

APRIL 2023 CHAPLAIN REPORT

JOHN
BENNETT



Although our congregation in Taormina is fairly small, except for special services and the totally unknowable influx of visitors each week, it is an eminently joinable English speaking congregation. All members here work extremely hard to maintain the friendly fellowship, the property church garden and flat. Their notice boards and communications are well presented. Everyone, regulars and visitors receives the warmest of welcomes, but more too.

There is interest shown to everyone. Worship is offered with quiet enthusiasm that comes from the heart. The recent centenary celebrations and confirmations overseen by Bishop David in October 2022, have brought a noticeable spirit of encouragement to the regular congregation. During our April locum duties, we have put into practice the recent authorisations of additional chalcists to assist, in the distribution of the elements in the Sunday eucharist which is working well. An expression of the ministry of the People of God and the presence of the Spirit among them.

This has been our sixth locum duty of service at St George's, Taormina since 2017, out of eleven in the Diocese in Europe. It has been a great joy to be here again, and to be really included as part of the family. To know you are part of a treasured fellowship among special friends is a very rich privilege and a precious encouragement to find.

as well. Holy Week and Easter services have been well attended, On Maundy Thursday we had a simple eucharist in church, followed by a fellowship meal in the church apartment. On Good Friday we all were able to use the set reflections in the church's booklet that Norma our Church Warden located for us in the vestry. These are the Good Friday, Stations of the Cross. On Easter Sunday, twenty four people attended our Festal Eucharist and we shared an Egg hunt and refreshments in the garden afterwards.

The bible study on 18th April was held in the apartment, looking at two healing stories of Jesus in Mark's gospel. The printer in the apartment is now fully operational following the visit of a technician known to Norma.

The church officers had received an invitation to the opening night of the Mabel Hill exhibition of lace and embroidery in the town library. Norma, Rita and I went along on Saturday 22nd April. It was a busy evening, just before Independence Day, with members of Italy's Armed Forces present in the square. We had local dignitaries, and cultural officers of the town present for the opening in the library. The exhibition is well worth visiting, being open until July 23. A great tribute to the Hill family and their Christian service, as members of Taormina church in the nineteenth century. Mabel Hill's work in providing skills for women in local families became an early form of self help. Today we encourage credit schemes to promote women's employment through the Gramine bank in developing countries. But this promotion of skills has a honourable history of which we can be proud. The skills of lace making can still be found among some local people here.

A tip for a superb railway journey while locum priests are here, is to take the circumetnae train around Mt Etna. We took the train from Garre. We walked from Garre station to the special private station around the corner. Take enough change to pay for

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2023
HOLY WEEK

We have shared in the Easter feast together

your ticket as the person in the office does not admit to having any change. Trains are very infrequent and there is a change of trains on the way at Randatzo. But it is the most spectacular journey all around Mt Etna, with orange and lemon fields, pistachio trees and olive groves and constant lava fields all around the mountain. The other side of the mountain, away from the sea, was completely covered in snow. There is a good sight of Bronte town on the way. It could make a good church outing when we come back next year, it has been suggested. Though currently it is not seen or marketed as a tourist draw, as the travelers are usually residents of local villages and use the train to get to work, it is in our experience one of the great railway journeys of Europe.

On a more serious note, we hosted the funeral of Irene Dickson, the housebound mother of Norma Dickson a resident of Giardini Naxos. Norma Dickson has been the her mother's carer, and so her mother's passing will bring a totally new chapter for her life. Both I and members of the church were to spend special listening time being with Norma. Susan, our church secretary gave an excellent address at the funeral service.

Among the visitors to St George's church we had a married Catholic theological student and his friends, who wanted to know the difference between Catholic and Anglican spiritualities and practice. If he proceeds to Catholic ordination, he will remain a deacon, but not a eucharistic priest.

We were also in contact with Fr Giovanni at Randatzo, but not this time able to meet up together. We have also been in contact with Daniel Smith and his mother.

On Thursday April 27th we held a Pizza evening with eleven members of the church community in the church. This was an excellent evening of fellowship, ably assisted by Susan, our other Church Warden, who ordered the Pizzas. It was a time of sharing, listening and enjoying each other's company. Rita and I sense the community here is in very good heart. We had a memorable visit and look forward to April 2024.

An unusual event took place on Friday April 28th when two local estate agent employees, lost their drone in our 100 foot conifer at the front of the church. It was supposed to be taking pictures of the Straits of Messina, for publicity in selling a property opposite the church. Norma, our church warden, kindly came down to sort out the issue on behalf of the church, when they had come into the premises with a person climbing the tree, without having the agreement of the church first. But a contemporary issue we now have to become ready for.

Our journey to Sicily had been via Rome where we had met up with Archbishop Ian Ernest and his wife Kamia again, at the Tuesday eucharist at the Anglican Centre. As the Yorkshire Representative for the Anglican Centre in Rome, I try to maintain annual contact with the Director and his wife and colleagues at the Centre. Archbishop Ian, would like to make contact with any family and friends of Bishop John Moorman, who was instrumental in the formation of the Anglican Centre in 1966, as they are mounting an exhibition of the John Moorman library, hopefully in September 23, depending on the availability of Archbishop Justin Welby.

So I am trying to establish contacts where possible. There was a 50th anniversary exhibition in October 2006 when Bishop John Flack was Director, but at that time the person who mounted the exhibition Julia Jones, didn't manage to contact family and friends of John Moorman, although she found considerable material on John Moorman's work, including his attendance at Vatican II.

Our visit to Sicily closed with three days spent in Ragusa and Mordica in the south of the island which we loved. We return to the UK with much thankfulness for a full, delightful and rewarding locum visit this April 23. We much look forward to being with all the friends and family at St George's next year.

John Bennett Locum chaplain. April 2023.