



St Martha & St Mary's

ANGLICAN CHURCH LEUVEN

Annual Meeting Reports

Churchwardens' report Annual Church Meeting May 2022 - April 2023

In looking back over the different events held in the life of M&M's over the past year, the overwhelming impression is one of richness and bounty. We have been blessed with the talents and gifts of so many in our community and we continue to grow in number.

In October, Council met to discuss our identity as a church community. We affirmed our commitment as an inclusive community, a community that celebrates and affirms every person and does not discriminate. During that discussion we revisited our values as set out in our Mission Statement. These values form the structure of this year's report.

'M&M's is an inclusive Anglican parish, with broad ecumenical participation, known for rich liturgy, engaging preaching, and friendly community. We aim to explore Christ's mission in pastoral care, spiritual formation, openness to questioning, vocational training, and warm hospitality.'

Rich liturgy:

Last year saw the introduction of a monthly morning service held at the American College Chapel, the success of which spurred us to trial weekly morning services (in addition to our regular JLC evening services) that began in March of this year at the Paus College Chapel on Hogeschoolplein. The increase from monthly to weekly morning services has required a huge effort on the part of the M&M's community with its impact on the welcomers', childrens', music, serving, and clergy teams and we are very grateful to all who have worked so hard to make these morning services a possibility.

A further gift to our services has been the collaboration with the conductor, Toby Wardman, who has in the past year led a couple of traditional Evensong services at the JLC. M&M's now has its own choir who will be meeting for weekly rehearsals lead by Toby and we look forward to hearing them twice - monthly as they lead our worship at Paus College and JLC.

A sign of great promise for our community was the continuing of services throughout the summer of 2022. Traditionally M&M's services coincided with the academic calendar year but owing to our growth and the feeling within Council of wanting to establish M&M's as a church community for *all* in Leuven - the decision was taken to remain 'open' for services throughout July and August.

Vocational Training:

Discernment and training have continued to be central threads in the life of M&M's with many in our community actively discerning a call to ministry.

July saw a significant event for our community in the ordination to the Priesthood of our Curate, Sarah-Jane and many of the M&M's community travelled to Ghent for this joyous service in support of Sarah-Jane and her family. Filipe Francisco was appointed Intern in 2022 and has supported the community in its administrative and liturgical life for which we are most grateful.

Engaging Preaching:

We have welcomed guest preachers throughout Lent and held two café churches allowing people to spend more time discussing and exploring faith and our response to the Bible and God's call on us to serve our community.

The final talk of Creation in Crisis, given by Ruth Valerio from Tearfund, took place in June followed by an all-age outdoor worship service in the Patmores' garden to mark the end of this significant series of talks. In an effort to maintain our community's focus on the threat of Climate Change, last year also saw the appointment of Mathias Weikl as M&M's Environmental Officer.

Spiritual formation:

This year has offered several opportunities for the community to come together outside the service times for fellowship and spiritual growth. The Lent course 'Come and See' offered by our Curate, the Advent Lectio Divina prayer group organised by Filipe, the quiet retreat day during Lent and the Women's retreat at Drongen Abbey are all such examples.

Our ministry to the younger generation in our community has grown with the offering of Sunday school twice a month. We now have an active and engaging Sunday School with children joining for creative tasks linked to the bible readings of the day. We have invested in books and activities during the AAW services and are hugely grateful for the Sunday school helpers: Isobel, Andrew and Rose, who have come forward to support this vital ministry. Last year we organised a couple of 'Prayground' sessions in response to a need in the community for the children to meet more often. We organised a litter pick with the Stad Leuven and a craft morning celebrating Christ the King.

Friendly Community & Warm hospitality:

The increase in church services highlighted the need for clarity and visibility in our marketing and publicity strategy. With the designing of new posters and an updated website it is now much easier for members of the public to find out when and where services will take place. We are greatly indebted to Tatiana Ntompidou, Rebecca Breekveldt and Roshni Jegan for their work on this.

A significant project voted through last year by Council is M&M's commitment to support a family seeking refuge as part of the Humanitarian Corridors initiative. The Humanitarian Corridors team has worked hard to find accommodation for our incoming Syrian family who will arrive in May. Their new home 'Beiti Batak' (My home is your home) is currently being furnished and we look forward to welcoming them to Leuven in late spring. This will be M&M's focus this year as we work together as a community to welcome and support our new neighbours.

Our community is growing and the opportunity for us to break bread together and spend time together has been witnessed in countless ways from the M&M's Christmas party and carol singing to home group gatherings and potlucks. In breaking bread together we affirm our commitment to one another and we look forward to many more such gatherings in the year ahead.

Broad Ecumenical participation:

The community at M&M's has continued to involve itself in the life of the city both in its interfaith and interdenominational dialogue but also in its involvement in humanitarian projects. Our membership of the KU Lifestance Network and involvement in the KUL university parish has continued along with joint services such as the regular Taize services and peace vigils in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Christ's mission in pastoral care:

All of these new activities have led to an increased level of safeguarding. The Diocese in Europe promotes "Safe Churches" as part of its commitment to the safeguarding of children, young people and adults who may be at risk. All clergy and readers have safeguarding training and need record check clearance certificates as a normal part of their ministry. Hundreds of lay volunteers, working with young people and vulnerable adults in local churches across Europe also need to go through the process and M&M's is no exception. This is to ensure that our congregations are safe places for young and vulnerable people to visit. We are grateful for the commitment shown by members of M&M's to online training and obtaining police checks.

Over the arc of the year we have seen once again the large reach our relatively small community has achieved. May God's blessing be upon us as we journey together through the next year in the life of M&M's.

Sarah Jones
Lydia Patmore

Treasurer's Report Annual Church Meeting May 2022 - April 2023

We all know the story of Joseph and the pharaoh's dream. There were 7 years of abundance and 7 years of lack. We've had a few years of abundance, and hopefully we'll experience many more of those. We need to consider what God wants our priorities to be. Recently I spoke to a catholic priest that was indignant with the fact that so many parishes had a million euros in savings. "That money should be used, he exclaimed". The person he spoke to answered: "a million euros is a roof", meaning it's just the cost of replacing a roof if it breaks down. It helped him to see it in perspective. As treasurer, I recommend finding a balance between saving for future projects and unforeseen circumstances and investing in opportunities right away.

2022 was a good year financially. The church has built up a buffer that gives us confidence to take initiatives. The tithes were a blessing. At the same time, only a few people give regularly, and some of them are not even current members of M&M's. If you're not giving to the church, please consider it. Some people tithe, but also supporting by 10 or 20 euros a month makes a big difference. It is good practice to encourage people to give.

In 2022 we found new people willing to participate in the Kerkfabriek, especially Alan Strange and Elsie Wilms. Recently Brendan Pousset and Andrew Wiersum became part of this body. Because of this some very faithful members of this body: Sarah Jones and Bram Verkerk, were able to hand over these tasks, for which we are grateful. As some of you may know, Catriona also is required to be on this committee that relates to the city of Leuven and the Agency of Domestic Governance as our Priest.

The church has given quite a large amount to charity, a bit more than was anticipated due to a misunderstanding that meant all the tithes for the Lent period were donated to charity (as opposed to simply those made to the Lent Appeal). However, the money was put to good use. Hospitality is one of the areas we spend more money on. Due to the very gracious prices we pay at the places we rent, building costs are low. With the continual search for a place to stay, it might be good to dedicate money that we save now for a rainy day. Either to buy or to rent at some point in the future. It is

important to note that housing allowance for the priest is only possible for a priest living in Leuven. To attract a priest in the future, it might be necessary to dedicate more funds to a housing allowance.

Please continue to pray for M&M's financial health, and people to take the administrative roles. Thank you very much.

Paul de Pender
Treasurer

**Intern's Report
Annual Church Meeting
May 2022 - April 2023**

I am delighted to write this small report to you. Since last year, I have been doing an internship in our beloved Church as a manner to explore my vocation to the sacred ministry in the Church of England. I would like to begin by saying thanks to all of you for giving me this opportunity and for recognising my calling and spiritual gifts in serving God's Kingdom and our Church. In the 2022 Easter, I remember that after our Sunday celebration, a group of people stayed at the American College cleaning and organising the room used by the festival. Whilst I was Hoovering the floor, Sarah-Janne looked at me and said: "This is the work of a Priest." I gently smiled at her and kept Hoovering; however, she gazed at me again and said, "I am talking seriously. At times, those who are called to be a priest will do works nobody wants to see or do." I know Hoovering a room is a very ordinary thing, that perhaps I should do more often in my room, but that very ordinary moment taught me something crucial.

When I started this internship, my expectations were very different from what happened in the months onwards. I was expecting to preach a lot, giving studies—that I think is one of my strengths—and finish it as an expert in Anglicanism. High expectations, I know. My reality betrayed me, I guess. With my studies workload and busy schedule, things followed another path. First, I was responsible for organising a new rota for the Church, which I did. Of course, always with Catriona's help. Since then, I have maintained the rota and sent you annoying e-mails (if you are a server in the Church, sorry.).

Subsequently, I also became part of the church council, which I want to highlight has been one of the most inspiring and challenging experiences. It is challenging because some administrative/spiritual decisions we make reflect in the Church's life; thus, it is a huge responsibility. Inspiring, because our council, without a doubt, expresses so beautifully what it means to be M&M's: people from different backgrounds, contexts and even theological perspectives united under one name: Jesus, and one single ordinance: to love one another.

As part of the internship, I also attended the Archdeaconry Synod as an M&M representative. The experience was outstanding. I had the opportunity first to have a fantastic quiet moment of prayer led by Sarah-Janne, in which I even slept during a good part, and I learned to say this without any guilt because there, I understood how I needed to be still before God and to rest in his arms. After that, the opportunity of talking with so many priests with such different callings was encouraging and helped me to see how the callings in God's Kingdom are so multiform.

A fun point: the game night and a priest in my group who was so obsessed with winning against his son that he got mad several times in the competition, showing that priests are humans.

Overall, I felt so supported in the Synod by everyone who talked to me, and I could experience our Church and tradition from a broader perspective. I loved, for example, the discussions and questions regarding the eminent decision that would happen regarding sexuality by the House of Bishops.

In the advent, we planned a lectio divina course that was held in four sessions. Because of the busy period, we had to reschedule the course one time and not too many people showed up. I got a bit sad, but also I felt very embraced and supported by those who appeared—yes, at least someone always came, and we had beautiful contemplative moments.

Recently, I preached in Church, and I loved the experience. And I loved, even more, to realise that nowadays, I no longer see preaching as an essential function of a minister. It is definitely something I like, but I have been deeply involved and touched by the liturgy and how the Eucharist is concentric on our services, unifying everything to our calling to share the table.

My internship definitely has been inspiring me for my calling in the Church of England. That is why, recently, I have decided to move the process officially and start the conversations under a broader administrative umbrella. After some initial conversations, and even though realising that the process is still long and tough, I felt supported and free to be open and share my feelings and fears, a special thanks to Catriona, that in my vulnerability, welcomed me and has been doing everything possible to help me.

Finally, as this internship gets closer to the end, I plan to conclude a project that presents the storyline of our Church. I interviewed Professor Reimund Bieringer, who was deeply involved in M&M's foundation, and I will transcribe it and maybe post it as a podcast. I plan still to work serving the M&M's kids for a bit. I am only waiting for the conclusion of the Safeguard process. And finally, I hope I still represent our Church in the next Archdeaconry Synod.

Thank you for all and Blessings.

Filipe Francisco
M&Ms part-time intern 2022-2023

Archdeaconry Synod, lay rep report
Annual Church Meeting
May 2022 - April 2023

In the last Archdeaconry Synod, M&M's made presence by its priests, Alan Strange, Catriona Laing and Sara-Jane King. Also, Filipe Francisco and Karen Papellero as lay representatives. First, the event started with an optional wonderful quiet day led by Sarah-Jane. A considerable amount of people attended it. The first session occurred in the evening with practical information and a moment of night service. The next day, several lectures were held. We highlight two: personal management and life balance coaching/ training session, and the second on mental health and emotional life.

The afternoon was followed by discussion panels on our Diocese's central issues and decisions. Among the topics is the eminent decision the House of Bishops would make concerning blessing same-sex relationships. Also, there was a considerable discussion on the 2021 Synod decision for all meals in the Synod of 2022 (that, in fact, happened) to be vegetarian in the name of climate-changing issues. It was posed if the Synod would keep the same posture.

The assembly was divided, after the panels, into two groups according to each region. It was the moment to present a report of each parish. Sarah-Jane spoke on behalf of M&M's in the given moment of feedback. The evening was carried by a confraternization moment and a fun night game, ending in night service. The following day of the Synod, there were voting and decision panels on administrative/ financial matters. The Synod ended with a gorgeous lunch and the expectation for the next Synod in 2023.

Filipe Francisco
M&Ms part-time intern 2022-2023

Curate's Report
Annual Church Meeting
May 2022 - April 2023

We are so thankful for the past year at M&Ms, for the blessing that is this lovely community, and for God's faithfulness to us during this time.

Looking back to the ordinations in Ghent last July, I was very touched that many of the M&Ms community came to support and join in with that very special service. It was a beautiful day. Since then, it has been a joy to be leading worship and to see our community grow and thrive in different ways over the past year.

Some things I particularly give thanks for this past year:

- God's provision, in terms of new spaces in which to worship and being able to offer more opportunities to people in Leuven to encounter the love of God in Christ through our Sunday services, and also the good ecumenical and other relationships that we have, that enable us to do that;
- Our home group, which has been a lovely place of fellowship and prayer, as we meet together on Thursday evenings to share our highs and lows, read scripture together and lift each other to God; and our "Come and See" series during Lent, where we explored different aspects of the Anglican tradition and shared together what speaks to us and draws us in this expression of the Christian faith;
- Seeing God at work in people's lives, as members of our community grow in faith and discipleship, with some also deciding to take new steps of public commitment to follow Christ – we had the joy of baptising Ravi on Easter Day, and we have four wonderful candidates for confirmation on 7 May. Their openness to the work of God in them and to go on in the adventure of faith is such a source of celebration and encouragement to all of us in our community;
- Catriona's training and support over the year, as my curacy moves into a new phase; a parish placement in Newcastle in the UK; a placement to look forward to in June in London focusing on ministry in the public and political space and public theology; an inspiring conference on public theology in Hamburg; joining the ICS (Intercontinental Church Society) family as an associate mission and ministry partner and participating in the ICS conference in Beatenberg, Switzerland; and last but very definitely not least, the constant love and support of Rutger, Bram and Max and all the fun and good times we have together as a family.

Some things for which I would ask for your prayers, as we look to the year ahead:

- We are going into a period of vacancy, as we say goodbye to Catriona and her family, as we seek God's leading as a community, and as we pray for the person who will come to serve as the new Chaplain in Leuven. Please pray for our wardens, Lydia and Sarah, for me as your curate, for our other clergy in M&Ms, and for everyone who will step up during this time, as we hold the space for that new person who will come and as we continue to minister in this place;
- Continuing to build community and discipleship – as we wait for our new Chaplain to come, it's my hope that our faith will not stand still, but that we continue to grow and deepen in our relationships with one another and with God, and that we continue to offer opportunities for people in Leuven to encounter the love of God in Christ;
- New Wine – this is a Christian festival in the UK that takes place every year. Rutger, Bram, Max and I are really looking forward to going. The worship and teaching are great, and we go there expectant because we always come back refreshed and renewed by God's Spirit. It is also a lot of fun! It takes place in the south of England from Tuesday 1 August to Saturday 5 August. If you are

interested, look at <https://www.new-wine.org/events/united23/> to find out more, and let me know if you have any questions or if you would like to come along, as there are still some tickets available.

Thank you again to all of you for your support, your prayers and your gentle, loving encouragement. I always say that this is a lovely place to be a curate. It is a very special community. Inspired by these words from Philippians, I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that on the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God. (*Philippians 1:3-7; 9-11*)

Sarah-Jane King

Assistant Curate, St Martha and St Mary, Leuven

April 2023

**Chaplain's Report
Annual Church Meeting
May 2022 - April 2023**

As we gather for our annual meeting, I find myself energised and excited by all that you, the congregation at M&Ms, are doing to be the hands and feet of Christ in Leuven! This has been a year of growth for St Martha & St Mary's. Growth in all sorts of ways.

Numerical Growth

We give thanks for growth in numbers of people attending our Sunday services (with over 80 people attending our morning Eucharist on Easter Day). Whilst we should be wary of becoming too bothered by the numbers of people sitting in the pews on Sunday, it is an undeniable sign of a healthy thriving church when you can look around you and see new faces from Sunday to Sunday. We celebrate that growth!

In addition to the growth in numbers, there are other ways in which I notice this community growing and for which I give thanks.

Spiritual Growth

We have seen individuals and groups growing in their Christian faith. Another mark of a healthy church is one in which Christians, at all stages of their walk with God find an opportunity to go deeper and to learn more of the mysteries of God. We have seen much of that this year. Discipleship and formation have been fostered in so many ways. I can list just a few: through the home group and the Lent lunchtime group, which have been precious sources of fellowship and support to their members. Those newer to the Anglican tradition had the opportunity to learn more through 'Come and See' the course exploring Anglicanism led by Sarah-Jane. For those finding themselves at a crossroads with decisions to be made, we were grateful for the course on discernment last autumn. Those in need of contemplative services and retreats have enjoyed the monthly Taize services and the

silent retreat day in Lent. There have been new opportunities to become more familiar with the liturgical life of the Anglican tradition through weekly morning prayer services, the new monthly services of Choral Evensong, as well as continuing the M&Ms tradition of Cafe Church services in Advent and Lent.

One of the great spiritual blessings at M&Ms lies in our ecumenical relationships. At Advent we celebrated an ecumenical Advent Carol Service with congregations from the Roman Catholic, Indian Orthodox and Evangelical churches. In addition to this we continue to give thanks for the precious relationship we have with our sisters and brothers in the Catholic congregation of St Martha and St Mary of Bethany, with whom we share the Justus Lipsius College Chapel. Celebrating the Triduum with Fr Reimund and his congregation was a spiritual blessing to our church and I give thanks that a number of our congregation were able to take part in those joint liturgies. I pray that the strength of this relationship will continue to grow in the coming years.

M&Ms continues to be a place that makes room for people to discern where God may be calling them next and we currently have a number of people in the congregation exploring future paths in ministry. Sarah Jones will be licensed as a lay reader in June and Frank Zamora is due to begin his lay reader training very soon. Others are in conversation with spiritual directors about discerning vocations to ordained ministry. It is a real blessing to walk with these people as they open themselves to God's call. Please hold keep them in your prayers. And of course, we rejoice in the Easter baptism of one of our members and the upcoming confirmations of four people from M&Ms.

Growth in confidence

M&Ms is becoming more confident about who we are and what we can do in Leuven. I was delighted that the council voted to offer our church as the lead chaplaincy in Belgium for the Humanitarian Corridors project and I am so proud of the team who are working to prepare a place for the two refugees from Syria who are due to join us in May. It's a big undertaking for a relatively small church and the fact that the council decided to do it is testimony to a growing sense of our role and place in Leuven. A further example of this growing confidence in our identity and sense of calling to be a place of welcome to all people is seen in the way our church has responded to debates and decisions around LGBTQ+ issues in the Church of England. Following a careful and thoughtful discussion in October, the council decided to support those from M&Ms who wanted to participate in the Brussels Pride March in May. More recently, the decision in February taken by the General Synod to recommend prayers of dedication and blessing following civil partnerships between members of the same sex was met at M&Ms with the kind of care and compassion we try to exercise in our life together as a community in which we hold our differences tenderly.

This desire to have the confidence to be honest and authentic about who we are, and to experience a sense of belonging in our differences, is something I hope we can treasure and further nurture in the coming year.

Looking forward

As we celebrate this growth and the momentum that we currently have, your council have some important decisions to make in the coming year. Following the 2021 vision day when we determined a desire to experiment with morning services, we are spending the months from March-June holding weekly Sunday services in both the morning and the evening. On a long term basis neither our congregation nor our clergy can sustain this number of services, but it has been an important chapter to help us decide what the pattern of services should be in the medium to long term. In June your council will meet to pray, discuss and discern what the Sunday schedule should look like from September. Please feel free to share any views you have about this with the council and hold them in your prayers as they make these decisions on behalf of our church. What is clear is that the demand for Anglican church services in Leuven is growing (it has been such a joy to see new faces in church every week in the last month or two)!

Thanks to the enthusiasm and commitment of Toby Wardman, we have been able to start a choir at M&Ms and look forward to having the choir lead our music twice a month: at the morning Eucharist and in the evening for Choral Evensong.

On a personal note, I as your chaplain announced last Sunday that my family and I will be moving to the UK at the end of the summer, where my husband has a new job and I will be taking up a post as the vicar of a church in west London.

As you might imagine, I am a bundle of mixed emotions about this at the moment. However, when I take a step back I am very excited about what lies ahead for M&Ms and I can see that the hand of the Lord is at work in the timing of it all.

I find myself giving thanks for the growing sense of community in our church at present. Hospitality, fellowship and friendships are flourishing, which are again signs of a healthy church community. To support the church through the vacancy you have four priests - our curate and three other priests, a soon to be licensed lay reader, two excellent and dedicated churchwardens and a council team who bring a wide range of gifts and skills and are committed to serving the church. M&Ms is in very good hands and I get excited imagining who God might be calling to serve you as chaplain in the coming years.

To conclude, it's going great! And you're a very special and wonderful congregation. I'm struck by the reading in Acts set for today:

Those who had been baptized devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

I think it sounds familiar. It points to a small community that is doing the basics of church community well: devoting themselves to word, sacrament and prayer; sharing their possessions and goods with those in need; spending time together in church and in one another's homes and praising God.

And what happened? Day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. Amen!