



The English Speaking Church of Verbier Association
‘Sharing the love, grace and truth of Jesus Christ’

Chairman's Report for the year to 30 April 2024

Since 1986 Sunday evening services have been held in English in the Swiss Reformed Church chapel on Chemin du Temple during the winter seasons. Since 2018 we have also held services during the summer Music Festival. Our activities and presence within the resort have steadily increased over the years, leading to the legal formation of The English Speaking Church of Verbier Association (ESC Verbier) on 19 January 2022.

Becoming an Association was the strongest possible sign of our long-term vision for our unique church here in the Swiss Alps - to become the Christian centre of the English-speaking community within Val de Bagnes. It also has important administrative benefits for ESC. At the same time we continue to have a long and successful affiliation with Christian Outreach in the Alps (CORA), a UK registered faith charity.

In July and August 2023, three Sunday services were held to coincide with the Verbier Music Festival, during which musicians from the Festival Academy kindly played for us. From December 2023 to April 2024 a total of 23 services were held at the chapel with an average attendance of more than 40 people. The Christmas and Easter services saw the chapel filled to capacity. The annual Army Carol Service, held shortly before Christmas in the Catholic church on the Route des Creux, was attended by over 350 people including the British Army ski contingent and many local residents who particularly enjoy the traditional English Christmas service.

Regular weekly ESC activities during the winter season were also well attended, including an evening supper and bible study, an informal pre-ski ‘bible breakfast chat’ and an apres-ski social meeting.

During the year many people took an active role in our Sunday services and weekly activities, ensuring that they all ran smoothly. Warmest thanks are due to everyone who helped ESC so willingly in so many different ways.

Our services are led by chaplains from UK, provided by CORA, who come out to Verbier on a fortnightly basis. In addition to conducting services and taking part in the weekly activities, our chaplains also provide pastoral support to anyone needing help through illness, accident, bereavement or personal trauma. Sadly, their support was urgently needed in the immediate aftermath of the tragic helicopter accident on 2 April 2024.

Together with everyone in Verbier, and many around the world, we mourn the death of the three men who died in the accident and we continue to remember their families in our prayers. At the same time we also give heartfelt thanks for the survival of the other three, including Ed Courage who does so much for ESC and the 1936 Ski Touring Club; our prayers are also with them, for their return to full health.

ESC highly values our ecumenical contacts and collaboration with the other churches in Verbier. During the year we keep in touch and support each other in every way we can.

The costs associated with running ESC Verbier are funded by donations from individuals and collections during services, for which we are extremely grateful. We are thankful also to the Commune de Val de Bagnes for its annual grant of CHF 500. For the first time for many years we have a modest surplus, as the annual accounts indicate. This enables us to cover our full ‘maintenance budget’ and also to launch our ‘mission budget’ for activities and causes we would like to help as part of our Christian witness within Val de Bagnes.

During the coming year we will continue to support our English-speaking community in all the ways we have done traditionally. This will be through our chapel services, our weekly activities and our pastoral care, but also with a renewed focus and priority on reaching out to everyone of all ages with the love, grace and truth of Jesus Christ.

Andrew Baines
Chairman
1 May 2024