St Martha and St Mary’s Anglican Church Leuven, Belgium
Chaplaincy Profile

Where we are

Address: Minderbroederstraat 15, 3000 Leuven, Belgium

The City: Leuven is the capital of the province of Flemish Brabant in Belgium, located roughly 25 kilometres (16 miles) east of Brussels. Leuven is the fourth largest city in Flanders with more than 100,200 inhabitants. Leuven is home to the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KU Leuven), the oldest Catholic university still in existence in the world, and the largest university in Belgium, with a student population of more than 55,000 students.

Where we meet: St Martha and St Mary’s (M&Ms) meets in the chapel of a KU Leuven residence hall called the Justus Lipsiuscollege. We are warmly welcomed by the Roman Catholic community who worships here and who allow us to worship in the evenings.
**Who we are**

**Mission and Vision Statement:** St Martha and St Mary’s Anglican Church Leuven lives Christ’s mission to spiritually enrich the lives of every person in our wider university and city community. M&Ms is an inclusive Anglican parish, with broad ecumenical participation, known for rich liturgy, engaging preaching, and friendly community. We aim to explore Christ’s mission in pastoral care, spiritual formation, openness to questioning, vocational training, and warm hospitality. We pray that practical outreach will lead to increased visibility as a generous university and city parish, as we grow in the life and service of God the Holy Trinity.

M&Ms is the only Anglican university chaplaincy in the Diocese in Europe. On the whole, we take a flexible approach to ministry which can accommodate an academic calendar. We are open and affirming of LGBTQ+ people and the ministry of women. These niches characterise our mission and outreach. M&Ms is a small multicultural congregation, typically 20-30 people in attendance at Holy Communion, generally university-age and young professionals with exceptions. Because of the transient nature of student life, we see a high turnover of attendees each term. This has led the chaplaincy to consider the description of a “pioneer ministry” or a “hospital” — for many people coming through the doors, M&Ms is a temporary stopping place along a greater pilgrimage. It is important to note that not all members of M&Ms have an Anglican background; rather we are a group of people who feel comfortable in the universal and ecumenical character of the Anglican Communion.

**Key Statistics**

- **Average Sunday attendance:** 25
- **Electoral Roll:** is comprised of the PCC - 10
- **Age Profile:** average age is 30
- **Growth:** as part of the nature of university chaplaincy, growth at M&Ms typically takes the form of new faces semester-by-semester as well as equal numbers of departures which off-set the new numbers.
- **Ministry Team:** In addition to a chaplain, we are blessed to have a talented and experienced ministry team, currently composed of two lay readers-in-training. In the past, M&Ms has enjoyed the ministry of ordinands and has welcomed young people exploring vocation through an informal scheme or a formal scheme such as the Church of England Ministry Experience Scheme.
What we do

Worship: Holy Communion is celebrated every Sunday during the academic year and during the summer. The chaplaincy is, unusually, closed during the university Christmas holiday (closing after the third Sunday of Advent and reopening for Epiphany) and Spring break (closing after Easter for two weeks). Our style of worship is bilingual and a mixture of modern and traditional music. Dutch and English translations of the order of service are provided. We enjoy a variety of musical styles, a tradition of intellectual preaching and warm fellowship. Members of the congregation regularly participate through reading Scripture and Intercessions. Once per semester, we explore other forms of worship though Café Church or Dynamic Worship.

Chaplaincy Life plus Special Church Events: Social events form an important aspect of our chaplaincy life. St. Martha and St. Mary's is a young, welcoming, theologically-open parish of the Anglican Communion. Everyone — Anglican and non-Anglican, enquirer, sceptic — looking for a home away from home is warmly invited to be part of our community. Holy Communion is celebrated every Sunday. A cornerstone of our weekly activities is Philosophy Café, a public gathering intended for church-shy students who want to discuss current events and important topics from a theological and philosophical point of view. We have recently moved away from the homegroup model toward meeting in a public place for Friendship Café, for increased visibility and accessibility. We host various social events such as film and game nights. M&Ms is involved on a monthly basis in the network of religious organizations affiliated with the KU Leuven Lifestance Network (KULLN). We participate in the KULLN interreligious events, midday meditation events, Armistice Day Peace prayers, panel discussions, and more. The chaplaincy has been invited to the local Evangelical Theological Faculty (ETF) to participate in weekday chapel services and discussion groups, roughly once per semester.

Baptisms, Confirmations, Marriages & Funerals: average of 3 confirmations per year, 1 baptism, typically no marriages or funerals

Chaplaincy Music: Our style of worship is bilingual and a mixture of modern and traditional music. Our musical offerings are supported by talented members of the congregation and everyone is warmly invited to participate. Last year, in order to increase our blend of modern and traditional songs as well as incorporate more Dutch language songs, a Worship Committee was formed of Dutch and English speaking members who produced a beautiful folder of music to replace our English-language-only hymnals.

House Groups: We have recently moved away from the homegroup model toward meeting in a public place for Friendship Café, for increased visibility and accessibility.
This also alleviates pressure on young members of the parish who typically live in student housing and find it difficult to host a group.

**Involvement with Children and Young People:** A consistent point of feedback that has been given to the chaplaincy is that the timing of the service of Holy Communion (in the evening) is not conducive to families. At this time, there are no specific children or young person ministries on offer at M&Ms.

**Working with Other Churches:**
- Ecumenical services: At key points throughout the Church calendar, we hold joint ecumenical services with our Roman Catholic hosts, the Justus Lipsiuscollege RC Community. These services are: a Carol Service on the Third Sunday of Advent, Ash Wednesday, and Good Friday. The two worshipping communities take turns hosting these services and we enjoyed a shared Eucharist as an instrument of communion.
- Ecumenical retreats: By maintaining an ecumenical relationship with the University Parish (an English-speaking Roman Catholic university chaplaincy), M&Ms students are invited to join their ecumenical retreats each fall and spring. Women at M&Ms are also invited to join the Brussels English-speaking Ecumenical Women’s retreat each spring.

**Mission and Outreach:**
- KU Leuven Lifestance Network (KULLN)…
  - The KU Leuven Lifestance Network is a network of international representatives of many religious and non-confessional lifestance communities and groups active in and around Leuven and its university. The network’s goal is to encourage and engage in innovative collaboration in the service of the human community and its environment. The network favours open and fair dialogue based on mutual understanding and respect and thus hopes to play a role in peace-building and fostering harmony among religions and non-confessional lifestance communities. A further goal is to organize activities and to prepare public statements rooted in shared concerns. (From https://www.kuleuven.be/up/lifestance/lifestance-about)
  - M&Ms representatives regularly attend KULLN General Meetings and participate in the assessment and planning of activities such as:
    - Orientation Days (Fall semester 2019) — Welcoming new students to the university and making them aware of faith communities.
    - Multi-faith Prayer for Peace (Armistice Day) — Contributing prayers and hymns from the Anglican tradition.
    - Multi-faith Forum — Participation in multi-faith discussions on a given topic that is relevant for religious and lifestance communities (e.g., fasting, sexuality, prayer).
- Lunchtime Meditation — Exploring Anglican prayer and meditation with a diverse group of students.

- Charitable giving and serving…
  - Beautiful Gate Lesotho
    - In the past, M&Ms has charitably supported this child care centre in Maseru, Lesotho where orphans and children affected by HIV/AIDS, aged 0-5, find housing and education.
  - Oasis Belgium
    - M&Ms has charitably supported the Belgian chapter of this UK-based Christian charity. In Brussels, Oasis runs programs for homeless families, women who have been trafficked, and the elderly.
  - Sant’Egidio
    - Sant’Egidio is an international Catholic Community, dedicated to serving those in need and working towards peace. Their Belgian chapter runs programs benefiting a.o. refugees, the elderly, homeless people, & people with mental disabilities. M&Ms volunteers time for visiting and collects items for new refugee families.
  - Le Refuge/Opvanghuis Brussels
    - Le Refuge offers temporary housing and multidisciplinary counselling to LGBT+ youths who can no longer live at home after their coming-out. M&Ms collects items for the youths in their housing.

Pastoral Care Scheme: St Martha and St Mary’s regards the wholeness and health of all its members as very important. We offer help to those going through various challenging circumstances by providing spiritual accompaniment as needed. We can point those who are struggling towards outside resources if necessary as we understand that pastoral conversations are not a substitute for professional counseling and we are not clinicians. The church council has nominated a pastoral team to organise pastoral care in the parish. This team operates under the supervision of a chaplain for safeguarding purposes, and during interregnum, this team has been suspended.

Social Events:
- Community and friendship are important aspects for M&M’s and a homegroup or Friendship Café have offered a place where these can flourish. Activities often include playing games, watching movies (e.g., Jesus Christ Superstar, Lord of the Rings, Silence, etc.), and exploring our worship by writing a hymn together. We also enjoy learning more about each other, for example through presentations about our favourite artworks, book, poems, etc.
- Trips and other events: in the past we have also enjoyed parish trips to Canterbury and London, as well as to Ypres. We also feel connected to the city
of Leuven and aim to connect to the city life on several levels. For example, we enjoy participating in city activities such as the Christmas Market, the Easter dance, and other (seasonal) activities. Moreover, we value being connected and showing friendship and solidarity to other churches and religions in Leuven. After the attacks in New Zealand (2019) we visited a mosque to learn about some of their religious practices, such as Ramadan.

Publications and Communication:
- Our website receives 60 unique visitors each week. We post sermon recordings here which are also frequently engaged with.
- Communication takes place primarily through a weekly email distributed every Monday. This email is opened by 60% of recipients.
- Notices are also posted on our Facebook page.
- We launched a Twitter account in 2019.

Current Finances:
- In 2018 and 2019, we have received an average of €1746.81 per year in subsidies from Stad Leuven. We hope to receive the same or more in the following years.
- In 2018 our expenditure was €7230.51, our expenditure in 2019 as at 21/11 is €4722.65. There are, however, some end of year expenses which must still be paid.
- We have a contract for the use of the Roman Catholic Justus Lipsius College Chapel for €100 annually.
- The chaplain of M&Ms is in receipt of one full-time traitement from the Belgian Government of €25000 gross (pre-tax). The city of Leuven provides €300/month for clergy housing costs. No additional housing or clergy gift is presently provided. The parish does contribute to the chaplain’s home and personal insurance, which is at €250 for this year, but next year we have budgeted for €1500.

Financial Outlook: Being a small parish of predominantly students, we are by no means a wealthy parish. Fortunately, the combination of a few very generous parishioners, subsidies from Stad Leuven, and some sound financial management from previous treasurers, has resulted in M&Ms currently maintaining a stable financial situation. We are extremely grateful to the Roman Catholic parish which allows us to hold our services in Justus Lipsius college Chapel for the very small fee of €100 annually. However, if our subsidy from Stad Leuven were to decrease or the few generous parishioners were to leave, we would quickly deplete our reserves and find ourselves in a challenging financial situation. We therefore have to manage our finances very carefully and prudently.
The parish unfortunately does not receive enough income to completely support our own chaplain beyond some minor expenses, hence we rely on the traitement from the Belgian government for that.

For this year, our major expenses have been training and transport of our CEMES intern and our two lay-readers in training. Another significant expense is our Diocesan and Archdeaconry quotas. Other expenses of note include printing, supplies for communion, and insurance payments. We choose a charitable cause to support every year and this is also a significant yearly expenditure. We look for creative ways of charitable giving, especially gifts-in-kind, and we raise charitable funds through the annual production of an e-book of sermons from our Lenten sermon series.
Where are we going

It is clear that M&Ms has maintained a robust focus on student-oriented ministry. Without wanting to compromise that mission and vision, we see the need to stabilise this worshipping community by seeking long-term, committed members who reside in the area and support the vision of student outreach. We would like to welcome families but find that our worship times are prohibitive for families with children. There could be room to expand our current offering of an evening service to an additional morning service.

We are also aware that there are many existing student ministry opportunities which the Anglican community could support. The University Parish holds a monthly Taize service in which we have been invited to participate. The KU Leuven Lifestance Network holds promising potential for deepening ecumenical and interfaith relationships within the city. The city of Leuven has expressed an interest in documenting the history of the Anglican Church in Leuven, a project which has been put on hold during the interregnum. These are just a few of the opportunities for future growth and networking that have already presented themselves to M&Ms.

While we have enjoyed a warm welcome from the Justus Lipsius college Catholic Community, the chapel in which we meet is not ideal for a few reasons: it is not disability accessible, the main entryway is routinely locked during our worship times, and the chapel is in need of major renovation. The shared sacristy is in poor condition and our usable space is limited. On a positive note, a renovation project is due to be undertaken and underwritten by the university within the next five years. However, realistically, renovation will cause disruption to our worship and thus, in light of this and other drawbacks of the location, the PCC would welcome considering alongside a new chaplain whether relocation would be prudent.

An ambitious project of the university theology faculty, much discussed but as of now not actualized, is the Leuven House of One project, a house of prayer for the Abrahamic religions. M&Ms was included in early conversations about this project but this has fallen by the wayside in interregnum.