



ECHO

OCTOBER 2022 EDITION

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



A MESSAGE FROM THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE ON THE DEATH OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II



As members of the British Community Committee of France, ECO have been passed this message from Her Excellency Dame Menna Rawlings, British Ambassador to France:

Her Majesty was the only monarch that the majority of British people ever knew. She was a constant in our lives and in those of millions of people in the realms, the Commonwealth and the entire world. She embodied what it meant to be British and gave to her nation steadfast leadership, courage, joy, and, when necessary, hope.

Tributes to HM the Queen have flowed in from around the world. But I wanted to mention her relationship with France in particular. As President Macron said, "She loved France and France loved her back". She was a fluent French speaker, courtesy of her mother's desire that she should master the language as a child. She made many visits here during her life. Her first official visit, as Princess Elizabeth, was in 1948 and reminds us of the remarkable continuity that she has represented, connecting us all across generations. Over the years, she met ten French Presidents and had a deep appreciation of the subtleties of the relations between our countries – our history of shared sacrifice and of friendly rivalry. As she put it once, "the Latin and Anglo-Saxon worlds are like oil and vinegar: very different but you need them both to make a proper dressing."

Her contribution to the relations between our countries will outlast her. As M. le President put it "Le lien entre la France et le Royaume-Uni est indéfectible. Nous continuerons à le tisser, en suivant le chemin tracé par Sa Majesté la Reine Elizabeth II."

I would like to thank the British community for your support at this sad moment for our nation, and to the many members of the French Government and other leading figures for your displays of condolence.

I will finish by sharing a couplet from the poem 'Floral Tribute' that Simon Armitage, the Poet Laureate has written to mark Her Majesty's passing:

"The country loaded its whole self into your slender hands,
Hands that can rest, now, relieved of a century's weight."

God Save The King

Dame Menna Rawlings
The British Ambassador to France



ECO and Operation London Bridge

Operation “London Bridge” was the code name for the detailed procedures to be followed upon the death of the Queen. Originally created in the 1960’s, and updated at least once a year ever since, with Queen Elizabeth actually contributing to these, the plans were activated by the key message “London Bridge is down”.

Here in the Occitanie, ECO was not privy to the detailed contents of this plan, but when, on the 8th September at around 12:30pm, the news media began to report concerns over the Queen’s health, this had an immediate impact on us.

On Thursday evenings we broadcast our Service of Prayer for Healing. This is recorded during Thursday afternoons before being uploaded to the internet, so we amended our list of those for whom we would pray by name to include the Queen.

As the afternoon drew on, however, it became clear that the Queen’s condition was causing grave concern as members of the Royal Family dashed to Balmoral to be at her bedside. None of us knew that, sadly, she had already died.

For ECO there was a deadline – if the death of the Queen were to be announced before 7pm, when we were due to broadcast our service, it would be inappropriate to still include her name among the prayers for those who were ill, but we would wish to include prayers for her immortal soul and also for her family to be comforted and strengthened. As we approached 6pm, we therefore prepared a second version of our 7pm service to address that eventuality.

Right up until 6:55pm, in the event of an announcement it would have been possible to shift from our recorded service to a live broadcast of the newer version. Clive Billinness sat in the studio with his finger poised over the “Transmit” button.

As 7pm passed, and we broadcast the version of our service including prayers for the Queen’s healing, we

began to hope and pray that perhaps our preparations had been un-necessary. And then, at 7.30pm, the sad news was officially released by Buckingham Palace of the death of Her Majesty.

Feelings among the ECO Team had to be held in check for a little while as, within 10 minutes, the new version of our Service of Prayer for Healing was placed online and the previous one removed. We began to note people logging in to view our new service within a few minutes of it being placed online.

There was, however, no time to rest, because we had decided to create a new service of dedication and thanks for the life of the Queen to replace the service we had originally planned for the following Sunday morning. Because this was **not** a funeral service, it was important to choose hymns and readings which would reflect our focus on the Queen’s life of dedication and service.

Plus, we had to obtain a recording of the singing of God Save The King, something not sung in more than 70 years !

Revd Neil Batcock very kindly consigned the Reflection he had already recorded for the 13th Sunday after Trinity to the filing cabinet (it will be online in 2025!) and on Friday morning recorded a new homily. He then had to drive this to our studio to be transferred onto our systems. Meanwhile the volunteers who were due to read our lessons that day kindly made recordings of replacement readings for the new service. As an Ecumenical Church, in preparing the service we then drew on and recorded prayers from many denominations, including the Iona Community.



And so, on September 11th, ECO broadcast a special service of dedication to the Queen which, at the time of preparing this article, has been watched by an estimated 250 - 300 people – a number which still continues to grow daily.

And, with a happier focus, we will now start to prepare for Operation “Spring Tide”, the forthcoming coronation of His Majesty King Charles III.

Two Reflections on the Death of Queen Elizabeth

We are very grateful to Janet Varty and Linda Trew for sharing these personal reflections on the death of Queen

From Death to Life - A Reflection

Janet Varty

Did the recent death and funeral of Queen Elizabeth give you a chance to think about death? Perhaps you were taken back to the death of a loved one and the pain of separation took you by surprise once again. Peter Pan said that dying was a big adventure but too often it is more like a tragedy, a time of loss and loneliness. Often folk attend a funeral to support a friend and find themselves inexplicable sobbing despite not being very involved personally and later they will speak of their mum, their child or their regrets. The dying also remind us of our own mortality and fear for our surviving partners and family.

At times there is thankfulness for a long life spent well as with Queen Elizabeth, at times anger for a life cut short by a random act of violence or a chance to weep for the suffering endured during death. The funeral service needs to meet the needs for all different types emotions and provide an opportunity to say farewell to the person who has died.

Death is the end of a journey, and the beginning of another for the deceased and those left behind. The funeral service helps people acknowledge that transition. Letting go of the remains and commending the person to God's mercy is a fresh start. The words, symbols and actions during the service should begin, but only begin to provide mourners with comfort, assurance and even hope. A funeral should be an act of worship that takes people from the old to the new. That becomes their adventure as they walk away to a different life.

“And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels or demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow..not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below..indeed nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 8 v31 to 39

I'm Grieving Too

Linda Trew

With the recent death of Her Majesty the Queen the media was overtaken with stories of her life, her achievements, and the loss that the nation felt at her death. However during this time many other people were facing a loss of their own, a beloved husband, wife, mother, father, brother, sister, son, daughter, friend or colleague. Their loss may have been overshadowed by all the activity surrounding the Queen's death and their own grief not acknowledged.

Was the life of their loved one not as valued or important of that as the Queen? Was their depth of grief not equal or greater than the nations?

We are told clearly in the Bible that we are all made in the image of God, we are all equal in his eyes, whether you are the head of a state or a beloved member of a family – God loves us each the same. Every loss and grief is felt by Christ, as we read in John, Jesus feels our grief. He too cried at the loss of a friend - ‘Jesus wept’ John 11:35.

So if you are on a journey of grief and have been affected by all that has been happening over the last few weeks, if you feel that people have not recognised your grief, know that Christ has and that you are not alone. Be kind to yourself too, grief takes all different forms and whatever it is you are feeling is fine.

If you know of someone who has recently lost a loved one, reach out to them and let them know that you are thinking of them, it will mean more that you know.

A prayer for all those who grieve –

Dear God,

You know our hearts.

You know the sadness that fills them.

You recognise how grief pushes all other emotions aside and weighs heavily on us.

See us, God.

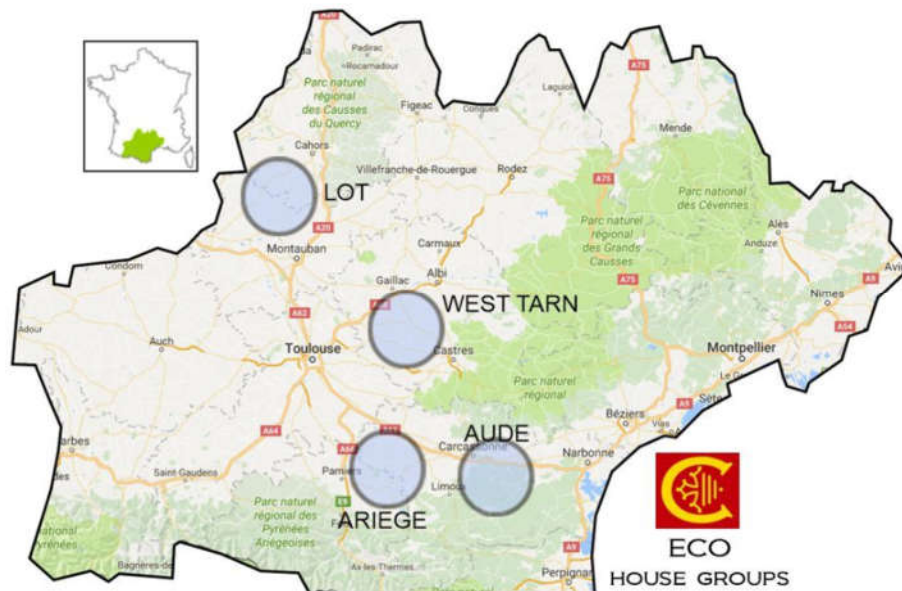
Hear us.

We pray for your healing of our sadness and grief.

Guide us to find new ways to cope with our loss that will renew our souls and refill our hearts with your eternal love.

Comfort us Lord.

Amen.



ECO House Groups

When ECO was founded, our purpose was to provide ecumenically-based worship online. Our objective was to enable people who wished to join in English worship but who had no access to, or did not wish to worship in, an English-speaking church within the Occitanie region could still do so online.

We were also very conscious that with Covid-19 cases still at very high levels in this part of France, there might be many people who would not feel safe being in one another's physical presence.

We very occasionally came together for worship, but either in outdoors settings or in places where social distancing was possible.

Our Orders of Service include online Communion, which you can take part in wherever you are. When we met physically, we shared in a 'Bubble Communion' where each person (or 'Bubble' of people from one household) brought their own bread and wine to avoid the risk of passing Covid to one another through sharing.

However, as Covid has begun to be better understood, and we understand what precautions are the most effective against the risk of infection, there has been a wish expressed by different people around the Occitanie to meet in small groups in order to discuss the Scriptures, pray together and possibly share Bread and Wine.

Our Lot Group, led by Janet Varty, has pioneered this and has been meeting for over a year (see Janet's latest report).

Similarly, an Ariège Group has met - very occasionally - near Mirepoix.

We are now hoping to expand our House Group network by founding two new House Groups, in the West Tarn area around Lavaur and in the Aude Valley around Limoux.

We are also thinking about the practicalities of a Virtual House Group for the whole of the Occitanie (and beyond) which will meet online using Zoom.

Watch out for more details in our November edition.



SOME GENUINE NOTES LEFT FOR MILKMEN.....

Dear Milkman:
I've just had a
baby, please
leave another
one.

Cancel one pint
after the day
after today.

Please close the gate
behind you because the
birds keep pecking the
tops of the milk.

Please don't
leave any more
milk. All they
do is drink it.

**PLEASE BRING ME
A FORM ABOUT
CHEAP MILK, AS
MY BOYFRIEND HAS
MADE ME
STAGNANT.**

Please do not
leave milk at
no. 14 as he is
dead until
further notice.



ECO Lot House Group
lot.group@ourchurch.fr



BREAD OF HEAVEN

On 29th September, we gathered for a Ceilidh service of communion. It is based on Gaelic tradition of informal gatherings in people's homes. It is an opportunity to share music and stories, food and drink. The sharing is a reminder of the ministry of the whole people of God. Gathered around the table we do what Jesus did, and asked his disciples to do throughout the ages. We are all invited to share this meal whether we regularly receive communion, whether we have never been to such a celebration or whether we have indeed given up on God. It is neither our virtues nor our defects that are important, it is the invitation to each and all to take what Jesus has to offer those with whom he is pleased to dine. As his first disciples shared communion in the upper room, we share these gifts from hand to hand and feed on them in our hearts with love and gratitude. It is an act of worship for any day or place and very inclusive.

Our table was set out with water and wine, with bread and other fruits of creation and with lighted candles. We used the words of St Paul in his letter to the Corinthians chapter 11 v 23 to 25. "For I received from the Lord what I passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you, do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup saying. 'This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me,'"

Afterwards we talked about our beliefs and understanding of the symbols before us on the table.

The water, which is present on the table at every meal we share and we remember the Living water with which God surprises us and enriches us and transforms us: "...but whoever drinks the water I give them they will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (John 4 v14)

The bread, its rich imagery as it threads its way through the Bible and Jesus saying "I am the bread of Life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again." (John 6 v35). The chorus of that great Welsh hymn was a must for me: "Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me now and ever more."

The wine, and how it is inextricably binds us to Jesus in this act of remembrance "I am the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15 v5)

The light, we always light a candle, sometimes its just our habit but to dwell on it today as a reminder of the the saying of Jesus "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

The next meeting of the House Group is on Thursday October 27th at 2.30pm. Not forgetting the Thanksgiving Service for St Francis on 6th October.

Janet Varty



I I SUPPOSE WE OUGHT TO LOOK IN AND SEE HOW DANIEL IS GETTING ON....



Welcome to Linda Trew

The ECO Team are delighted to welcome Linda Trew to our worshipping community.

We have asked her to introduce herself:

Hi, I'm Linda, I am new to ECO and so wanted to introduce myself. I live in Prayssac, region 46 with my husband, two dogs and cat for most of the year, but we do pop back to Kent, England regularly to visit our family and friends.

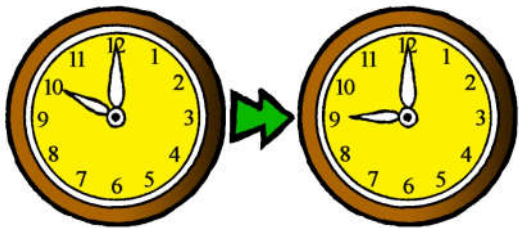
I have recently started a course in 'Chaplaincy' which I am conscious has a different meaning in France than it does in England. I am not ordained or an official 'member' of any church – I am simply a Christian who loves people and wants to be able to be there when needed. We all know that life with all its joys also has its challenges too and sometimes having someone come alongside you when you feel alone can be of great comfort – and that – to me is the role of a 'chaplain'.

I have only just started the course, literally! I have only had the first week, so I am looking forward to learning more over the coming year in how and where I can help others. Traditionally the role is found in prisons, hospitals and schools but more recently it has spread to the workplace, sports fields and shopping centres to mention just a few. It's my hope that I will be able to offer support here in France to the ECO community, alongside the rest of the team.

If you feel alone, concerned, or just need someone to listen please do get in touch with us at

contact@ourchurch.fr

THE CLOCKS WILL STILL GO BACK ON THE 30th OCTOBER



Despite discussions within the EU in 2021 about introducing Permanent Daylight Saving Time across Europe, the initiative stalled as a result of Covid and Brexit and debates about which European institution would be responsible for managing the implementation.

Brexit has introduced a new issue that the Irish Republic, were it to adopt European Time, would be one hour apart from Northern Ireland every winter, since the British Government would be unlikely to adopt a European scheme.

So, this winter, we gain an extra hour in bed, as usual...



church and peace

by Janet Varty

Church and Peace is the European network of pacifist churches. It contributes to the Ecumenical dialogue on Justice, Peace and the Safeguarding of Creation and is the breeding ground for joint initiatives and projects.



Over the weekend 2nd -5th September they held their Annual general meeting and conference. A choice of workshops and lectures were available.

Most dynamic was the lecture 'Blessed in God's Image: Radical Equality of Men and Women in Genesis 1 and 2.' by K Renato Lings who has written two books on this subject 'Lost in Translation' and 'Holy Censorship or Mistranslation' both published by Harper Collins.

Challenging our understanding of male female relationships that have become ingrained in our theology. Suggesting for example that more accurate translations from Hebrew show that Adam's little helper (woman) was indeed intended as his defender, protector and liberator.

Other equally important contributions came from a variety of keynote speakers, on wide ranging subjects, 'Images of God and non violence' a critique of language about God that has led to violence in all religions including Christianity. 'Patriarchy: Sexism and the Churches'. 'Anti racism: from awareness to Action' was led by Beverly Thomas who spoke movingly about her own experiences of racism in Churches and developed themes from the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Equally challenging was Lana Bobic's presentation on domestic violence and how some church leaders condemn victims to stay in the home danger zone because divorce is discouraged.

All these topics were available on zoom, delivered in French, German and English and over 50 people from European countries had joined the conference. I was an invited guest and represented ECO. There was plenty of time for discussion in smaller groups. It provided a real opportunity to deepen ones understanding of issues discussed and a desire for further study.

The closing event was an act of worship led by team members from The World Council Of Churches.



Anthony Ashley-Cooper The Poor Man's Earl

Think of Piccadilly Circus, and that small statue of the angel poised with bow and arrow. Most people think it stands for Eros. It does not. It stands for Anteros, his brother, the god of selfless love.

It is a memorial to the greatest Christian Victorian philanthropist, politician and social reformer of his generation – Lord Shaftesbury.

Anthony Ashley Cooper, the 7th Earl of Shaftesbury (1801 – 1885) was a devout Christian who spent his life fighting to help ease the plight of lunatics, chimney sweeps, children in factories, women and children in the mines, opium addicts, and children without any education.

His own early life was loveless and bleak – his parents formal and frightening, his early schooldays a “horror” of “cruelty and starvation”. The only love came from the family’s housekeeper, Maria Millis. A biographer wrote: ‘She provided for Ashley a model of Christian love that would form the basis for much of his later social activism and philanthropic work.’ The reality and homely practicality of her Christian love were a beacon for the young Ashley. She told him Bible stories, she taught him a prayer.

After Christ Church Oxford, where he proved an outstanding scholar, Ashley turned to politics. In 1826, aged 25, he was elected as Tory MP for Woodstock. He was eager to serve on parliamentary committees that got things done; his great life’s work had begun.

Lunatics: In 1827 lunatics were kept chained naked in straw, forced to sleep in their excrement. They were washed in freezing cold water, with one towel for 160 people and no soap. There was gross over-crowding and inedible food: asylums were places to die in.

Shaftesbury’s maiden speech in Parliament was in support of a Bill to improve their conditions. He wrote: ‘By God’s blessing, my first effort has been for the advance of human happiness.’

It took years: from 1827 to 1884 he fought for a succession of Lunacy Acts, writing later of ‘the years of toil and care that, under God, I have bestowed on this melancholy and awful question.’

Child Labour and Factory Reform. Again, reform took years, with Shaftesbury fighting for the Ten Hours Act from 1833, 1842, 1844, 1846 and 1847 – when it finally got through Parliament. No child under the age of nine should work in the cotton or woollen industries, and no one under 18 must work more than ten hours a day.

Miners. In 1842 he fought to outlaw the employment of women and children in coal mines.

Climbing boys. Thousands of young boys were dying in terrible pain – scorched, blinded and suffocated by soot, or with cancer of the scrotum. Ashley fought for Bills in 1840, 1851, 1853, 1855, and 1864 until finally the Chimney Sweepers Act 1875 closed the practise down.

Education reform. In 1843, under Ashley’s patronage, William Williams, a young solicitor’s clerk, founded the a charity dedicated to the welfare of children and young people. Starting with “Ragged Schools” to teach children trades and skills, they progressed to running schools to train young people for careers in the Royal and Merchant Navies as well as a school of agriculture.

In 1844 Ashley became president of this Ragged School Union that promoted education for poor children. He wrote that if it were to fail, ‘I should die of a broken heart’.



Religion. Lord Shaftesbury was a devout Christian who became a leading figure in 19th century evangelical Anglicanism. He was President of British and Foreign Bible Society for nearly 30 years. He was very sympathetic to the Jews, and advocated their return to the Holy Land.

Lord Shaftesbury’s funeral service at Westminster Abbey on the morning of 8th October 1885 drew thousands of people. The streets along the route were thronged with the poor: costermongers, flower-girls, boot-blacks, crossing sweepers, factory hands and many more. They waited for hours just to see his coffin go by. He was dearly loved by them as the ‘Poor Man’s Earl’.

One biographer wrote: ‘No man has in fact ever done more to lessen the extent of human misery, or to add to the sum total of human happiness.’

The great preacher Charles Spurgeon called him ‘the best man of the age’. He ‘lived for the oppressed’, he was a ‘moral anchor in a drifting generation’, ‘friend of every living thing’, ‘he had a ‘fervent love to God, and hearty love to man.’

OCTOBER IN-PERSON WORSHIP WITH ECO

As we indicated in last month's edition of ECHO, there will be two in-person worship events during October.

On Thursday 6th October at 15:00 our Lot Group will be meeting to hold a Communion Service near 82150 Montaigu-de-Quercy. Our service will celebrate Creation and the Feast of St Francis of Assisi. The service will last about an hour. Afterwards we will take time for some refreshments and fellowship.

If you would like to come and join us, please e-mail lot.group@ourchurch.fr and we will send you some more details.

As you may already be aware, we do not take any collections at our services, but if you would like to, we invite you to bring dried or canned dog or cat food which we will pass to a number of local animal charities in celebration of the life of St Francis and his love of animals.

Our service will be recorded for broadcast on Sunday 9th October at 10h00 am.

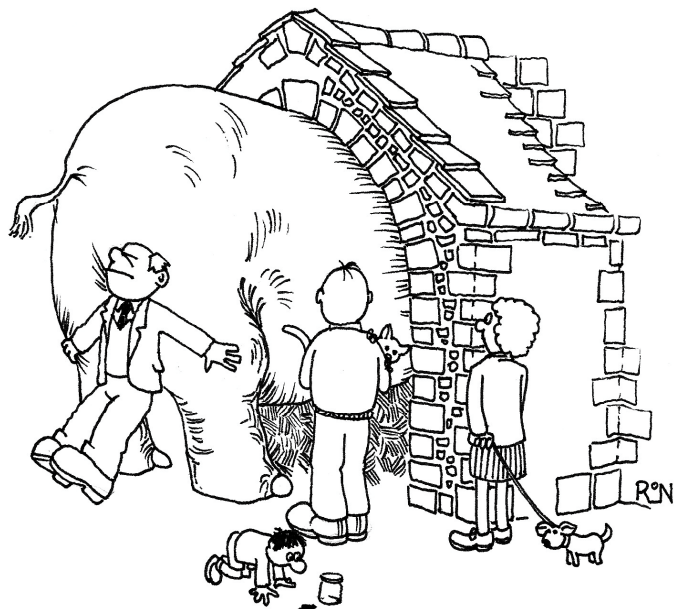
A fortnight later, on Thursday 20th October, again at 15:00 we will hold an in-person Communion Service in the grounds of Les Marguerites, Alet les Bains. Again, after the service there will be time for refreshments, provided by our hosts Antoinette and Keith.

At this service, we are inviting contributions of toiletries (shower gel, shampoo, soap, toothpaste etc) which will be donated to Secours Catholique in Quillan.

If you would like more information about this service, please e-mail us at contact@ourchurch.fr

At both these services, while we will continue to take appropriate Covid precautions, we have now developed a liturgy to share bread and wine. We therefore ask you to bring a small plate or napkin on which to take bread and also a small plastic or metal goblet or glass in which to receive some of the communion wine.

PRIVACY NOTICE: Please note that when we record our services, we do not film members of the congregation.



IT WAS QUICKLY DECIDED THAT NEXT YEAR'S "BRING YOUR PET TO OUR ST FRANCIS' DAY" SERVICE WOULD BE HELD OUTSIDE THE CHURCH AND NOT INSIDE

OCTOBER 30th IS BIBLE SUNDAY

The Wycliffe Global Alliance are an international charity which promotes and supports the translation of the Bible into foreign languages in order to make it accessible to an increasing proportion of the world's population.

It is estimated that there are 7,378 languages in use around the world amongst its population of 7.9 billion people.

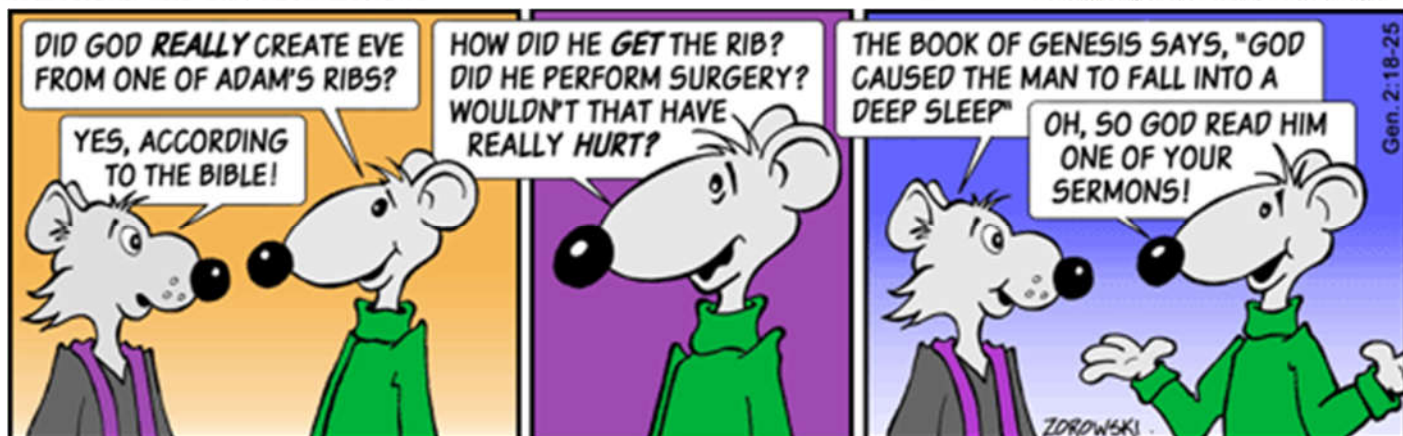
As at 1 January 2022, the Bible was estimated to have been translated into 3,495 languages, making it accessible to just over 7 billion people.

Translations into another 828 languages are currently in progress, which will make the Bible available to another 67 million people.

Another 1,892 languages have not yet begun to be translated, meaning that 145 million people cannot yet study the Bible in their own language. There remains much work to do to bring the Word of God to the whole of God's people.....

Church Mice

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ECO WORSHIP CALENDAR OCTOBER 2022

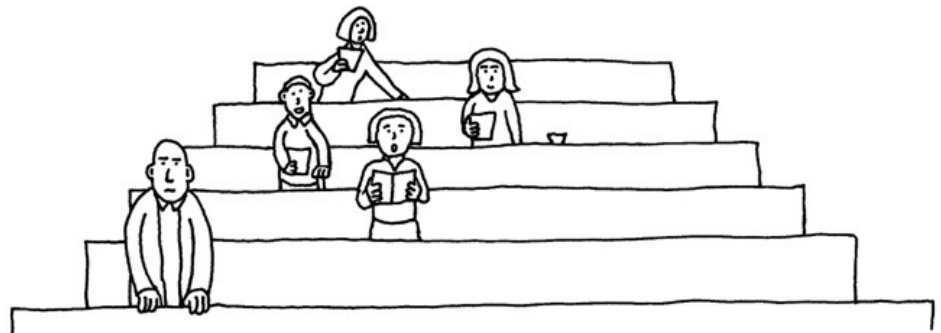
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1
2 10:30 Online Morning Prayer	3	4 19:00 Online Service of Compline	5	6 15:00 - Creation Service at Montaigu 19:00 - Online Service of Prayer for Healing	7	8
9 10:30 Online Communion Service (Recording from 6 Oct)	10	11 19:00 Online Service of Compline	12	13 19:00 Online Service of Prayer for Healing	14	15
16 10:30 Online Morning Prayer	17	18 19:00 Online Service of Compline	19	20 15:00 - Communion Service at Alet les Bains 19:00 - Online Service of Prayer for Healing	21	22
23 10:30 Online Communion Service	24	25 19:00 Online Service of Compline	26	27 19:00 Online Service of Prayer for Healing also 14:30 - Lot House Group Meeting	28	29
30 10:30 Special Service for All Saints Day	31					

Dave Walker reveals what is really going on in the pews of a church

IN THE PEWS

WHAT IS GOING ON?

WHAT THE VICAR SEES →



ACTUAL ACTIVITIES →

