



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

October 2026

From Father Chris

What happens next?

Thank you for your response to our Stewardship Renewal in September. We are still evaluating the results to see whether we hit our (quite modest!) target. Last month's letter provoked some interesting conversations, and the focus on June 2027 sparked a few questions and a little speculation: that date is just nine months away – what about our long-term aims and plans? A warm letter from Bp Robert after reading last month's magazine wishes us blessings for the autumn and adds *'the vision for the church is well expressed and inspiring!'*

So what are our plans for the future? One of my favourite cautionary phrases is 'Our plans = God's jokes' (a comment on James 4 v13!) – the caution is to continue to make plans, but to make plans with humility, in case God shows us He has other plans! As we see the plan to next June unfolding – not perfectly, but still on track! - what priorities should be in our minds for the next stage of our journey? I believe they can be neatly expressed in three words which happen to begin with the letter 'V'.

The first 'V' stands for our target agreed for next June, that we are viable. The practicalities of our Stewardship Renewal majored on money – the resources to pay for the ministry we need. But there are other challenges to our viability, not least the age of our congregations and the difficulty in replacing long-serving Church Officers. Heroic service is being given by people who could easily claim other priorities or point to the challenge of advancing years. Can we replace them when we need to? If we can't, what might that say about our viability as a church? We have gained some new members, but we are only holding our own in terms of overall congregation numbers. Who are we here for? God (obviously!), but who are the people we hope to reach and find and draw? We need to keep an eye on our viability, so that we can demonstrate it at the unpredictable but inevitable point where a new Chaplain is needed.

The second 'V' is also a familiar one, that we are visible. We've made real progress in getting better seen and better known, but it's a challenge for all of us. We can only do so much with advertising and social media, but all of us need to be creative in finding ways to remind people that we are here! It's difficult enough in a conventional parish with a big building with a bell that everybody in the parish can hear: how do we get ourselves known without those advantages? This is a challenge for us as a church, and for each of us as members of this community.

The third 'V' has been a theme all along, but have we the courage to aspire for our life to be vibrant? In the 1662 Prayer Book Eucharist, a prayer referred to God's 'true and lively Word', but a modern revision preferred the term 'living Word' 'Not so', said an old priest I knew, *'water is living, but champagne is lively!'* Surely God's Word is nothing less than lively! Spiritual vibrancy is a gift of God, but it's a gift God pours out on Christians who are hungry and thirsty for a deeper encounter with His reality. Are we content with our religious routines, or do we build on the regular good things we enjoy to encounter God's lively grace more deeply through praise and penitence, Word and sacrament, prayer and faith and exploration? This isn't necessarily about doing more – rather about sometimes doing differently, and certainly wanting to do better. A vibrant church needs to be a community of vibrant Christians: a community of vibrant Christians will be a living invitation to other spiritually hungry people – they are out there!

How do you respond to these three aspirations? They are 'only' aspirations, but aspirations are the foundations for God-focused plans. Is this how we would like our Chaplaincy to live in the next stage of our life together? Tell me – and one another – and of course God! – what you think.

Love in Christ, Fr Chris



19h30 every Tuesday – a short service of Evening Prayer on Zoom.

It is fine to come for the service then either leave or else stay on for the 20h00 Bible Study or house-group.

The **Bible Study** will continue its study of the book of Malachi on 6th and 20th



'Something More' dates for October are 13th and 27th.
The next session will be looking at the topic of Pilgrimage.
The Zoom link is to be found in Friday Focus.



In place of Picnic with the Parson, October sees the resumption in Gratot of our winter warmer, Potage with the Parson (aka Soup lunches!)

Home-made soup, bread and a dessert for only 5 euros, accompanied and followed by the usual interesting conversation.



We hope you will stay after the morning Eucharist service.

Harvest Thanksgiving at Gratot

On Sunday 27th September the Gratot congregation held their Harvest Festival – though it was quickly pointed out by Fr Chris that this should properly be called Harvest Thanksgiving as we were there to give thanks to our creator God for His many wonderful gifts to us.



Our gifts were ranged before the altar - all were items suitable for passing to the local *banque alimentaire*; they formed a colourful collection to complement the lovely arrangement of autumn flowers placed in front of the lectern.

We sang the old harvest hymns with gusto, delighting in the words so familiar to most of us since primary school days – as they are generally sung only once a year, they are still fresh and new each time.



In his sermon Father Chris amplified the theme of Thanksgiving, reminding us that the prayer at the heart of the Eucharist, though known by several names, is best called The Great Thanksgiving, drawing together our many reasons to be thankful. The sermon ended with this beautiful quotation from the poem “Eurydice” by Dame Edith Sitwell:

“Love is not changed by death, and nothing is lost, and all in the end is harvest.”

After the service, we repaired to the hall for a Bring and Share lunch and plenty of interesting conversation.

The harvest gifts were packed up ready for delivery later in the week to the *Mairie* in Gratot for onward delivery to the food bank. All was gratefully received.

A big THANK YOU, as ever, to all those who helped make the day go so well.

Please note that Harvest at Avranches will be on 4th October at 16h00.

Leading Intercessions

A lively group met on Zoom recently to explore how to lead prayers of intercession during Sunday worship. Two of the participants give their impressions here.

Leisa writes:

From the moment we were all online, up to and including the end of our “Leading Intercessions” course, the overall ambiance / “feeling” was of warmth, inclusion and utter organisation.

The paper sheet helped outline what was communicated on screen, the onscreen outline helped us stay the course. Comments were pertinent, course-related and very educational and entertaining. There was structure and shape, just as there are in writing the intercessions and showing examples of what NOT to include was fun, funny and helpful in turns.

I, for one, learned a lot and the course helped me realise very clearly what is expected. It was also exactly the right length of time. Thank you!

Margaret writes:

To lead a congregation in public prayer is a privilege not to be undertaken lightly, as this interesting workshop demonstrated. After giving us some extraordinary howlers (thanking God for intervening in the local football match the day before....really?!) Fr Chris led us into examples of best practice. He pointed out that prayers should include both the eternal and the everyday, with vital source materials being the Bible (especially the readings for the day) and the week’s news.

There should be some sort of structure, such as: prayers for the Church, the World, Needy people, those recently departed and the Communion of Saints. There could also be time (how long?) for silent prayer and/or a link to the theme of the service. It is important not to mix styles – addressing God as You or Thou should be consistent throughout the prayers and should also chime with the style of the service.

The workshop covered so much more including the use of responses, accessible language, inclusivity, extemporaneous prayer... All in all it was an excellent and informative evening. Many thanks to Fr Chris.

Church of England is running out of priests!

....so the UK newspapers reported last spring, responding to a report by church group 'Save the Parish', drawing on official church figures. A consultation held at Windsor brought together a wide field of interested people from all corners of the C of E, and this report was the result of that meeting.

Our 'Something More' house-group looked at this report, and pondered these stark figures. Paid clergy ('parish Vicars') currently number 6,682, with more than half aged over 55. The year Fr Chris was ordained, the number of parish clergy was 11,700. On the present track, by 2030 (not long!) there may be only 5,780. In order to maintain current numbers we need to ordain 400 parish clergy per year: last year the figure was 294. Something must be done – but what? Equally interesting, and perhaps more immediate, was the sorry account of mixed messages harming recruiting ('we need more clergy but we are cutting the jobs available'), of inadequate clergy training, of parish clergy struggling with morale and feeling overloaded with seemingly irrelevant tasks.

Most alarming was the apparent loss of any agreed vision of what clergy are here to be and do. The report enlarges on this need in the section: *Addressing the Core Problem: Creating an Anglican Vision of Priesthood* '...our entire project to attract, train and retain clergy relies on a strong and confident theological understanding of what it is to be an Anglican priest, which will be what inspires a postulant and supports a minister throughout long years of service. It is also what enables good, clear and trusting relationships with the parishes in which these clergy are to serve. Confident and joyful priestly ministry will itself engender vocations whether to ordained ministry or to lay callings. A priest is both a walking sacrament, and the first vocations officer. This is a virtuous circle, but one which we need to strengthen.....'

The discussion was wide-ranging and thoughtful: we knew the solutions were not in our hands, but we did reflect on ways we might insulate our Chaplaincy from some of the consequences. It was an excellent meeting.

Fr Chris

New Faces 1

Here is the first of a new series in which we introduce the newest members of our chaplaincy to the wider membership.

Hello everyone!

My name is Sarah Mougenot-Newton, and I'm a new member of the Christ Church La Manche community. I'm originally from the north of England (a Lancashire lass!), a musician and writer of science-fiction, fantasy, and roleplaying games. I love words, and am an enthusiastic reader of scripture and theology, fiction, history, popular science, and in fact just about anything I can get my hands on. I'm fifty-eight years old.



I was raised in the Church of England, but my faith really begins with a religious experience at university, where I found wonderful and formative fellowship and a vibrant community. After leaving university, I travelled and worked in various countries, including studying in Moscow and living five years in Japan. I worked as an English teacher, a TV producer, an interpreter and translator, a web developer, and designed financial services websites in the city during the dot com boom. I came to France in 2005, spent a few years doing the self-sufficiency thing, and then started to write roleplaying games and fiction. Throughout my adult life, although I've been a frequent church-goer, I never really found the same kind of solid fellowship community as I was fortunate enough to enjoy in my younger days – until discovering the Christ Church La Manche community this year!

I was widowed in 2019, my late husband having been taken by cancer. I re-married in 2022, to the French luthier and musician Mil Mougenot, whom I met in late 2020. We speak both French and English at home — French one day, English the next — and we have feet firmly planted in both communities here in Normandy. Mil has belonged to both Catholic and French Protestant communities, but is a relative newcomer to south Manche, and also found it difficult to find a vibrant church here. Last spring, quite by chance, we discovered a post about Christ Church La Manche on Facebook, and here we are!

I've found the community at Christ Church La Manche to be wonderfully welcoming, energized, and active. The services are deep, traditional, well-structured, and always nourishing; and the community feels very attentive to everyone's needs, and imbued with the discreet yet heartfelt care and mutual support one would always hope to find. The church is something I've been looking for, for many years, and I'm very grateful to have been received so warmly. I'm looking forward to entering into deeper fellowship with my fellow community members, and thank you all warmly for your kindness and acceptance!

*In Christ,
Sarah*

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.



Don't forget that this is the month
when the clocks change..
Put them back one hour during the night of
24th/25th October.



Why I like hymns!



I wasn't brought up in a religious family, so my first real encounter with hymns was at secondary school. Our school was a religious foundation, but equally it was a place where music was made! With the organ played by our music master (a former pupil of Sir Adrian Boult, and later organist at Peterborough Cathedral!) we sang hymns at daily assembly – two in the morning, one at the end of the afternoon, fifteen (usually different!) hymns per week! The source of all this was 'Songs of Praise' a book of fine music, combined with words which were occasionally so heretical the Chaplain would walk out rather than sing them! Music sinks into my memory very easily – must be something to do with the autism? - when I leafed through 'Songs of Praise' a few years ago I found I can still sing more than 500 of the hymns even now. I guess that makes me a hymn enthusiast?

Not that many years ago we were assured that the hymn was dead and that the future belonged to the modern worship song. I sang along, learned a lot of new music, but soon noticed some drawbacks trying to introduce songs to congregations. Maybe I've worked in the wrong kind of church, but I've found most congregations less than keen to learn much new music. Even my liveliest congregation would cope with just one new song at a service, and then not every week. Each song has its tune – to sing the fresh words means learning the fresh tune written for it. Many of the new tunes worked well with a music group, fairly well with a piano, but not so well when played on a pipe organ.

The fact that everything was contemporary brought other problems. Apart from the people pitching the old versus the new as enemies leading to endless silly rows in Church Councils (I heard it called 'the Worship War!' *Crikey!*), the books of new songs proved to be full of the bland, with a few buried gems to unearth. Of course new hymn books have always contained a high proportion of rubbish, but there is this wonderful thing called The Test of Time(!), where the unsingable junk in the first edition is shunted to the appendix in the next edition, then quietly dropped. ('*Within the churchyard side by side are lots of long low graves*' was a new hymn for children in 'Ancient and Modern' (1860) but it never appeared again!) Gems can take a generation to emerge – I quite like the tune of 'Shine Jesus shine' (some of the words are a puzzle), but haven't actually sung it for 20 years now. New things can depreciate quickly from 'fresh' to 'stale' (a musical baguette!): only the best pass this 'test of time'.

If I was simply a grump who disliked new things I wouldn't have six volumes of the 'Songs of Fellowship' music edition on my shelf! I love some worship songs and find them deeply moving, but hymns remain the backbone of my planning for services. The 1980s prediction that the era of the hymn was over was premature: lively Christians keep writing new hymns! Most hymns are verses of poetry written to fit a particular 'metre' of syllables to each line. The fresh words can be linked to tunes people already know, so words (which are, after all, the 'point' of a hymn?) can be sung without having to learn a new tune each time. A really determined effort could teach a congregation ten tunes in ten different metres: they could then sing 90% of the hymns being written without ever learning new music again!

There are many great old hymns we should never forget. Among new hymns of course you'll find a few brilliant gems, quite a bit of rubbish, and a lot of 'OK' hymns that 'do the job' with the theme or message of the day. You can use most 'OK' hymns to a familiar tune without investing time (and money!) in a special tune for it. But the biggest reason I hang on to hymns is because I love the breadth and depth they bring to worship. Hymns can offer Christian experience from every continent, and from every century from the 2nd to the 21st. Well-selected hymns will invite you to pray with spiritual giants – Ambrose, Augustine, Bernard, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther and his companions, the early fathers of our Anglican tradition, Victorian enthusiasts, Victorian translators, the ecumenical and social activists of the 20th century, our passion for peace and justice today. Jesus said “...every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.” (Matthew 13, v52) And for me our hymns are part of that treasure.

Fr Chris

DIARY DATES	
Sunday 4 th October 16h00	Harvest Thanksgiving at Avranches
Tuesday 6 th October 10h30	Coffee Catch-up Poké Mi, Avranches
Tuesdays 6 th and 20 th October 20h00	Bible Study on Zoom
Wednesdays 7 th and 21 st October 10h00 – 12h30	The Baker English Library at Gratot
Sunday 11 th October 17h00	Service in Cherbourg
Tuesdays 13 th and 27 th October 20h00	Something More on Zoom
Saturday 28th November	Christmas fair

SERVICES IN OCTOBER		
<i>Covid is still around. Please respect those who are being cautious.</i> 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
4 th October	Morning Prayer	Holy Eucharist
11 th October <i>17h00, Cherbourg service</i>	Holy Eucharist	Evening Prayer
18 th October	Morning Prayer	Holy Eucharist
25 th October	Holy Eucharist	Evening Prayer

READINGS FOR OCTOBER					
Date	Day in the Church Calendar	Psalm	1 st Reading	2 nd Reading	Gospel
4 th	Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity	80:8-16	Isaiah 5:1-7	Philippians 3:4b-14	Matthew 21:33-end
11 th	Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity	23	Isaiah 25:1-9	Philippians 4:1-9	Matthew 22:1-14
18 th	Twentieth Sunday after Trinity (<i>Luke the Evangelist</i>)	96:1-13 <i>Or</i> 147:1-7	Isaiah 45:1-7 <i>Or Acts</i> 16:6-12a	1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 <i>Or</i> 2 Timothy 4:5-17	Matthew 22:15-2 <i>or</i> <i>Luke</i> 10:1-9
25 th	Bible Sunday (<i>Last Sunday after Trinity</i>)	119:9-16	Nehemiah 8:1-4a, 8.12	Colossians 3:12-17	Matthew 24:30-35

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Mary Jackson, Licensed Lay Minister	02 33 48 94 15 maryjackson117@gmail.com
Adrian Grainge, Licensed Lay Minister	02 99 20 38 60 adrian.grainge@orange.fr
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 26th October

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



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