

Church warden's report

May 2023 - April 2024

'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.'

Change has been the year's theme at M&M's. It is something in which our community is well versed but this year we experienced two large changes in terms of personnel and worship location that presented us with significant challenges.

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Our Chaplain, Catriona Laing, returned to the UK in July 2023, and this departure coincided with an arson attack on the Paus College chapel, our weekly Sunday morning service location. These two events resulted in a creative and busy autumn within the lay leadership team as we sought to rota services, identify new locations, and design a new service schedule. We have been very fortunate in the presence of our Curate, Sarah-Jane, who has proved a huge support in taking on the practical delivery of services and rotas during this interregnum, for which we are most grateful.

Since September we have been conducting morning worship at the American College chapel. Due to the existing schedule of services in the chapel we were unable to offer weekly morning services but, in cooperation with the Indian Orthodox community, we have been able to meet on average twice a month. These morning services continued to be well attended and the chapel has been the location for our successful AAW Harvest Sunday service in support of the Community Kitchen, our Christingle service and our Christmas Day and Easter Sunday celebrations. We continued to offer Sunday school to families who attend the morning service and have replaced our children's corner following the loss of equipment in the fire.

The evening services at the Justus Lipsius Chapel remained an important part of our worship and here we have enjoyed joint services with our Catholic brothers and sisters throughout Holy Week, as well as services of reflection, Taize, café and craft church. One of the highlights this year has been the increased scope of music, particularly in our evening services, with musicians from within our community offering their talents both instrumental and vocal. In October, Toby Wardman led a 'come and sing' with singers drawn from M&M's and further afield. We also enjoyed the visit of the King's Voices from King's College Cambridge, who led us in a service of Evensong in March of this year.

The process of finding a new chaplain to serve M&M's has been the priority of the chaplaincy council this year. It has been a busy time drawing up the chaplaincy profile documents and seeking input from our community on the kind of leadership we seek. We were able to finalise all the documents by the early autumn and then went live with the advertisement in late November. Sadly, we were unable to shortlist the candidates who applied. Council voted to pursue a second round of selection that will allow Bishop Robert to approach individuals to apply for the position. We expect the second round of shortlisting and interviews to take place in late spring /early summer.

Amidst these strategic challenges, M&M's has once again been blessed this year with growth in numbers and the generosity of time and talent freely offered by our faithful community. We have thrived, grown, and given, in spite of the challenges we have faced this year, and this is testament to the resilience and creativity found within our community. It has been a joy to witness.

Through the home groups, social gatherings, discernment course, retreats, and morning prayer services at Leo XIII chapel, we have continued to offer fellowship and community outside the traditional Sunday worship times.

We have remained involved in the student and university network working with the KU Leuven Lifestance network and representing M&M's at student open days.

We have seen members of our community grow in faith and calling with the licensing of Sarah Jones as Reader, Leon's calling to priestly ministry, and the confirmation of Katie as member of the Anglican Church.

As part of our continued focus on climate change, our Environment Officer, Mathias Weikl, represented M&M's at the most recent 'Climate Fresk' workshop and members of our community attended the Climate march in Brussels in December last year.

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A happy consequence of our community's growth has seen the roll-out of the software, *Churchsuite*, to help manage membership and rotas. With the appointment of our Electoral Roll Officer, Jesu Spurgen, and the support of our *Churchsuite* administrator, Kayla Meeking, this has been a huge step forward in improving efficiency. We have also created QR codes for visitors to scan so they can be connected to our church whatsapp group and newsletter in an effort to improve our welcome experience. Roshni and Tatiana have been instrumental in this process.

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One of the biggest projects ever undertaken by M&M's has been our involvement in the Humanitarian Corridors programme hosted by St Egidio. We were able to support two Syrian families in our rented apartment in Leuven and are indebted to the Central Committee and the team from M&M's who have worked so hard to help them settle into their new lives in Belgium. It has been a challenging experience for the team involved, but one of immense worth. We are a church who believes in action and the offering of warm hospitality, and extend our heartfelt thanks to our M&M's team under the leadership of Kayla, who have made this possible.

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And finally, for all who have welcomed, served, read, prepared intercessions, preached, presided, opened their homes, run home groups, study groups, discussion groups, training sessions, prepared refreshments, baked cakes, planned services, prepared children's ministry, managed the website, written newsletters, played music, designed posters and the many other behind the scenes roles upon which we depend, we extend a huge thank you for all that you have done throughout the year in Jesus' name and service here in Leuven.

Your churchwardens, Lydia and Sarah.