those who voted for a zero carbon church by 2030, including me, will need to change our lifestyles. The Diocesan Secretary has already received a lengthy questionnaire from the national church asking him to explain how our diocese is going to start addressing energy usage, particularly in

areas of buildings and travel. And I hope more churches will sign up to the eco-church programme.

But I am quite hopeful about this. Because, during the Lockdown, we have seen some remarkable changes in behaviour, not just across one or two nations but across much of the planet: behavioural change on a scale that I had hardly imagined possible. People walking and cycling more. People using aeroplanes hardly at all. That has been of direct benefit to our ecology, and I'm sure I'm not the only one who has appreciated the improvements in air quality and decrease in noise. Some of that will go back to the 'old normal'. But some change will be here to stay. For example, I'm convinced office staff will be working from home more in the future and commuting less. Blended working has arrived. The kind of behavioural change needed to address the ecological change is possible, and I hope the church will be in the vanguard of this.

Much of this leads on to a question of money and resources. The Covid crisis has been very stressful financially for all charities, mission agencies and churches. Some dioceses have only one or two months of cash to pay their clergy. Some dioceses have furloughed dozens of staff. You may have seen reports in the press concerning one diocese that is bringing forward plans to reduce by 60 the number of clergy it employs.

The national church institutions are very aware of these stresses, and in response, the Church Commissioners are making available a fund of £35m across the 42 dioceses of the Church of England. Our Chief Operating Officer is in discussions with the Commissioners to look at our eligibility for a grant or a loan. We are working hard to balance the books or at least keep the deficit manageable. Many of us will remember Mike Fegan's 'Calamity Canyon'. Thanks to strong financial planning and the generosity of our chaplaincies, the train is still very much on the rails. But these are difficult times. And a new Financial Plan is going to be needed.

# A Day in the Life of the Diocese during Lockdown

The period during which we have been in lockdown due to Coronavirus across the Diocese has been demanding and challenging for us all.

One of the key features of this lockdown period has been demonstrated readiness across the Diocese to embrace “going digital”. To remember, record, and reflect on this period in the history of Europe, and of our Diocese, we’ve decided to commission a video production on the life of the Diocese under Lockdown resulting from the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Life across all parts of the Diocese will be represented in the video. We’re looking to cover three main areas:

- Prayer and worship
- Supporting and caring for each other
- Living everyday life

Here are a few, illustrative examples of what you might think about offering:

- Prayer groups meeting virtually
- a daily meditation, or excerpts from Sunday services
- Talking about talking and connecting with each other during times of physical distancing
- The activities that have sustained and nourished, what you have missed, not missed, or what you’re looking forward to doing again now that lockdown is easing.

We’re looking for contributions that look back on the period since mid-March, and you may have footage and contributions to share already from the many videos and photos we have

seen taken across the Diocese. We also want to consider life in the present, as well as include some reflections on hopes for the future.

We anticipate producing a video with short video segments, and a large number of photos which, taken together, depict what daily life of the Diocese has been like in these times.

You might instead want to share a written piece, and we welcome contributions of up to 100 words, so they can be well-presented digitally.

If you have a contribution already, please email it to our Diocesan Communications inbox at **[communications@europe.anglican.org](mailto:communications@europe.anglican.org)**.

Please get those phones and cameras at the ready!

We’d like to receive all contributions by Wednesday, 8 July (tell us which chaplaincy you’re from in your email) and we will then produce and release the video for the Diocese.





# Tips on how to film a good quality video

## Filming

- Use an iPhone or other good quality camera
- Use a tripod, get someone to hold the camera steady or rest the camera on something stable
- Use the back camera of your phone, rather than the front camera because it is better quality
- Position the camera landscape
- Place the camera in front of a window so you are well lit and visible. See below example as to why this is important



Facing behind window

Facing in front window



Camera positioning

- Ensure the background is clear, not messy and free from any confidential items or documents
- Position the camera so that your shoulders, head and arms are in the shot. See above example. This is not only for the quality of the video but also to ensure the audio can be picked up clearly
- Pause for 5 seconds before AND after you start speaking/ start or end the recording
- If someone is recording the video for you, ensure they are not covering the mic
- Don't worry if you make a mistake in a sentence. Just pause, and say the full sentence again
- Be open, talkative and informal. People like videos that are reassuring, encouraging and portray 'real life'.

## Sending a video

### If you have filmed your video on a smart phone

- Download the 'We Transfer' app or visit [www.wetransfer.com](http://www.wetransfer.com)
- Click 'send a file' and choose your video
- Once it has been added, follow the directions on your screen.
- Click next > send an email > in the 'email to' box:

**communications@europe.anglican.org**  
followed by adding your email address in the 'your email' box.

- click 'transfer.' (it will come up with a wheel counting the % that it has uploaded)
- Once the wheel reaches 100%, that's it!

### If you have filmed it on a camera

- Transfer your video file onto your computer (usually can be done with a USB cable or
- Apple Mac users can put the memory card directly into the computer)
- Visit [www.wetransfer.com](http://www.wetransfer.com) and follow steps to the left.