

# FATHER PETER JACKSON: A YEAR ON

*FATHER Peter Jackson, who was born in the UK, went to Oxford University and trained to be ordained at Theological College at St Stephen's House in Oxford, arrived at Holy Trinity Nice in October 2014, a few months before the Charlie Hebdo massacre. Uncannily, he was also in Washington as 9/11 unfolded, driving across the bridge as the Pentagon was hit. Following the Paris attacks, he reflects upon the past twelve months.*

A year ago, I became Chaplain of Holy Trinity, the historic Anglican Church in Nice, as well as of St Hugh Vence, a nearby smaller church. I have served in a variety of parishes and schools, including twelve years at Harrow School, but I have never received such a warm and practical welcome as here.

We have had so much help in settling into the presbytery – the 1890s priest's house next to the church – getting to know the community and becoming accustomed to life in France.

The assistance offered was invaluable as Holy Trinity is quite different from my previous parish in London. The congregation there consistently drew from only the immediate area, while the Nice one is constantly changing. There is a loyal core of people who have made their permanent home here but there is also a constant flow of visitors from all over the Anglophone world.

In recent months, we have welcomed students from the Netherlands, Australia and the US, a Canadian Air Force chaplain, as well as visitors from the UK and North America.

There are also those who come

for a few months at a time: some from Canada wintering on the Riviera, as the British did in the nineteenth century, and others simply spending time in apartments that they own in Nice.

There is also a significant American presence, which dates back to the time 40 years ago when the American Anglican congregation of the Episcopal Church of

the Holy Spirit joined Holy Trinity, having sold their church in Nice to the French Protestants. This explains why Holy Trinity, a chaplaincy within the Church of England Diocese in Europe, is also listed as an associated parish by the Episcopal Church.

Attendance, as well the composition of the congregation, varies considerably.



Fr Peter: "For the people who come to Holy Trinity Nice, the service needs to be elegant, lasting an hour and giving them their space."



We had almost 300 in church for the Easter Day service but fewer than half that number at Christmas, reflecting both the tendency of many permanent Nice residents to visit family at Christmas and the popularity of the Riviera as a holiday destination at Easter.

When I describe the Holy Trinity congregation to visiting friends, I say that they are more like a cathedral congregation than a parish one. The factors that draw people to us are similar: a desire to participate in worship in English, and worship, that is accessible and mainstream. Also, I cannot assume that everyone is Anglican or that everyone is equally devout: some may be seeking something spiritual without yet having strong commitment. Moreover, the social time after services, when many linger to chat over a glass of wine or a cup of coffee, is for some an indispensable complement to the worship – English speakers in a foreign land, they are keen to find an English-speaking community. But this has to be balanced by a recognition that some are also attracted by the fact that you can also slip in and out of Holy Trinity without the obligation to become more involved.

The historic church site includes, apart from the church itself, the presbytery, Hall and churchyard, and is home to many activities apart from worship. Since the church is open every day, many come simply to visit it or to find somewhere for contemplation or prayer. Others come to the presbytery to seek me out for help or advice. The churchyard provides a green space for visitors and neighbours to stop in. The Hall accommodates the weekly meetings of diverse

groups and serves as a point of outreach to the wider community. The English American Library is housed in a part of the Hall and offers a large choice of English-language books for lending.

Reflecting on all these aspects of our congregation's nature also convinced me early on of the need for good communication: first of all, visitors or those new to living in Nice need to be able to find us. For this reason, I commissioned a professional redesign of our website – *anglican-nice.com*. I have also completely revised the service books and weekly service sheets to make them as clear to follow as possible. Even as a priest, I have sometimes found it very difficult to follow what was happening in a service when visiting churches on holiday; I am determined that visitors to Holy Trinity don't have that experience.

No tour d'horizon of a first year in Nice, especially from an Englishman, would be complete without some comment about the weather. Until I moved here, I had no idea how heavy the rain would be. A long-standing parishioner frequently remarks that Nice has a higher annual rainfall than Manchester. As the basement of the presbytery is prone to flooding, I now have first-hand experience of what this means. Also, in common with many native *niçois*, we found the record-breaking *chaleur* of this last summer close to unbearable. I now appreciate why our forebears chose to visit during the cooler months: it is delightful to walk the streets of the city on a winter's day in bright sunshine or wander along the Promenade and see people sunbathing on a January afternoon – in a sheltered spot, of course – by a sparkling blue sea. **P.J.** ■

## WANTED! SUNNY BANK NEEDS YOU!



**Recently retired? Just moved to the region?  
Have skills to offer? Want to meet people?  
Have a few hours to spare?  
Yes? Sunny Bank needs you!**

It's the good life for most Anglos on the Riviera, but for those growing older, life can become very hard without moral and physical support. It's up to those of us who are in a secure position, having good health and the support of friends and family to offer a helping hand to those who are less fortunate.

Sunny Bank exists to provide that help and support for English speaking residents on the Côte d'Azur. Working closely with commercial operator EMERA, in Mouans Sartoux, the nursing home Victoria offers 90 rooms.

Opening early 2016 on the same site, Albert offers 33 apartments for independent living. Sunny Bank also provides grants to help people to continue to live independently in their own homes.

The Grange, which is adjacent, provides a vibrant social hub for English speakers with regular lunches and social events and also a wide selection of books and bric-a-brac.

Sunny Bank already has many amazing volunteers who provide a range of services including daily visits to Victoria, and also all-important fundraising.

However, we need more volunteers to help us run the Sunny Bank charity. *In particular we are looking for volunteers who can provide project management, financial or commercial skills, as well as those who can give some time to visit the elderly in Victoria and Albert or to help with our social events.* Interested? Email Catherine Wright, Secretary, Sunny Bank, at [catherine.wright@wanadoo.fr](mailto:catherine.wright@wanadoo.fr)

**Further information about Sunny Bank at  
[www.sunny-bank.org](http://www.sunny-bank.org)**