e 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
November 2026

Minister's Message 1



As all those heatwaves begin to feel like a thing of the past, and everything is much more autumnal, November brings a distinct shift in rhythm. It is a month of transition, — one that sits quietly between the harvest celebrations of autumn and the expectancy of Advent.

In our church calendar and in our communities, we take time this month to look back. We mark Remembrance Sunday and All Saints' Day at the start of the month, setting aside dedicated time to remember those lost in wars, as well as those saints who have gone before us.

Looking back often stirs nostalgia, grief, or a longing for days gone by. When scripture calls us to remember, it invites us to remember God's faithfulness in the past, — reminding us that the same God who carried us through past shadows walks with us into today's uncertainties.

In a month where our friends across the pond celebrate Thanksgiving, we are reminded that gratitude is more than a seasonal feeling — it is a spiritual practice, and we hold on to hope as we are reminded that the darkening days are not an ending, but a prelude — a prelude to the coming of Christ, the light of the world. The changing seasons serve as a gentle reminder that no darkness lasts forever, and winter always gives way to spring.

This November, may we find space to remember with love, give thanks with a joyful heart, and look forward with faith to the light that is always coming into the world.

Mary Jackson
Lay Minister

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.

Christmas Services

Carol Services:
Avranches: Sunday 6th Dec, 15h00
Gratot: Saturday 19th Dec, 15h00
Cherbourg: Sunday 13th Dec, 17h00

Christmas Eucharist:
Avranches: Thursday 24th Dec, 15h30
Gratot: Thursday 24th Dec, 11h00
Christmas Day Gratot: Short Morning Prayer, time to be announced





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 3rd and 17th



'**Something More**' dates for November are 10th and 24th.
Our fortnightly house-group continues with a varied programme of topics. Our session on 'Pilgrimage' looked at this age-old instinct and the blessings that can come from following it, but also asked whether the concept of 'holy places' is something Bible-based Christians should embrace. The following session 'Does Mary matter?' looked at the place of the Virgin Mary in Anglican spirituality: when we gather with our Christian neighbours what beliefs can we celebrate together, and what are the 'sticking points' where Anglicans need to say, *'thanks...but no thanks!'?*

Our session on Tuesday 10th November will take a different approach. We'll watch a fascinating brief video from a young American Christian entitled: '*I Attended Anglican Church For a Year...What Changed?'* He's already a Christian, but attending an Anglican Church changes him in many ways. His excited discovery of things we tend to take for granted should give rise to some interesting discussions. There will be a surprise in the tail of this session, but you'll need to come along to find out!

The Zoom link is to be found in Friday Focus.



Sunday 22nd November
Potage with the Parson (aka Soup lunch)
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.



CHRISTMAS FAIR

Saturday 28th November, 10h00 – 17h00



Yes, it's that time of year again and plans are in hand for this year's Christmas fair at Gratot and the "British Goods" stall at the Montmartin sur Mer St Nicholas market –
but we need YOUR help, please!

If you are a crafter, can you donate one or more of your items for the gift stall? Ideas could include knitted hot water bottle covers, felt embroidered book marks, shopping bags made from fabric scraps, hand-made Christmas cards, quilted table mats….. the possibilities are endless.

Not clever with your hands? Not to worry, there are still ways you can help:

- Perhaps you have received an unwanted gift this year – could you donate it to the gift stall? It may be just the thing that someone else has been looking for.

- There will be a **raffle**, with two splendid hampers of British foods as the main prizes. In previous years, goods have been bought and the costs taken from the profits, but perhaps individuals (You?) might be able to make a small monetary donation to pay for one or two items, which will then be bought in the UK. (We had thought of asking for donations of the actual items, but realised we could end up with 10 jars of Marmite….!)

Finally, of course, do come on the day and bring your friends and neighbours – the more the merrier!

Minister's Message 2

Editor's Note: This article should have appeared last month, but due to some weird technical glitch, it did not arrive, despite having been sent in very good time. My apologies to Helen.

Endings and beginnings

As we have moved through October we have come to the end of Summer…some will breathe a sigh of relief after all the heat we've had. Others will put the Summer clothes away with some sadness, having enjoyed lovely holidays and good times with the children/grandchildren. We watch the leaves fall and the nights grow dark. But this has also been a beginning time…the beginning of Autumn with its rich colours and harvests and new challenges for work or school or club activities. Even some of the plants that have suffered so much in the heat are beginning to show signs of life again. King Solomon, generally recognised as the writer of Ecclesiastes, offers us familiar words: "For everything there is a time…" (Ecclesiastes 3: 1). There are endings and there are beginnings.

As the seasons change, so does the life of Christ's church worldwide. In fact, in order to keep on living, our cells need to continually change and be renewed. It's part of the healing and adapting and growing process. If everything stayed the same, then we would stagnate and die. Sometimes we can't understand why something ends before it should and we are deeply saddened by it. In September I came back from a lamenting and thanks-giving day for the life of Spurgeon's College, where I did most of my theological training over many years. That was a seemingly premature ending, not something anyone would have wanted, and we are still grieving and trying to work out what went wrong. But I do believe that out of the ashes something good and new will come, because I have seen that God is able to take our sadnesses and failures and work with us to see good arise from them. To make new beginnings out of both expected and unforeseen endings.

While in the UK I also attended the Parish nursing symposium at the Hayes, Derbyshire. 75 nurses had gathered there to celebrate and enhance their work with churches. We heard wonderful stories of whole-person healing and support for both church-attenders and those with no church connection, along with guidance for excellence in good practice and encouragement. As I heard news of more churches and nurses wanting to embark on this ministry, I was reminded that God had brought this all about as a result of endings and new beginnings, and I give glory to Him.

And in our own journey of faith, there may be some things that need to end so that we can fully enter into the new life God has for us. If we allow past doubts, disappointments and hurts to live on in our memories they can easily hold us back from experiencing the blessings He has in store for us.

So as we move into this new season let's remember that Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and for ever, and He is both creator and re-creator of all things. He can turn endings into new beginnings, both in our own lives and in the life of His church. And one day He will turn the world as we currently know it with all its injustice and wrongdoing, pain and sadness, into the beginning of a new world where He rules for ever with justice and with peace.
Your Kingdom come Lord Jesus.

Revd Helen Wordsworth

Time to renew?

The UK Government's Living in France - GOV.UK advice on renewing your residence permit has been updated and now includes detailed information on: • how and when to apply for renewal. • supporting documents. • récépissés. • travel while a renewal application is being processed. • what to do if problems arise.	**Key messages for applicants** • Apply during the two months before your permit expires. • Follow the process specified by your local prefecture. • Do not use the general ANEF renewal service for WARP renewals. • Keep your contact details up to date and regularly check spam folders. • Include your *numéro étranger* and application reference when contacting the authorities.

There is also a short video published by the British Embassy in Paris available here: Facebook

Avranches News



Our Harvest Thanksgiving Service was held on 4th October and non-perishable food items were collected for the '*Restos du Coeur*' centre in Avranches. We have since received a nice letter of thanks from them, expressing their sincere gratitude for this, and any, donation. They are now supporting some 200 families per week, about 500 individuals. We will be collecting more for them in the run up to Christmas.

This year we have participated in the enjoyable and rewarding Lent course, based on the book 'The Greatest Story ever told' by Bear Grylls, and also an excellent Alpha Course with videos on Zoom, which brought our Chaplaincy group closer together and culminated in a most enjoyable shared meal hosted by the Wordsworths.

Since October of last year we have been setting aside our tea monies to support the financing of a future 'House for Duty' chaplain, and have collected in excess of 600 €uros in that time

Over the summer the numbers attending our services have increased with some newcomers, some holidaymakers and other visiting friends or relatives, altogether providing a lively gathering for conversation after the service.

We enjoyed two 'Songs of Praise' services during the summer, the second of which saw Joanna Wehrle back with us to lead the music and conduct our 'pop-up' choir (the former Virey Voices) in performing an anthem. We are now fortunate to have a few accomplished musicians worship with us, and we plan to put their talents to good use. More details to follow on this!

On Saturday 24th October our Sri Lankan congregants opened their new shop in St. Laurent de Terregatte and a group of us attended to give them our support. We pray that they will be blessed in this important new venture and that they will receive the support of local residents.

Penny Feather

Blessings on a new venture!

At Avranches some months ago we welcomed a Sri Lankan family who had come to our area as refugees (life for Christians in Sri Lanka isn't always easy or safe). We missed them when they had to move to Vire, but then came the glad news that they were returning to our area and opening a shop! Months of planning and sheer hard work finally came to fruition on Saturday, 24th October when Sri Lankan and Anglophone friends joined the local community for the grand opening of the Proxi Store 'ShaliCha' at Saint-Laurent-de-Terregatte (between Saint Hilaire, Ducey, and Saint James). The new shop combines a well-stocked grocery section with a bar, plus before long the tempting prospect of authentic Sri Lankan food as well!



The opening was a great village occasion: we gathered in front of the door (thankfully the wind and rain held off!), Fr Chris prayed a blessing on the venture, the Maire welcomed the new shop and thanked all who had made it happen, then all flowed in to enjoy a glass of wine and a selection of nibbles. Many interesting conversations followed, and Fr Chris found himself answering a number of questions about our faith and about our church. It was wonderful to be there, and a valuable piece of PR. Christ Church wishes every blessing to Baskaran, Dayana and the family; we hope your new venture will flourish!

Fr Chris

Carefully crafted....yet strangely empty?

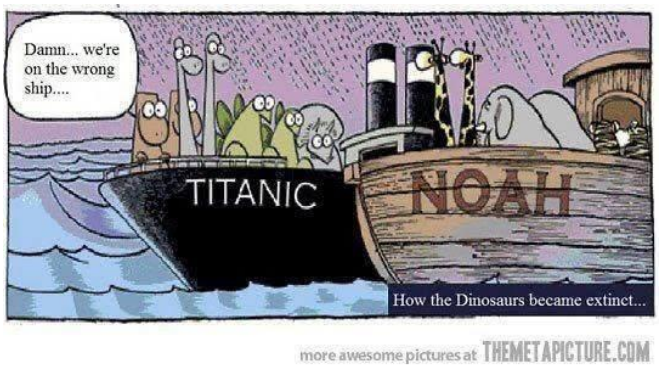
For the first time in over twenty years, recently I found myself asked to lead a non-religious 'civil' funeral ceremony as a favour to the neighbour of a friend. Such funerals are pretty normal here in France, but they are normally led by 'celebrants' brought in for the occasion, not by the local Vicar! I laid my cards on the table: I could offer a *non*-religious funeral, but not an *anti*-religious funeral, nor would I do a 'semi-religious' funeral which was neither Christian nor humanist. Talking of humanists, where was my copy of 'Funerals without God' that the British Humanist Association sent me all those years ago.....? (Later I found out I had given it to Donna, certain I would never need it again!)

The family were lovely (though they kept changing things!). They supplied a mass of material: biography, anecdotes, stories. Some people wanted to speak, others wanted me to read their text for them. We had music to include...including 'reggae'! The first job was to give the ceremony some 'shape' – I decided from the start to call it a ceremony, since a 'service' implies a religious offering of some kind. A well-planned church service has a structure, it moves the worshipper through a series of steps. By comparison a civil funeral starts out as a blank piece of paper – yet the celebrant still needs to lead people through a process, maintaining a sense of occasion while giving people the opportunity to express their reasons for being there.

I decided on a ceremony in four steps, using pieces of music as a 'hinge' between each. We began with *The Introduction* welcoming people, introducing myself, explaining how the ceremony would unfold. The next section was *The Story*, a biography of the person's life. So often we only know a person in one stage of that life – but the ceremony is about naming and celebrating a person's whole life, looking at the 'big picture'. After a piece of music, I stepped to one side and 'compered' as family and friends came forward to contribute the third section, *The Memories*. Then I took the lead again for *The Farewell*, which I deliberately drew back to formality. I asked people to stand and remember the person as they had known him, picturing him at some happy moment they had shared with him. Using a carefully crafted list I remembered the human qualities we saw in the person which made him a unique individual. We ended with lines expressing a meaning for life, and a determination that we would be better people for having known our departed friend. The coffin was removed as we listened to final music. 'Lovely service, Vicar' was the greeting at the door.

Was it? I did my best to meet a need, and to be pastorally sensitive to the human situation. It was certainly an opportunity to meet people I wouldn't normally encounter, people who 'don't do religion' - who knows what conversations that might lead to in the future? But for me as a Christian there was a bleakness: despite all the beautifully crafted warm words, because there was no faith there was also no hope – whether leading to extinction or to some sense of personhood dissipating into the cosmos, the stark message was that death was the end – a brick wall of finality, rather than the door to a new and eternal life in Christ. 'For the Christian, life is changed, not taken away'.

Civil funerals in France are common, in fact they seem to be the default 'offer' especially at crematoria. With plenty of professional 'celebrants' around it's unlikely I'll be conducting a civil funeral again in future. I'm glad I accepted this one-off request to help my neighbour, which has given me this opportunity to reflect on why I wouldn't want such a funeral myself. There's probably a gentle reminder to church members here, that you should leave your relatives clear instructions if you want to be sure that your funeral reflects the faith you lived by, even if your relatives don't share that faith. Few of us know when that moment will be, so this is something to attend to now then get on with living to God's glory until He calls you home. Given my role I've picked my own hymns already, and I'm sure that when the time comes you will know the tunes! *Fr Chris*



My therapist says I have a preoccupation with vengeance.

We'll see about that.

My wife told me to stop imitating a flamingo.

I had to put my foot down!



New Faces 2

We continue our new series introducing the newest members of our chaplaincy to the wider membership.



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Father Chris has asked me to introduce myself to the community. I am Jean-Louis Christian Mougenot, better known by my nickname “Mil”, derived from my grandfather’s name. I was born on January 15, 1960, in Longwy, in the east of France, into a two-faith family environment that had been strongly affected by both world wars. On my mother’s side, my grandfather had been a stretcher-bearer in the trenches in 1914-1918, and had been a victim of PTSD. On the paternal side, my grandfather Emile was in the Resistance, arrested by the Gestapo and died in the Gross-Rozen (Rogoznica) concentration camp in Lower Silesia in 1945.

My mother, a Catholic, was raised strictly during the war by Italian nuns in Savoy; she was discreet and rather submissive. My father was a Protestant of the Augsburg confession. Both were dental surgeons. My father was an exuberant character! To compensate for the pressure of his stressful job, he allowed himself all the excesses that life could offer. When he retired, he suddenly recognized that he was a sinner, turned to Jesus Christ, and volunteered at “La Force”, the village of pastor John Bost which is entirely dedicated to treating mental illnesses of the worst kind. He came back “born again” and, having become quite devout, offered the large living room of our house to the local Protestant community. It’s in this atmosphere that I was raised.

I got married for the first time at the age of 18. My first wife is now deceased. My life would be too long to quickly tell, but I had three children: Aurore, Josepha, and Zachary. Six years ago, I had the chance to meet Sarah Newton, an English widow from Lancashire, and we quickly married.

My professional life is of very little interest: a typical career as a rock singer, but not a very stable one. It had its highs and lows. To make ends meet, I worked as deputy director at one of the oldest private detective companies in Paris. I also explored traditional music and Christian praise. Just when I was considering retiring, my wife Sarah suggested creating the rock band RELOAD, now enjoying success. I also work as a hurdy-gurdy maker, with a workshop in Le Teilleul in south Manche.

Two significant events in my life occurred in 2005. First, a spiritual retreat in a monastery. There, one evening, I suddenly felt seized by a force impossible to describe in words. I panicked, and asked: "Is it you, Lord?" The answer was not long in coming: I was visited by an intense wave of love. In the days that followed, I realized that my life would never be the same. After that, preaching to anyone who wanted to listen the holy name of Jesus Christ, I felt completely lost and in an intense search for God. I lost all my friends, who thought I was crazy. Like father, like son: I’d also been born again! In that way, I worshipped successively with Catholics, Evangelicals, and, finally, in a stay of four years with the Protestant church in Beauvais, where I was kapellmeister at worship every Sunday.

The other event of 2005 occurred while I was living in Paris. I was attacked by a gang of youths in the suburbs of Paris. I survived, but with multiple fractures and a cardiac arrest lasting several minutes, which led to a state of partial amnesia which I still suffer from occasionally to this day. In retrospect, I think that Jesus, while making himself known to me by the power of the Holy Spirit, also wanted to make me taste the pains and joys of his redeeming cross.

In the three years after first meeting Sarah, when I stopped attending any church, I began to realize that I was more comfortable with direct confession to God and a more reformed doctrine. You could say it’s taken me a lifetime to realize it. It’s in this spirit that I’ve joined the Anglican Church in Avranches after discovering the community.

Thank you for welcoming Sarah and me. Be richly blessed by the Lord Jesus!

Mil

DIARY DATES

Tuesday 3rd November 10h30	Coffee Catch-up Poké Mi, Avranches
Tuesdays 3rd and 17th November 20h00	Bible Study on Zoom
Wednesdays 4th and 18th November 10h00 – 12h30	The Baker English Library at Gratot
Sunday 8th November 17h00	Service in Cherbourg
Tuesdays 10th and 24th November 20h00	Something More on Zoom
Saturday 14th and Sunday 15th November All day	Christmas fair with church stall Montmartin sur Mer
Saturday 28th November	Christmas fair at Gratot (*See Page 2*)

SERVICES IN NOVEMBER

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
1st November	Morning Prayer	Holy Eucharist
8th November *17h00, Cherbourg service*	10h30 start, Holy Eucharist for Remembrance Day	Evening Prayer
15th November	Morning Prayer	Holy Eucharist
22nd November	Holy Eucharist	Evening Prayer
29th November	Morning Prayer	Holy Eucharist

READINGS FOR NOVEMBER

Date	*Day in the Church Calendar*	*Psalm*	*1st Reading*	*2nd Reading*	*Gospel*
1st	All Saints' Day	34:1-10	Revelation 7:9-end	1 John 3:1-3	Matthew 5:1-12
8th	Remembrance Day	70	Amos 5:18-24	1 Thessalonians 4:13-end	Matthew 25:1-13
15th	Second Sunday before Advent	90:1-8,12	Zephaniah 1:7, 12-end	1 Thessalonians 5:1-11	Matthew 25:14-30
22nd	Christ the King Sunday next before Advent	95:1-7	Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24	Ephesians 1:15-end	Matthew 25:31-end
29th	Advent Sunday	80:1-8, 18-20	Isaiah 64:1-9	1 Corinthians 1:3-9	Mark 13:24-end

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Adrian Feather, Churchwarden and Chaplaincy Treasurer	02 33 58 01 35 adrian.feather@orange.fr
Michaela Winterman Churchwarden	07 88 38 33 93
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Fr Chris with:	
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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 25th November

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

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