St Martha and Mary's Anglican Church Leuven

Annual Chaplaincy Meeting 2026: Chaplain's Report

"*So then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and members of the household of God.*" (Ephesians 2:19)

One of the great blessings of ministry here is the opportunity to welcome people at times of transition. Each year people arrive in Leuven from many countries, cultures, churches and life situations. Some stay a few months, others for many years. Through God's grace, strangers become friends, visitors become fellow pilgrims, and together we journey as a community.

This has been a year marked by growth, but not simply numerical growth. It has been a year in which we have seen God inviting people to grow in new kinds of belonging: belonging to Christ, to one another, and to the mission to which Christ calls all of us.

I want to reflect briefly on three aspects of belonging to the household of God, as a fellow citizen with the saints at M&Ms. **Belonging as being gathered, being grown and being sent out.**

Being gathered

Week by week, worship remains the heart of our life together at M&Ms. We continue to rejoice in the privilege of gathering around Word and Sacrament, offering our praise to God and receiving anew the grace and love of Jesus Christ. Attendance at Sunday services has continued to grow, and we give thanks for the many newcomers who have found a spiritual home here. And we are grateful for God's provision of the Leo XIII chapel following the temporary closure of our beloved Justus Lipsiuscollege for renovation works.

A great joy this year has been the growth in the number of children and families. The love and care of our children's ministry team is evident in how much children look forward to coming to M&Ms. Music also continues to be a gift. We are blessed by musicians who lead us week by week, by our choir, and by visiting choirs and musicians who enrich our worshipping life. The Carol Service was a particular highlight, attracting record numbers and reminding us that the good news of Christ continues to draw people in who might not otherwise come to church.

A core part of Sunday is hospitality after church, which remains one of the charisms of M&Ms. Again and again, newcomers say they feel welcomed, known and included. Conversations over coffee, shared meals, celebrations and gatherings large and small, not just on Sundays, all contribute to this being a community where people can belong.

Being grown

This year we have witnessed people deepening their relationship with God and one another. Prayer and pastoral care sustain the life of M&Ms. Home and hospital visits, follow-up by phone, and practical support have been offered to those experiencing illness, personal difficulties or life changes, whether regular Sunday attendees or not. Many informal acts of kindness from across the M&Ms community have ensured that individuals and families are not left alone in times of need.

We continue to hear testimonies of God's faithfulness in difficult circumstances and of the power of prayer. These moments remind us that the life of the church is not only expressed in what is seen on Sundays, but also in the hidden places where God's comfort, presence and peace are experienced.

Our home groups continue to provide opportunities for prayer, friendship and exploration of scripture. It has been wonderful to see a second group established in Kessel-Lo alongside the central Leuven group, creating additional spaces for discipleship and mutual encouragement.

This year has seen an intentional focus on deepening spirituality. Last autumn, the Chaplaincy Council spent a Quiet Day at the Carmelite monastery in Ghent, reflecting on discipleship through shared silence, study of God's word, listening and reflecting. Throughout Advent and Lent, contemplative prayer, the "offices" of morning and evening prayer, and weekday Bible study at Leo XIII responded to a deeply-felt need to rest in God's presence amid busy lives. M&M-ers shared spiritual practices that help them stay close to Jesus, through our Lenten preaching series and newsletter reflections. Our first dedicated M&Ms retreat in Lent was also important. We took as our theme, "*I am the vine, you are the branches*" (John 15:5) as a focus for time in guided prayer and meditation in the Ignatian tradition, reminding us that all Christian service flows from abiding in Christ.

Continuing the theme of growing in discipleship, we continue to rejoice with those who have taken significant steps in their faith journey this year through baptism and confirmation, and with those preparing for confirmation and reception into the Anglican Church. We thank God for his kindness and for the joy of knowing the love and friendship of Jesus and the consolation of the Holy Spirit.

Another source of encouragement is the emergence of gifts and vocations within the congregation. We continue to support those exploring authorised ministry, and celebrate the many forms of lay leadership that sustain and enrich our common life. We welcomed a curate on placement and were blessed to host Jowan for an internship as part of his study programme at ETF. We look forward to continuing to invest in identifying and nurturing future leaders.

Being sent out

Mission and outreach are an important part of our identity. Through programmed events such as the orientation days, ETF "meet the local churches", lunchtime meditations and conversations, we seek to grow the visibility of our university chaplaincy presence and draw others who are curious towards opportunities to (re)discover the love of Christ.

Alpha in particular has continued to be a place of curiosity and encounter. Running for a second consecutive year, it has provided a welcoming environment for honest conversations about faith, supported by a remarkable team of hosts and helpers, and delicious home-cooked food! We give thanks for all who participated and for the ways God continues to work through these conversations.

We give thanks and pray for our relationships with KU Leuven, especially American College and Leo XIII, as well as with ETF, Het Goede Boek and many other partners across Leuven, Belgium, the Diocese and beyond. We also continue to invest in ecumenical and interfaith partnerships. Initiatives such as the ecumenical prayers for peace and Christian unity, the interfaith peace prayer and the Open Shabbat have enabled us to live out the love of God for all who are made in God's image, to build trust and witness to mutual respect and connection across traditions and communities.

We give thanks for our newly-established relationship with the City of Leuven, and look forward to what that might bring in the future.

Looking ahead, the Chaplaincy Council has agreed to support emerging opportunities for ministry among prisoners and residents of care homes. These conversations reflect our desire to participate actively in the love of Christ for those who risk being forgotten or marginalised.

None of this would be possible without the generosity and love of so many members of M&Ms. We are grateful to the members and officers of our Council, our kerkraad and vzw, as well as our Lay Reader Sarah, our safeguarding officers Jen and Melissa, our ecumenical and interfaith officer Stijn, our children's ministry co-ordinator Lydia and the team, welcome and set-up co-ordinators Xinyi and Sarah and the team, our servers and intercessors co-ordinator Karen and the team, our Alpha volunteers, home group hosts and leaders, musicians, communications team and all who pray and contribute quietly and faithfully behind the scenes.

We are blessed by good governance, clear finances and a growing culture of leadership that is distributed and shared. These things may not always be visible, but they are essential foundations for ministry and mission.

I want to express particular gratitude to our Churchwardens, Lydia and Roshni, for all their practical support, hospitality and prayers. In particular, I want to thank Lydia, Hector, and all the family, for all they do for the church, especially in offering and supporting Sunday services and children's ministry alongside family, a busy job and other commitments beyond Leuven. A special note of thanks must be offered to Lydia as she concludes ***four*** consecutive terms as Churchwarden. During these years she has helped M&Ms through periods of significant change, challenge and growth with remarkable generosity and poise. Whether responding to crises, supporting services, offering children's ministry, communicating news of church life, leading prayers or simply noticing what needed doing before anyone else realised, her contribution has been immense. I remain profoundly grateful for Lydia and Hector's ministry, especially when family circumstances have meant that we have needed to be away from Leuven. Their willingness to step in and ensure that services can continue has been just part of their tremendous gifts. We thank God for Lydia's faithful service and pray that this next season will bring rest, refreshment and simply enjoying being part of the congregation she has helped nurture so gently. And we rejoice in the safe arrival of baby Lukas and pray God's blessing on him, Roshni, Jesu and all the family, as they get to know one another at this precious time.

Thank you to Rutger, Bram and Max for their love, patience and support. And thank you to all who call M&Ms home. You are the saints and the household of God in this place! Together, we continue to discover the joy of belonging to Christ, to one another, and sharing in his mission in Leuven. May we continue to be built on him as our foundation, and in him be built together, to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit (Eph. 2: 20-22).

Revd. Sarah-Jane King
Chaplain, M&Ms
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