



ADVENT 1 EDITION

ECHO



25TH NOVEMBER 2021

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
ECUMENICAL CHURCH OF OCCITANIE
www.ourchurch.fr

HAPPY NEW CHURCH YEAR !

With the arrival of Advent 1 this Sunday, churches of every denomination mark the beginning of their New Year.

But what is Advent and what does it mean to us? There are several traditions associated with Advent, what do they mean and what is their relevance to us as individuals as Christians and as a church?

It is believed Advent was originally a time when new converts to Christianity prepared for baptism but changed to a time of preparation for the coming of Christ during the 5th or 6th Century. It was usually marked with some kind of fasting in the weeks before Christmas although this varied. The tradition of readings and teachings for Advent appears to have started in the 8th Century.

The Advent Wreath is full of symbolism. The wreath, made from evergreens, is a continuous circle representing the circle of life with no beginning or end representing the eternity of God, the immortality of the Soul and the everlasting life we have in Christ. The traditional elements of the wreath also have meaning, for example the cedar represents strength and healing and the pinecones life and resurrection.



The candles also have meanings- 1st candle of hope, 2nd candle of faith, 3rd candle of joy, 4th candle of peace and love. The white candle in the middle represents Christ and is white as it represents the purity of Christ.

The Advent calendar is much more modern and is believed to have started with German protestants who marked doors with chalk and lit a candle to count the days leading to Christmas. Printed calendars were first used in the early 1900s again in Germany. Originally these were cardboard, and a window was opened each day depicting a picture relevant to the Christmas story and helped to increase the anticipation of the coming of Christmas and Christ.

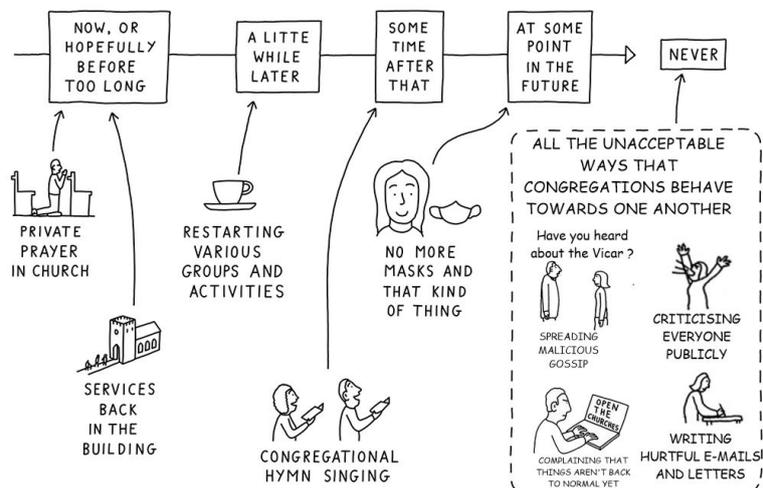
There were no chocolates or expensive presents just a reminder of what we are waiting for.

As we open our Advent calendar windows and light our advent calendars this year let us spend time as individuals, families and church families praying and reflecting on the meaning of all this symbolism and anticipating the truth of Christmas, the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Heidi Worswick

RETURNING TO NORMAL

AN APPROXIMATE TIMELINE



Here's hoping that 'normal' will be different in future



WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP LIGHT UP SOMEONE'S CHRISTMAS AGAIN THIS YEAR ?

NEXT WEEK'S WORSHIP AT ECO

We have set out below our programme of worship for next week. For all details of our latest worship, always go to the Home Page of our website:

www.ourchurch.fr

Sunday 28th November

10:30 am - Online Service for Advent 1

We celebrate the start of the new Church Year as we begin the Countdown to Christmas and light our first Advent Candle. followed by our usual Zoom Virtual Coffee Bar.

Tuesday November 30th

19:00 - An Iona Service of Evening Prayer

This is a short service of prayer and readings from the Bible which is available as a video and also as a Podcast to download and listen to at the close of the day. We also provide the order of service in .PDF for you to download and keep so that you can follow it on your smartphone, tablet or computer if you wish.

Thursday December 2nd

15:00 - In-Person Communion Service at Les Marguerites, Alet les Bains.

By kind invitation of Les Marguerites Restaurant, Alet les Bains, ECO will organise a special Advent Communion Service in the restaurant, starting at 15:00 and followed by tea and cake. This service will be broadcast online on Sunday 5th December. As is our normal practice, this will be a 'Bubble Communion' to which you bring your own bread and wine. In accordance with French rules, you will need to be in possession of a Passe Sanitaire.

Friday December 3rd

19:00 - A Service of Prayer for Healing

Because of the service in Alet on Thursday, we will broadcast our Healing Service on **Friday**. If you would like us to pray by name for anyone in this service, please send their first name to contact@ourchurch.fr by no later than 21:00 on Thursday 2nd December.

As was done last year, a village team in Alet led by Patricia Gillespie will be preparing Christmas packages to distribute to people in need.



At our service on 2nd December, we will leave out some blank envelopes.

If you would like to make a donation towards this Christmas project, please put it into one of the envelopes, write your name and contact details on the outside, seal it, and then hand it to any of the ECO Team.

We will pass them (unopened) to Patricia who will use your gifts when she goes shopping to buy more things to put into the parcels.



Worship for the Young and the Young At Heart

This weekend, our friend in the Diocese of St Albans, Margaret Pritchard Houston has published a short video about the 1st Sunday in Advent. You will find a link to this on our web page for this Sunday's Service.

2021 - A Reflection by Neil Batcock
(with apologies to Flanders and Swann!)

January brought some snow our way,
Outdoor Burns Night kept by day.

February, gardening in woolly hat,
Gravel spiral to confuse the cat.

March brought warmth and more presents,
Especially our right to residence!

Vaccines came on **April Fool's** day,
But frost hit the vines just down the way.

In **May** things all opened - hear the folks shout!
So we built a fence to keep the wild boar out.

In **June** planted veg for our potage,
Car windscreen replaced at Carnon Plage.

July's my birthday - Oh what treats!
An ECO outdoor service at Les Marguerites!

August brought an amazing scene:
One hundred storks stopped in Pauligne!

September brought shocks from prehistory:
Tautavel man looked just like me !



October brought friends, much social mixing.
Spent much of the time at our outdoor kitchen.

November brought snow to the mountain peaks
And checking of gutters to stop the leaks.

Despite a strange year, there is much to remember,
And we haven't yet got to the month of
December !

Neil Batcock

And finally



**Happy Thanksgiving
to all our
American Readers
from the ECO Team**

The Collect for Thanksgiving from the American Episcopal Church

Almighty and gracious Father, we give you thanks for the fruits of the earth in their season and for the labours of those who harvest them. Make us, we beseech you, faithful stewards of your great bounty, for the provision of our necessities and the relief of all who are in need, to the glory of thy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever.

Amen.