

DIOCESE IN EUROPE

THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND



The Anglican Chaplaincy of Holy Trinity Las Palmas de Gran Canaria

Report to the Archdeaconry of Gibraltar Synod 2010



Gran Canaria

This is my first report as Priest in Charge and marks my first year in the Chaplaincy as I arrived on the island immediately after the last Synod.

I wish to begin by thanking the Church Wardens and Chaplaincy Council for their welcome and unwavering support. It has been a busy year, a year of exciting changes as the Chaplaincy was dropped into the twenty first century! Their new priest was into emails, websites and computers! So we now have a website – www.laspalmasanglican.com and this has been an important means of communication as the now monthly newsletter is sent by email, is on the web, so reaching a very wide readership.

The Archdeacon came and 'put me in' in what was an excellent evening with a reception at the British Club on March 19th – the Feast of St Joseph. It was very good to have present colleagues from the other islands.

Bishop David came at the beginning of December for a confirmation, three candidates and one from Lanzarote. This was an extended visit and we able to show him quite a lot of the island. He also met Bishop Francisco and the staff at the Templo Ecumenico.

In order to give a full picture I am now going to report on the four centres of the Chaplaincy. It is necessary to bear in mind the island is some 900 sq miles and travel is usually by bus.

Las Palmas de Gran Canaria : Holy Trinity



(Outside Holy Trinity from the garden. When the church was built in 1891 no public access or view inside was allowed from the road)

As the historic centre of the Chaplaincy, the Eucharist is celebrated every Sunday at 11am and on a Wednesday at 10.30am. The congregations have remained small this year, in part due to the recession. Palm Sunday was very special to me as the children waved real palm branches as we began the procession in the Church Garden. On All Souls day a Eucharist was celebrated in the British Cemetery. The confirmation was a very happy occasion. The candidates each decorated a large candle which was lit each Sunday during their time of preparation and the Bishop gave the candle to them at the end of the service. (An idea I picked up in Germany).

During the year we have introduced the Weekly Notice sheet with the readings. As we are a multinational, multidenominational congregation for whom English may not be the mother tongue, having the text of the readings in your hand is extremely helpful. The Offertory Procession is now weekly and we have extended the number of lay assistants.

On Saints Days the Eucharist is celebrated in the flat and is followed by a sharing lunch. This has helped to develop the fellowship.



(Inside Holy Trinity)

Some of the Chaplaincy social life centres on the British club with the monthly quiz and themed dinners.

The regular opera evening are always enjoyable, though we did have a spate of 'suicides, murders and dramatic deaths' I am always surprised how much breath the lead singers can muster when they are dying!

A Come and Meet session is usually held on the Parque Santa Catalina on a Wednesday after the Wednesday morning Eucharist.

Study Groups have been held in Advent and Lent. In Lent we reflected on the Gospel for the coming Sunday, and I reflected the discussion in my sermon. In Advent we looked at the Psalms and Canticles of the Sunday readings.

Since Advent we have begun to share the Church with the Church of Sweden and look forward to a Sharing Agreement in 2010. They held their Santa Lucia celebrations with us. The Church has been used by a number of organisations to hold concerts often with a total Canarian audience. The garden by others, such as the American School and the German Church for fund raising

Our own bazaars have been very successful during the year and we have seen many new faces.

During the year we have supported the Archdeaconry Peru Project and we are hoping to develop closer links in 2010. We have supported Peru for a number of years. This year a Chilli Evening raised 255€ for the Archdeaconry visit. We had two members of the congregation running in the Las Palmas Half Marathon and through sponsorship they raised 130€ for Peru and the same for Holy Trinity.

The British Cemetery has undergone part restoration and in November was declared a site of Historical and Cultural importance by the Canarian Government. 2010 will see the Government continue this work. Throughout the year people visit the cemetery and the website has helped to make people more aware. We have begun to make it possible to visit the cemetery 'on line'.



(Visitors from Australia being shown around the British Cemetery: Picture La Provincia)

January finally saw me being given a pass for the Prison, and I will be visiting there on a regular basis.

We also have close links with Religiosa y Militar Orden de los Caballeros del Temple and they have designated Holy Trinity as their Church. In April they made me a Comendador Honorario.

As with regards to the buildings, the Church was redecorated in time for Easter, though we do get water in when it really rains hard!

Work of improving and refurbishing the flat has gone on. Old furniture has been replaced and as there is no air conditioning ceiling fans have been installed. Because my parents lived in the flat during the 1990's, it was for me like a 'homecoming'. The lounge suite, beds and new TV have all appeared as well as a large outside dining table and chairs. When we have lunch after the Eucharist having good furniture helps people want to stay. Sometimes

we B-B-Q and I have a butcher in the central market who provides wonderful steak, and another stall supplies me with the freshest of vegetables.

As I said at the beginning we have now gone electronic with all the joys and frustrations that brings. Effectively I am away from the North 2½ days a week, and in 2010 will most probably stay in the south one night a week to save travelling. We have introduced a simple system of 'call diversion' to my mobile, which means we don't have a complicated message on the Answerphone, but the call is simply diverted. It also means that if I am off the island, I can divert calls to one person to take the message or deal with the request.

As we expand South, the issue of where the most convenient place to be based arises. The flat is well placed in the City of Las Palmas, with all that a city of over 400,000 people has. It is convenient for the commercial centre and the bus interchanges. I travel South three times a week south by bus, the shortest journey is 55 minutes, the longest is over 2 hours. I am now accustomed to this, it puts me in contact with local people and visitors, usually the seat next to me is free, surprise, surprise, but those who have dared to sit next to me have included a retired priest, who more 'John XIII than Benedict XVI', and a French student on placement who wanted me to explain what is an 'Anglican.' I do get strange looks, and also greetings, such greetings take place in the street also as I walk to church and wear a clerical collar. Travelling on the bus means my carbon footprint is low, to compensate for my high footprint in getting off the island.

We have a good relationship with the British Consulate and the Consul Mr Matthew Vickers. He arrived a month before me, so we are both new to the island. The staff attended my licensing and the Vice-consul with the staff attended the Remembrance Sunday Eucharist. We were privileged to have a visit from His Excellency the British Ambassador in November.

In the summer we shared the visit of Brian Lacey a Church of Ireland Theological Student from Ireland who was on placement with the English Evangelical Church. It was good to have him around.

Playa del Ingles

In times past we held a Eucharist on a Sunday twice a month and sometimes three times a month. We have now extended this to every week. As a result we are beginning to have a regular congregation, some of whom are willing to act as readers and sides men. The service takes place in the Templo Ecumenico. In the winter months, whilst we use the Catholic Chapel, we do so against the background of Swedish or German Lutheran worship in the main chapel.

We held the first Christmas Eucharist in the Temple Ecumenico on Christmas Eve at 12 noon.

The Parish Priest and Sisters are very supportive and are very encouraging our development.

At the end of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity we shared with the Catholics and Lutherans in an International Service.

It is in Playa that we have a connection with the Caiphos Project for homeless men in San Fernando – we collect toiletries. I was present at the anniversary presentation in October



(An inside photograph of the Catholic Chapel in the Templo Ecumenico).

Part of our contact with the community often involves chats with Muslims, usually from Morocco.

Come and Meet was held on a Thursday and has now moved to before the Sunday Eucharist.

Puerto Rico

Early summer saw our work expand into Puerto Rico. At the moment the main work is Come and Meet but we have held two Songs of Praise type services and on Christmas Eve held Carol Singing in Churchills Restaurant at 6pm. (Since preparing this report Churchills has now closed.)



(Above is the picture taken outside the restaurant at the Harvest Festival)

Puerto Morgan

This is new this month as we try to move into another area where the British go on holiday. The Catholic Bishop of Gran Canaria has given us permission use the local Roman Catholic Church for a Eucharist and we have found a possible restaurant to hold Come and Meet. This will take place on a Friday which is also market day.

By now I have used the term "Come and Meet" a number of times, so I need to explain the concept. There are a number of factors to what we do. First I walk around the area, speaking to anyone who speaks English. In the southern places this is usually the OCP's (Outside Contact People). Sometimes this is just very general conversation, sometimes it is more serious. This also includes shop owners and many others. Secondly, I then set up stall in a restaurant, with a sign saying 'Come and Meet' / Church of England information, and I wait. I am joined by my lay assistant and we chat, eat and drink over a period of about 3 hours. In Puerto Rico we can be quite busy. Each venue has its own characteristic and in the north it is mainly the congregation who drop in.

Theologically, it is about showing God's care and love for His people, by offering them hospitality and reflecting God's mission in His world. We are a pilgrim Church, we have no home, we are expats, and in three out of four of our centres we have no home, but are strangers. So often I am asked, "What are you doing here but we are pleased that you are!" Without the help of the restaurant owners this would not work, but they do also attract more customers. We both win. Because we are out on the street in a non- threatening way, even a none church way, we are showing the flag, even to those who do not even speak to us.

The Chaplaincy is changing, it is growing and the work is faithfully supported by the core congregation and Chaplaincy Council.

Fr Peter Ford, OGS
Priest in Charge

January 2010

Gran Canaria

Las Palmas – Holy Trinity – Chaplaincy flat



Puerto Morgan

Puerto Rico

Playa del Ingles