

An interview with Revd Hazel Door

When did you first arrive in the Poitou-Charentes?

Martin and I have lived in the Vienne for over 15 years. We bought a house in Civray in 1996 and we were very much part of the initial development of the Chaplaincy before Michael arrived. In those days we used to meet to worship in peoples homes, with special services taking place in a local Church at Christmas and Easter. It was small and intimate, with no-one needing to travel more than 45 minutes to a service. Then it started to grow as more English speaking people arrived, and when the Chaplaincy was formed we realised there was a need to have formal worship centres, but we were keen to keep the travel time to a minimum.

When were you ordained?

It was soon after Martin and I arrived here, that I felt God calling me to ordination, so I began my training in 2001 and was eventually ordained as a Deacon by Bishop Geoffrey in 2004. I had the great pleasure to serve my Curacy here when Michael was Chaplain. I went to Brittany in 2007 and spent a happy 3 years there as the Priest in Charge, it was always our intention to return to the Poitou-Charentes. On my return I took on the role of Assistant Chaplain. It was a formative time for me and Martin, and we have witnessed Gods guiding hand in many parts of our lives. We both feel we have been called by God to this region.

Can you talk a bit about how you experience God's calling?

Well something that really brought it home to me was a recent Baptism in the Chaplaincy. I was very struck by the words in the Baptism service where the parents and Godparents say 'I believe and Trust' they are such simple words, but so incredibly powerful. It's that trust that we need to develop to believe that God in our lives, guiding us, loving us. It is my constant prayer that I will trust Him.

Can you talk a bit about prayer?

I talk to God, at anytime and anywhere. You know, people tell me they find daily prayer very hard. And I do understand this. I think what is useful is to just ask God to be with you. Maybe say 'Help me God', that's a prayer. I often suggest people think about the words of the Lord's Prayer, it's a prayer that so many people know; it's familiar, poetic, and honest. It can help guide us in our regular prayer life. The words 'Thy will be done' have been a constant inspiration to me in my life and ones that confirm my trust in God. Prayer is like a conversation with God, with pauses to listen; if we don't listen for God speaking to us we may as well not pray at all.

What are your initial priorities in your new role as Chaplain?

I have a huge enthusiasm to share the Gospel. After 12 years here I am really excited about the congregations we have, they are what make this Chaplaincy so special. I see my role as taking the good news out to a wider group of people, to enable people to worship more regularly than now, helping people to start home churches if there is nothing in their immediate location, to build the congregation amongst the English speaking community. I am very excited that recently I was invited by an ecumenical group of English and French speaking Christians to lead their Christmas Carol service. This is a part of the Poitou-Charentes with which we have not had much contact. Yet here is an opportunity to work with them to support a new congregation in the area.

What do you see as your particular gifts?

I love working with people. I think that pastoral care across the English speaking community is essential. It is something I love doing and want to do more. In my early career I specialised in working with children in a residential home as a Care Officer. My own brother is mentally handicapped and I wanted to work with children to give something back as he had been so well cared for. I learnt very quickly the need for patience and humour.

What is the first thing you will do on taking up your new role on 1st January 2012?

I want to listen to people so that I can better understand their needs. For example, are we meeting the worship needs of all our people and congregations? Are there things we can do better? Are we doing the best we can to reach out to the English speaking people across the region? I see the Home groups as a vital part of the pastoral care infrastructure, enabling the Chaplaincy to support more people over the vast area we cover.

Have you any final comments?

Yes lots! But foremost in my mind is that I feel honoured and privileged to serve this Chaplaincy, but I know I can only do it with God's help and strength.

For more information about the Chaplaincy of Christ the Good Shepherd please go to our website at: www.church-in-france.com