



The Grapevine



The magazine of Christ Church la Manche
A Chaplaincy within the Church of England Diocese in Europe
Walking together with Christ: Companions on the Way
May 2026

From Father Chris

Ascension Day

The Shrine at Walsingham in Norfolk isn't everybody's spiritual cup of tea, but it has some entertaining quirks. A processional route with altars at the stopping places includes one chapel where the ceiling consists of golden clouds, out of which stick two golden feet! These feet invariably look a bit worn – when I noticed this and mentioned it on a visit many years ago the priest explained that children on pilgrimage would be tempted to try to reach up and tickle these, the feet of Jesus departing in glory into the golden clouds in the Chapel of the Ascension of Christ.

Most portrayals of Ascension Day tend to be very literal: we can laugh at the golden feet at High Church Walsingham, but countless Sunday School text books from every kind of Christian church used to portray Christ firing vertically into space in front of his disciples as if rocket powered!

So what really happened on Ascension Day, celebrated with a public holiday here on Thursday, 14th May? Jesus spent 40 days with his disciples after He was raised from the dead on Easter Day. He pulled them together, gave them a task to do and the authority they needed to do it, promised (again!) the Holy Spirit to help them, told them He would come back, but in the meantime would be with them always ... and then He left them.

The Bible accounts of the Ascension of Christ are confusing. The event isn't mentioned in the oldest Gospels of Matthew, Mark or John. Luke – the last gospel, though based on eye-witness accounts, describes the Ascension twice, and in great detail. However his account in Acts 1, vv6-11 clashes with what Luke writes in Luke 24, where the Ascension seems to take place on Easter Day or very shortly after – no mention of 40 days as in Acts! So should we believe it happened? Yes! Christians believe Jesus rose from the dead on Easter Day, so if the Ascension didn't happen, then the simple question would be 'where is Jesus now?!' If He didn't leave the earth, then either He would still be here among us, or if He was only raised to live a further limited human life then there would be a tomb, a burial place somewhere which would be the most famous pilgrimage destination on earth. So quite simply it is easier to believe in the Ascension as the Bible describes it than in the alternative.

In terms of the 'so what' question – 'why is this important?' - Ascension Day is the original celebration of the Kingship of Christ, centuries prior to the 20th century introduction of a Feast of Christ the King. Every day in the Lord's Prayer we acknowledge the kingdom of God in heaven and pray that the same Kingdom may come on earth. Christ the King has returned to His throne in heaven, and He calls the Church to be His chosen instrument – a tool in His hands – we are to shape our Church community life by the values of Christ's kingdom, then to spread that Kingdom life by our words, our example – to call each person to follow Christ, and to challenge society to live by the message and example of Jesus.

Ascension Day is 'liberation day' for Jesus, leaving behind the limitations of human life having completed the task His Father gave Him. Jesus is set free from the limitations of human physicality – by His Spirit He is free to be with each one of us wherever we act in His name and live for His Kingdom.

O God of glory,
your Son Jesus Christ suffered for us and ascended to your right hand.
Unite us with Christ and each other, in suffering and in joy,
that all your children may be drawn into your bountiful dwelling. Amen.

Peter John Hales, priest (1945-2026)



The Revd Peter Hales, who died on 24th March was a larger-than-life figure who ministered in the Manche Chaplaincy across a formative period in our community life. As Chaplain it's my privilege to celebrate his life, and that ministry, building on information provided by Pippa, Richard, and others.

Pretty well the whole of Peter's adult life was spent in the company of Pippa: they were married in 1966 (which turned out to be World Cup Day!), and were looking forward to celebrating 60 years together, a target sadly missed by just a couple of months. Their marriage was blessed with two sons, Richard and Stuart. Peter's working life began as a TV engineer, but his engineering career developed to include designing radar systems – a career which took him to exotic and sometimes dangerous corners of the world, including being evacuated from Iran, following after his family, after the Revolution!

Peter's Christian faith led him naturally into Christian ministry. He preached his first sermon – about Christingles! - in Iran, and was later Licenced as a Reader to become Lay Minister in Charge of the Anglican and Allied Church in Qatar. Peter served as a Reader for a number of years in different places in Guildford and St Alban's dioceses. While in Guildford he began training at Salisbury & Wells to serve as a non-stipendiary 'worker priest', but a job move took him to a different area and made it impossible for him to continue ordination training.



On retiring aged 60 and moving to France he discovered the nascent Manche Chaplaincy (then meeting monthly), and the founders invited him to become involved. At first this was as a Reader, but then the diocese made it possible for him to complete ordination training to become deacon, then priest, being licenced as Priest in Charge of Manche Chaplaincy at a busy period of early expansion, with a church move to Gratot, the purchase of the buildings, the building of ecumenical relationships, and the planting of a southern congregation.

Peter held this role until he retired from licenced ministry in 2014: he spent the next few years as a welcome and much appreciated 'locum' priest around the diocese, before a final period helping the church in Dinard through a time of vacancy. When illness brought his active ministry to an end he and Pippa returned to the Manche Chaplaincy, where they were welcomed home among us as old friends. Peter's Funeral Eucharist was itself a fitting triumph of ecumenical relations, and we sang him Home with his favourite hymns. We treasure Peter's memory, as we continue to treasure the company of Pippa in our church family.

Fr Chris

Cherbourg Inaugural Service

On the 19th April we held our first service at the Eglise Evangelique Baptiste, Cherbourg. It has taken us some time to get to this point, but we really feel that God has opened the doors to make this happen and this is what He wants us to be doing.

There were twelve of us, eight of those are regular attenders at the Gratot services; the Pasteur of the Baptiste church came as did one of the Deputy Mayors who was asked to attend by the new Mayor of Cherbourg as she was unable to attend herself. There was also a lady we had never met before who was brought by an English speaking, German gentleman who is a member of the Eglise Evangelique Baptiste. Thank you to all those who were able to come and support us, it was appreciated.

Unfortunately, Fr Chris Probert was unable to come as planned due to ill health, so I led the service, ably assisted by Donna who also took charge of the music – thank you, Donna. Afterwards we had a time of fellowship together over a cup of tea or coffee and cakes which were kindly provide by Jacqueline.

It was a slow start with effectively only one potentially new person but we do really believe that this is what we have been called to do and so we will press on, trying to get the message out to the anglophones in and around Cherbourg and praying that our



Heavenly Father will bless this new church so that we will become established there.

Our next service will be on the **10th May** and then every second Sunday in the month until such time as we have sufficient numbers to be able to sustain a weekly service.



Please continue to pray with us that God will bless us and we will see many more people coming to share with us the love of God and the joy of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adrian Grainge

Easter Monday Afternoon Tea

Fine weather greeted us on the afternoon of Easter Monday, as crowds of friends, old and new, French and English, many sporting beautifully decorated Easter bonnets, arrived to partake of a traditional English tea. What a wonderful spread it was, all beautifully served in fine china. Undoubtedly few would have needed anything further to eat that evening! Others came just to browse the laden stall of English-style goodies (mostly home-made in France!) and Fr Chris' equally laden plant stall and to have a cuppa and slice of cake.

Good weather, beautiful hats, wonderful food, great fellowship – and a profit of well over 800 euros! What more could one ask for? A huge THANK YOU, as ever, to the faithful few who made it all happen.



Seen from the Chaplain's Observatory!

By Fr Chris

Good meetings!



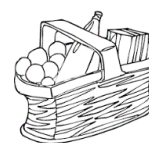
'Something More' house-group restarted with a bang in a session asking 'what happened to the Quiet Revival?' - we did a lot of thinking about the Bible Society survey and report, including pondering the religious attitudes of different generations. The next meeting will explore why the order of books in the Bible seems to be changing. It's a very varied programme – topics are advertised, if one looks interesting, come along!

Bible Study continues to be lively and reflective, finding spiritually sharp and relevant questions from our reading of the Letter of James: it's spiritually refreshing for me to join in a group as a member instead of always being leader.



And now on Thursdays we have the Alpha Course! A good little group has come together with Helen and Mary as leaders – is this the first ever Alpha Course in English in la Manche, or even in Normandy?

Finally *Picnic with the Parson* at Gratot, where we daringly ambushed two newest members of our Chaplaincy and asked them to tell us about the experience of joining us – the good bits and the difficult bits! Bravely they rose to the challenge, and the result was a fascinating and unexpected session.



Comings....



Book the date: **Sunday 21st June** – Archdeacon Peter will be in NW France with Bishop Andrew, who replaced Bishop David when he retired last year. Amid a flurry of meetings taking them from Tours via the Vendee and into Brittany, we have the privilege of welcoming them for the Sunday service which will be the culmination of the whole visit. We will try to make it memorable!

....and Goings: Archdeacon Peter Hooper, who has been a warm and consistent friend to this Chaplaincy during his six years in post, leaves the diocese at the end of July to take up a new post in his previous Diocese of Leicester. Last year he remarried, and his new wife is a Vicar in that diocese, so they are looking forward to spending more time together! We thank him, and wish him every blessing in his new ministry.



Yet more meetings....

A good meeting (hopefully!) as well as being a necessary one is the Chaplaincy AGM on **Sunday 24th May**. By publishing reports ahead of the meeting we aim to make the meeting (friendly and) efficient. This year we need to elect two new lay representatives for Archdeaconry Synod, and we are likely to have a couple of vacancies to fill on the Chaplaincy Council – we really need more CC members from our Avranches congregation, but we can only elect people if they stand for election! We hope every member of the Chaplaincy will want to be present to support the Council and Officers who do so much to keep our Chaplaincy organised and active.

Please don't forget to pray daily for our church

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for calling us to be a Church under the banner of your Name:
may we look to you today and find clear vision for tomorrow.

May our life together bring you glory,
as you make of us a living invitation to enter the joy of your Kingdom. Amen.

Minister's Message

An Eternal Promise

We may think that Easter this year is all over and done with. However, according to the Church calendar there are still a couple of weeks to go but for Christians the truth and importance of the event of that weekend are something that should be with us all the year round. Without Jesus' suffering and death, we have no forgiveness of our sins, without His resurrection we cannot have eternal life but as Paul tell the church in Corinth 'But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep'.

(1 Corinthians 15:20)

The importance of Jesus' resurrection for all those who have put their trust in Jesus has been bought home to us in the last few weeks with the death of Bronwen and of Peter Hales, or rather their bodies have died but because of Jesus' resurrection they are very much alive and with Him.

Jesus told the thief on the cross 'Today you will be with me in paradise', and that is how it is for Bronwen and Peter, not with physical bodies, that will come later, but their souls and spirits live on with Christ and all who have gone before.

This however is not their eternal state, they and we will have new eternal bodies: 'Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.' (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)

We have been promised that we will all have these new eternal bodies that will be free from sickness, pain, injury or worry and God does not break His promises.

But what you might ask if our old earthly bodies don't exist anymore, dust to dust, ashes to ashes, as literally happens at a cremation, what when there is no body to 'raise'. What about the martyrs who were burned at the stake, will they miss out? Of course not.

My Dad didn't want to be cremated, not because he thought God wouldn't be able to raise him on the last day but people then were saying – I am going to be cremated so God can't get me - and he as a committed Christian didn't want people to think that about him.

But surely our God is greater than that, He did after all create Adam out of nothing, just as He did the rest of creation; if He has prepared a place for us in heaven He will make sure we are there to take up residence, He has our blue print, our DNA if you like and after all this new body is not going to be an exact replica of our old bodies, it will be an all new eternal body. I don't think God will need bits of our old body to be able to do it. How much we will look like we do now I don't know but I am sure we will be able to recognise each other particularly, those we love.

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adrian Grainge

Catching up with two old friends

Matthew and I spent an afternoon with Penny and Keith at their lovely home in Spain. They are both well, and enjoying their retirement. And as a plus their koi carp survived the move from France and are multiplying !

Jill Purslow

As long-standing chaplaincy members will remember, Keith (Estlin) was our first treasurer and Penny edited the chaplaincy magazine for some years.



DIARY DATES

Tuesday 5 th May 10h30	Coffee Catch-up Poké Mi, Avranches
Tuesdays 5 th and 19 th May 20h00	Bible Study on Zoom <i>(See page 4)</i>
Thursdays 7 th , 14 th , 21 st and 28 th May 20h00	Alpha Course on Zoom <i>(See page 4)</i>
Sunday 10 th May 17h00	Service in Cherbourg <i>(See page 3)</i>
Tuesday 12 th and 26 th May 20h00	Something More on Zoom <i>(See page 4)</i>
Wednesday 20 th May 10h00 – 12h30	The Baker English Library at Gratot
24th May After morning worship at Gratot	Annual Chaplaincy Meeting Followed by Charities AGM then Bring and Share lunch

SERVICES IN MAY

Covid is still around. Please respect those who are being cautious.
In particular, please think of others and wear a mask if you come to church while you have a cough or cold or feel unwell.

Services may be subject to change depending on availability of ministers.

DATE	GRATOT 11h00	AVRANCHES 16h00
3 rd May	Morning Prayer	Holy Eucharist
10 th May	Holy Eucharist	Evening Prayer
17 th May	Morning Prayer	Holy Eucharist
24 th May	Holy Eucharist	Evening Prayer
31 st May	Morning Prayer	Holy Eucharist

READINGS FOR MAY

Date	Day in the Church Calendar	Psalm	1 st Reading	2 nd Reading	Gospel
3 rd	Fifth Sunday of Easter	31: 1-5, 15-16	Acts 7:55-end	1 Peter 2:2-10	John 14:1-14
10 th	Sixth Sunday of Easter	66:7-end	Acts 17:22-31	1 Peter 3:13-end	John 14:15-21
17 th	Sunday after Ascension	68: 1-10, 32-end	Acts 1:6-14	1 Peter 4:12-14, 5:6-11	John 17:1-11
24 th	Pentecost	104:26-end	Acts 2:1-21	1 Corinthians 12:3b-13	John 7:37-39
31 st	Trinity Sunday	8	Isaiah 40:12-17, 27 end	2 Corinthians 13:11-end	Matthew 28:16-end

MINISTRY CONTACTS

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Churchwarden and Chaplaincy Treasurer

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Chaplaincy Ministers - usually meet monthly with Fr Chris;
please share your questions, thoughts and ideas with the Team by contacting Chris

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Mary Jackson, Licensed Lay Minister

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Adrian Grainge, Licensed Lay Minister

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Revd Dr Helen Wordsworth

Useful websites

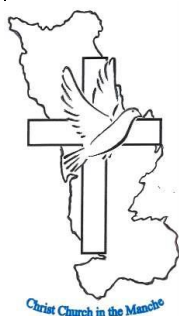
If you know of any other websites which might be of use to our readership, please let us know



https://europe.anglican.org/	The main Diocesan website
http://anglicanfrance.fr/	Anglicans in France
https://www.achurchnearyou.com/christ-church-manche-normandy	Our Chaplaincy website
www.rfi.fr/en/	French news and current affairs public radio station, good for latest news in English

NEXT MONTH'S DEADLINE for articles and photos is 25th May

Please send articles and photos to: mmupjohn@live.co.uk



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Meetings on 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month in the salle at
Notre Dame du Touchet, 50140; 10h00 – 12h30

Trained volunteers available

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