

Report for Christ Church Chaplaincy for 2023

“By this shall all people know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.”

John 13:35

It has been wonderful to be part of the community of faith that is Christ Church Amsterdam over this past year. I began work on January 1st and was warmly and generously welcomed across the chaplaincy. In the following months, as I stumbled to get to grips with the richness and breadth of life here in the chaplaincy and in Amsterdam, I encountered much patience and grace. Thank you for our welcome and care; *[name redacted]* and I are very grateful and consider ourselves blessed to be here.

This [report] contains the many reports of our life together. It is a celebration of God’s great goodness to us in Jesus Christ as we continue to work out what it means to be his body in the context and situations in which God has placed us. I would encourage you to enjoy this document; it is a record of prayers answered and God’s great faithfulness to us; we are richly blessed.

Having come to the end of my first year in the Chaplaincy I want to add some personal reflections on our life together:

It has been a joy and a privilege to work alongside Kerry and I am very grateful for our partnership together as we seek to lead the worshipping life of the Chaplaincy and help to discern, together with the Church Council and Congregational Leadership Teams, God’s leading and guidance for the way forward for our different congregations and the Chaplaincy as a whole. Kerry is a wise and considered leader with much pastoral experience in varied contexts in the world and we are very blessed to have him and *[name redacted]* here in Amsterdam. They are great team players and I really appreciate what they both bring to the chaplaincy.

The commitment, hard work, wisdom and experience of *[name redacted]* and *[name redacted]*, our Churchwardens throughout 2023, helped to keep us functioning as a Chaplaincy and ensured that all the bases were covered. *[name redacted]* and *[name redacted]* took on the role of Churchwardens at a critical time in the life of the community and their faithfulness to the church through the many challenges of interregnum and appointment has helped us to be where we are today. I cannot thank them enough for their dedication and service and hope that as they lay down the responsibility of their office, they find a renewed freedom to enjoy their life in the body of Christ at Christ Church Amsterdam. They are dearly loved and respected across the chaplaincy, and rightly so. We thank God for them and pray for them as they move forward.

With the appointment of *[name redacted]* as our new Administrator - in which we greatly rejoice - and having two Chaplains in post, the role of a Churchwarden takes on a slightly different nature. Every individual rightly approaches this role differently and this together with the season of life in the church right now, determines how the role is framed. We pray for our new Churchwardens.

We are also very grateful for our Church Officers – *[name redacted]* our Treasurer, *[name redacted]* our Church Council Secretary, *[name redacted]* our Safeguarding Officer and *[name redacted]* our



Chief Technology Officer. All these have been hard working and proactive in ensuring that our common life together is thriving and well-ordered. We thank God for their industry and commitment.

The Church Council took time away together in May to begin to think about the shape of the Chaplaincy and the challenges we face. We deepened our trust and relationships with one another and began to think about how we might manage our resources and focus our energy. We initiated a process that has subsequently been on-going throughout the Chaplaincy as we consider our distinct flavour and identity and continue to more openly discern where God is leading us.

We are very grateful for the work of the Church Council over the past year and express our gratitude to those who have shouldered this responsibility. We specifically thank those members who are standing down from this commitment. *[name redacted]* has been a rock as Treasurer and his faithful service over the years a wonderful example to us all. As he lays down this mantle, we give thanks to God for the work he has done and pray for the new Treasurer. We also thank *[name redacted]* for her commitment to the life of the Chaplaincy and her desire to put God at the centre of all we are and do. May she be blessed as she steps down from Council. *[name redacted]*, who has constantly helped us to think through difficult and challenging issues, is also laying down his responsibility with Church Council. We are very grateful for his practical expertise; will miss him and thank God for his servant heart in serving the Church Council so well. *[name redacted]* will also stand down from Church Council after faithful and sensitive engagement as a leader in Christ Church Amsterdam. We will miss his gentle and considered wisdom that comes from a deep desire to serve God and be faithful to God's call upon his life. After many years serving on the Church Council *[name redacted]* will be standing down at the AGM. He has been the long-serving member who has helped all understand the legacy in which we operate, but more than this, has continually called us to prayer. We are so grateful for all he has been to the Church Council and for the many years of faithful service.

I'd like to extend my thanks to all who lead worship or preach. Alongside our Lay Congregational Worship Leaders – *[names redacted]* - we have had a wonderful team of clergy helping us. Special thanks to God for the ministries of *[names redacted]*. We also give thanks and gratitude to all who take a lead in worship in whatever capacity.

Our worship teams continue to be outstanding across the chaplaincy. How blessed we are through their ministry to us. This is a real strength of the chaplaincy, and we thank God for his provision. We have new members in worship teams in all our congregations and this ministry continues to attract new people. If you would like to join with our worship teams in leading worship do speak to one of the clergy or to one of the Worship Leaders.

Thanks to all who make our gathered worship possible each week. Thanks especially to those who look after refreshments and hospitality, those who lead our intercessions, those who read aloud scripture, and those who act as stewards/sidespersons. We do also thank those who quietly do the washing up, those who look after the floral displays in our church services, those whose quiet and unseen ministry makes such a difference to who we are.

In 2023 we continued to move beyond fragmentation and the effects of the COVID-19 epidemic. We have suffered some significant traumas in recent years which are not easily worked through. What



has been important for us all is to acknowledge hurt/resentment/disappointment/mistakes and offer these to God so we might know his healing, forgiveness and freedom. Wholeness, healing and the freedom they bring are important in our moving forward together into all that God, in His goodness, has for us.

Recognition of the importance and value of all our members regardless of age and culture, is a really important part of the life of Christ Church Amsterdam. We are blessed with this grace, and I hope we will further deepen this aspect of our common life so every single member of the church community feels they are completely welcome and the gifts they bring recognised and encouraged to flourish. We have such riches amongst us. I constantly find myself looking out at congregations in worship and being overjoyed to see the person of Christ richly displayed in the faces before me.

Part of the DNA of Christ Church Amsterdam is its ability to warmly and genuinely welcome those exploring joining us and also those passing through Amsterdam who come to worship with us. This is a special gift which marks us out and which is to be celebrated and held onto. I often receive communications and comments from those who visit us who are overjoyed by the warmth of worship and fellowship that defines us. These people are also very grateful for the manner in which they are received, and the recognition and encouragement they receive as they spend time with us.

It is really encouraging to see our work with children and young people deepening and growing. From the All-Age Moment in non-eucharistic services, to the provision of Kids' Church on a Sunday, to our special groups for teenagers and youth, we are honouring our children and young people as part of the body of Christ. Thank you to all who work with our young people and children; what a blessing you are.

There have been some wonderful highlights in the past year. Our joint services often provide much encouragement and joy. We delight in eating with one another and worshipping together as we deepen our fellowship. The candle-lit Carol service where people from across the congregations worked together was a beautiful moment at the end of the year. The Palm Sunday procession and the service around the three baptisms were wonderful celebrations of our communal life, we again worked together from across the different worshipping communities to bring these to life.

God has been very gracious and generous to us in 2023. All our congregations have seen growth and encouraging new developments. There seems to have been a sense of encouragement and deepening fellowship which combines with a renewed sense of hope as we experience God's great goodness to us. We are in better shape as the year closes than we were when it began. For this we are humbly thankful to God.

Rev'd David Macha and Rev'd Kerry Buttram