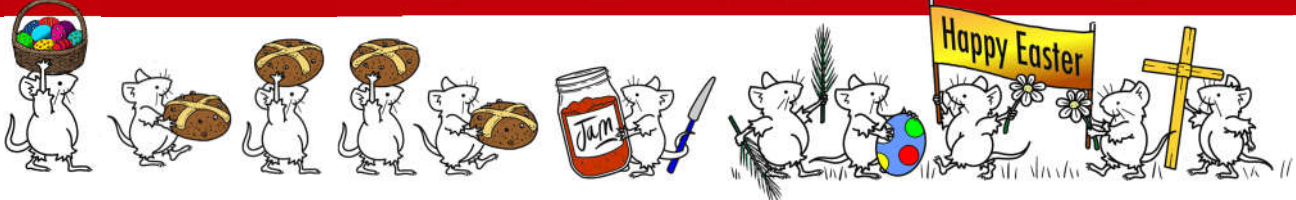




ECHO

APRIL 2023 EDITION



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

IT'S OFFICIAL: THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK DOESN'T WANT YOU TO SEND HIM AMAZON VOUCHERS (AND NEITHER DOES ECO)

"Dear Reverend Bloggs" the e-mail began. "I hope you can do me a favour. I need to get an Amazon Gift Voucher to present to Archdeacon Smith to celebrate her birthday but my phone battery has gone flat and I am busy in meetings all day today so I am having to borrow my Chaplain's mobile. Could you please buy a £100 Gift Voucher for me and send the code to this e-mail address and I'll pay you back tomorrow. Many thanks. Reverend Stephen Cottrell".

An e-mail like this is currently being sent to dozens of church officials in the Archdiocese of York, hoping to fool the recipient to send high value gift vouchers, apparently to the Archbishop of York at an e-mail address which is not his usual one but, surprise, surprise, is actually under the control of a scammer.

Alert recipients realised that Archbishop Stephen does not sign himself as "Reverend Stephen Cottrell". Other recipients with suspicious minds questioned whether it was likely that Archbishop Stephen would ever make a request like this. Sadly, however, some recipients were taken in, spent their money and sent off the vouchers to the scammers who promptly cashed them in before Amazon Security could be alerted.

Similar scams have been attempted using the names of members of clergy in other places, including here in the Occitanie, and again, several people were taken in and lost money as a result although cyber-security measures blocked most of the e-mails.

This is a callous crime which takes advantage of people's kindness and generosity. And sadly it forces you to be suspicious of every e-mail you receive.



However, please be assured that if you get an e-mail from the Archbishop of York asking for Amazon vouchers, it is definitely **not** from him.

Similarly, if you ever get an e-mail from anyone connected with ECO making the same kind of request, (or indeed any other request for money) please put it in the dustbin at once without sending any kind of reply, because we would never, never, **NEVER** send an e-mail to you asking you for money!



WE'RE VERY SORRY, JESUS, BUT OWING TO THE BUILDING WORKS OVER-RUNNING WE'LL HAVE TO SEAT YOU ALL ON ONE SIDE OF THE TABLE WITH THE WINDOWS BEHIND YOU.

HOLY WEEK ONLINE WITH ECO

As we did in 2022, ECO are planning a full program of online worship during Holy Week.

MAUNDY THURSDAY - 19:00

In place of our normal service of Prayer for Healing, we will be broadcasting an extended service which, as well as breaking bread and sharing wine to recall the Last Supper (note: this will **not** be an online Communion Service) we will wash hands to symbolically recall how Jesus washed His disciples' feet, and will also include our usual prayers for those in need of God's healing touch at this time.

GOOD FRIDAY - 20:00

As in 2022, we will be live-broadcasting the play "Breaking Day", this time at the slightly later time of 20:00. Breaking Day is performed by the Riding Lights Theatre Company and tells the events of Good Friday from the perspective of Pontius Pilate, his wife Claudia Procula and their Jewish servant, Hannah. The play lasts about 45 minutes. For licensing reasons, this cannot be left online after the broadcast has ended, but we will not remove it until 21:30, to allow people who tune in slightly late to still be able to watch it.

HOLY SATURDAY VIGIL - 19:00

By tradition, churches hold a Great Vigil on Holy Saturday to prepare us for the moment of Jesus' resurrection, which occurs some time during the Saturday night (the tomb is empty at dawn when Mary will arrive). These services are held during the hours of darkness since the new day is considered to start at the sunset of the preceding day. In ECO's version, Tradition combines with Modern.

Vigils begin with the Sweep of History (reminding us of the story of the Bible up to this moment). In its original form, this comprises the 12 Old Testament readings found in an ancient manuscript belonging to the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem. ECO use a modern version which incorporates them all into a version containing music, song and bible readings.

This is followed by the Exultet - the chanted Easter Proclamation.

ECO is very fortunate to have a dedicated recording of the Exultet, recorded for us live in Romsey Abbey - and we will be broadcasting this in our special evening service.

There is then a Litany of The Saints in which prayers are offered to Saints by name - in keeping with our Iona traditions, ECO offer prayers to Celtic Saints.

The service then ends with a proclamation of the Gloria as Christ is resurrected.

Despite the name "Vigil" this whole service lasts only 40 minutes.

EASTER SUNDAY MORNING COMMUNION - 10:30

And then on Easter Sunday morning, we will gather at our usual time of 10:30 to celebrate Communion together as we celebrate Christ's Resurrection.

We hope you will join us in our worship during Holy Week

EASTER, THE MOST JOYFUL DAY OF THE YEAR

Easter is the most joyful day of the year for Christians. Christ has died for our sins. We are forgiven. Christ has risen! We are redeemed! We can look forward to an eternity in His joy! Hallelujah!

The Good News of Jesus Christ is a message so simple that you can explain it to someone in a few minutes. It is so profound that for the rest of their lives they will still be 'growing' in their Christian walk with God.

Why does the date move around so much? Because the date of Passover moves around, and according to the biblical account, Easter is tied to the Passover. Passover celebrates the Israelites' exodus from Egypt, and it lasts for seven days, from the middle of the Hebrew month of Nisan, which equates to late March or early April.

Sir Isaac Newton was one of the first to use the Hebrew lunar calendar to come up with firm dates for the first Good Friday: Friday 7th April 30 AD or Friday 3rd April, 33 AD with Easter Day falling two days later. Modern scholars continue to think these two Fridays to be the most likely.

Most people will tell you that Easter falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring Equinox, which is broadly true. But the precise calculations are complicated and involve something called an 'ecclesiastical full moon', which is not the same as the moon in the sky.

The earliest possible date for Easter in the West is 22nd March, which last fell in 1818. The latest is 25th April, which last happened in 1943.

Why the name, 'Easter'? In almost every European language, the festival's name comes from 'Pesach', the Hebrew word for Passover. The Germanic word 'Easter', however, seems to come from Eostre, a Saxon fertility goddess mentioned by the Venerable Bede. He thought that the Saxons worshipped her in 'Eostur month,' but may have confused her with the classical dawn goddesses like Eos and Aurora, whose names mean 'shining in the east'. So, Easter might have meant simply 'beginning month' - a good time for starting up again after a long winter.



Finally, why Easter eggs? On one hand, they are an ancient symbol of birth in most European cultures. On the other hand, hens start laying regularly again each Spring. Since eggs were forbidden during Lent, it's easy to see how decorating and eating them became a practical way to celebrate Easter.

IS THAT FISH FOR SUPPER ?

Neil Batcock considers the Ravenna Mosaic of the Last Supper



I have long been fascinated by this mosaic image of the Last Supper. It dates to the early 6th century, and can be found in the church of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna. The church adjoined the palace of the Ostrogothic king, Theodoric.

Look carefully at the mosaic picture. The seating pattern indicates a meal being shared by people of relatively high status, reclining around a semi-circular table, such as would have been common in the Roman Empire. Maybe it's how Theodoric dined - he was a very Romanised Goth - and the artist depicted the sort of meal the king would have understood.



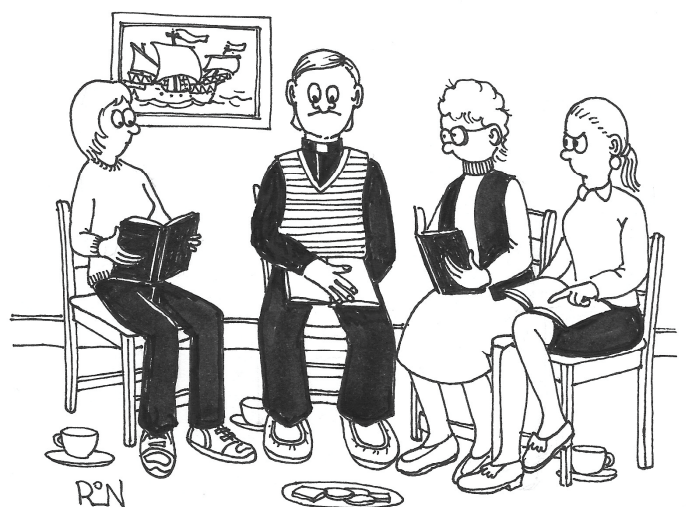
Notice the content of the meal: two rather plump fish, surrounded by seven small loaves of bread, but no cup of wine, so far as I can see. It is clearly a depiction of the Last Supper: Jesus stands out by his purple robes, and he is accompanied by twelve others, no doubt the disciples. The only Gospel scene which fits this arrangement must be the Last Supper.

And yet - why is there no cup, nor a single loaf that would seem essential 'props' for this scene? Why fish, why seven loaves? Ah, you might think, the artist is making an allusion to the feeding of the five thousand (five loaves and two fish) and the feeding of the four thousand (seven loaves and a few fish). The disciples are being miraculously fed at the Last Supper, just as the five and four thousand were.

But there is more. The language used in the Gospels to describe the sharing of bread and fish can readily be termed 'eucharistic'. As an example, take Matthew 14.19: 'taking the loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds.' There are obvious similarities with the account of the Last Supper - again, using Matthew (26.26), Jesus 'took bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples'.

There is a further example - interestingly enough, it is a post-Resurrection appearance of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel: 'Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish.' (John 21.13). It is notable, looking across all four Gospels, how often Jesus bonds with his followers by sharing a meal (a real meal, not a symbolic one), and often that meal consists of bread and fish.

Depictions of the Last Supper with bread and fish can be found dating much earlier than the Ravenna mosaic - for example, in the Catacombs of Callistus in Rome (3rd century?). Might it be that at least one strand of the early Church celebrated a Jesus-inspired meal involving bread and fish? This need not preclude the celebration using bread and wine, perhaps on a different occasion. But it could also mean that, for at least some in the early Church, the concept of Eucharistic meal was wider than we tend to imagine



The Bible Study Group easily verified it in Leviticus - Reverend Brown's new jumper was definitely classed as an 'abomination'

LOT House Group
lot.group@ourchurch.fr
Janet Varty

While our Group did not hold a monthly meeting in March, we have still been very busy:

3 March - World Day of Prayer



ECO group members took part in the World Day of Prayer held in Cahors. This year it was prepared by Christians in Taiwan, readings were led by 5 French ladies and the singing was led by the Cahors Ecumenical choir.

A Prayer from Sweden

Nils Ankarkrona sent us these images from Sweden during his visit there:



He also included this short prayer of St Bridget, Sweden's patron saint, whose saint's day occurred on 1 February:

Lord
Please show me your way and help me be willing
to follow it.
Amen

Our next meeting will be held on Thursday 27th April

A COFFEE BREAK REFLECTION

Linda Trew

As well as working, I am currently studying to become a Lay Minister in France, or a 'Pasteur'. I am loving the course, I am learning so much and am enjoying being with like-minded people, but being back in education is challenging.

The course is broken down into six modules and at the end of each module you have to write an assignment. I am not an academic, so having to write in the third person and stick to a rigid word count is not a discipline I am used to, and as for referencing, well I struggle to understand the instructions let alone actually do the referencing!

Needless to say, each time I submit an assignment a ritual behaviour takes over. I know that realistically it will take days, maybe even a few weeks, for it to be read by two separate lectures before they consider the marks and upload their thoughts and score onto my online account. But this doesn't stop me from logging on within a couple of days to see if the results are in.

This behaviour continues every day, numerous times throughout the day, refreshing the page every few hours in the hope that the marks will be in. I am so anxious to know what the lectures thought of my assignment (of me?), was it good enough (am I good enough?) will it pass (am I a failure?).

There is always that voice of doubt isn't there, I know that I am not alone. It creeps into aspects of our lives, in particular when we are doing things for others or with others. Our human instinct to please and do well doesn't go away regardless of age, experience, or power. Saying that, I do sometime wonder if the President of the United States or our own leaders ever have doubts? I am sure they do, they just don't share them in public newsletters!

Well, I am pleased to say that to date my marks have been good, better than I had hoped and the feedback I have received has been helpful for me to reflect, learn and improve. Isn't this true throughout life? We are so often our own worse critic, expecting so much of ourselves, more than is humanly possible sometimes and beating ourselves up when we don't quite hit the mark. I bet we are kinder to others, giving encouragement, support and positive feedback when needed – but when it comes to ourselves, we are unforgiving. We really can be our own worst enemy. So, let's try and change this. Here are some wonderful bible verses which I hope you find encouraging. Why not write them out and pop them around your office, on the fridge door, in your phone case etc.

2 Timothy 1:7, "For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." Psalm 27:3, "Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident." Joshua 1:9, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous."

PROPOSED VISA RELAXATION FOR BRITISH SECOND HOME-OWNERS WHEN VISITING FRANCE

French Senator Corinne Imbert has submitted an amendment to a new draft French Immigration Bill intended to enable some of the British subjects who own around 86,000 second homes to spend a continuous period of 6 months in those homes, rather than the 90 days to which Schengen rules currently limit them.



Ms Imbert has responded to a suggestion from the Facebook Group France Visa Free who campaign on this issue. A stay of 180 days would match the immigration restrictions which now apply to EU nationals entering the UK, so would be a reciprocal action, and not a unilateral concession.

The Immigration Bill was due to become before the French Senate during late March, but has been delayed owing to the current pension reform issues.

It contains new provisions for managing asylum applications as well as for creating new classes of visa. Visas for individual countries are not managed under the Schengen Agreement.

However, President Macron has announced that it will be postponed for several weeks and might now be divided into a series of smaller laws which will each be introduced separately, owing to the current issues relating to pensions and retirement.

Ms Imbert's proposal would allow British second-home owners to apply for a 5-year visa allowing them to stay for an unbroken period of 6 months during the year.

The campaign is now also being supported by Assemblée Nationale Member for the Manche, Bernard Sorre who is pressing the French Foreign Affairs Ministry on the same topic.



M.Sorre has criticised the current 90-day visa restrictions as ""penalising for property owners who participate in the local economy, take part in associations and restore old buildings"".

We will continue to monitor this subject when the Immigration Law is discussed and will report on any updates

EASTER IN ATHEIST RUSSIA...



Three years after the Russian Revolution of 1917, a great anti-God rally was arranged in Kiev. The powerful orator Bukharin was sent from Moscow, and for an hour he demolished the Christian faith with argument, abuse and ridicule. At the end there was silence.

Then a man rose and asked to speak. He was a priest of the Russian Orthodox Church. He went and stood next to Bukharin. Facing the people, he raised his arms and spoke just three triumphant words: 'Christ is risen!'

At once the entire assembly rose to their feet and gave the joyful response, 'He is risen indeed!' It was a devastating moment for an atheist politician, who had no answer to give to this ancient Easter liturgy. He had not realised he was simply too late: how can you convince people that God does not exist when they have already encountered Him?



"Police? This is St Mary's Ladies' Knitting & Vigilante Circle. We've detained two gents trying to nick the church silver."



SURVEYING THE CROSS

On Easter Sunday on ECO, and in churches throughout the world, we will sing the words of one of the greatest hymns written by Isaac Watts. Trumpeter and pianist Lester Amann tells us more

In England in the 1600s, singing in church was confined to simple melodies attached to the words of the psalms.

Incredibly, Watts describes the Roman device for capital punishment as a 'wondrous cross' and views this as an amazing scene of God's love. The cross was indeed a sight of horror, but it was also one of love where Jesus died for our sins.

Each line would be sung in turn by a precentor, and the congregation would follow. This was a slow, stilted and rather uninspiring process!

As Paul put it: "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." Galatians 6:14

When Isaac Watts was 15 years old, he complained to his father that singing in church was nothing but tuneless dirges. Watt's father, a church deacon, challenged his son that if he could do better with the worship he could go ahead and try.

Watts realises that anything he has of value pales into insignificance when considering the magnitude of Jesus coming from the glorious realms of heaven to live for a while on earth. As Watts looks at his Saviour dying in agonising pain, he knows there is no place for self-esteem. Jesus sacrificed Himself for us, securing our salvation and it is only about Him we should boast.

Watts rose to the task in a big way: during his lifetime he wrote over 600 hymns! And from that time, countless poets and composers have followed his example, and enhanced the way we worship God.

Watts uses an imagery of the starkness of the crucifixion with 'sorrow' and 'love'. It was sorrow for our sin that took Jesus to the cross; it was not the nails that held Him there, but His love for us.

Many churches will sing one of Watts' hymns this Easter: When I survey the wondrous cross.

The final verse is about gratitude and commitment. What can we give to Jesus as a 'thank you'? How can we repay Him? Even if we could give the whole world as a gift to Jesus it would be inadequate — a 'present far too small'.

It is written as though Watts is standing in front of the cross, gazing at the crucified Jesus, and taking stock of what this all means to him.

Our only proper gift can be to offer Him our own 'soul, our life and our all'.

The hymn was first published in "Hymns and Spiritual Songs" in 1707. The tune which we most associated with this hymn is "Rockingham", written by Edward Miller in 1861 and published in the famous *Hymns Ancient & Modern*. Miller was the son of a stone mason who ran away from home to become a musician and became a flautist in Handel's orchestra.

And Charles Wesley, who wrote more than 6,000 hymns during his life, was reported to have said that he would have given up all his hymns in order to have written this one.

Church Mice

Copyright Karl A. Zorowski



A TALE OF TWO DRAGONS.....

As we approach St George's Day on 23rd April, we compare two stories involving dragons



St. George And The Dragon

In the 13th Century, the writer Jacobus de Voragine wrote *The Golden Legend*, in which he tells the story of St George defeating a dragon.

One day, St George rode up to the heathen city of Sylene in Lybia where he found the citizens in great distress. A neighbouring dragon had forced them to surrender two sheep each day for its dinner, and when the sheep gave out, two of their children; and now they were about to sacrifice the King's daughter, dressed as if for her wedding. St George encountered the little party by a stagnant lake, where the dragon lived, and persuaded the sobbing Princess to tell him why she was so miserable. At that moment the dragon appeared, looking inexpressibly revolting. St George charged forwards and drove his spear into the dragon's gaping mouth. To everyone's amazement, he tumbled the monster over and over.

Then St George borrowed the Princess's girdle, tied it round the dragon's neck, and persuaded her to lead it back to Sylene herself. The sight of her approaching with the befuddled dragon on its makeshift lead emptied the town. When the inhabitants timidly crept back, St George promised to behead the dragon if they would all believe in Jesus Christ and be baptised.

It was a most effective form of evangelism, for everybody said 'yes' at once. So, 15,000 people were baptised, and four carts were commissioned to remove the dragon's body.

In the 13th Century England put herself under the protection of the Saint. His day was declared a holiday in 1222.



Hiccup And The Dragon

Have you seen the film *How to Train your Dragon*? It's set in a Viking village under attack from dragons, who steal livestock and burn down houses. Hiccup, the village Chief's son, invents a machine to capture dragons. However, when he catches one of the most dangerous dragons, he cannot kill it, when he sees that the dragon is just as frightened as he is. Through this friendship, the people and dragons eventually learn to live in harmony.

This month we celebrate St George, the patron saint of England. He is famous for slaying a dragon, a tradition which became popular in the Middle Ages. Whether he killed an actual dragon is open to question! However, we do know that the original George was a Roman soldier at the time of Emperor Diocletian. He refused to renounce his faith, as commanded by the Emperor, resulting in his death on 23 April 303 AD.

The contrast is clear: St George slayed the evil dragon, while Hiccup refused to kill one. However, they also have something important in common.

Both acted according to their conscience, defying the popular understanding of those around them and not worrying about the personal cost to themselves. St George was martyred for standing up for his faith in Jesus before a pagan emperor, while Hiccup risked rejection by his father and village because of his compassion.

Today, we are still called to stand for Christ against wrongs and injustice in daily life, whatever the personal cost. However, we also need to be ready to look our enemies in the eye and meet their hostility with love and compassion. This is why we also remember this month that Jesus died and rose again, so that we might have God's power to do this in our lives.

ECO WORSHIP CALENDAR

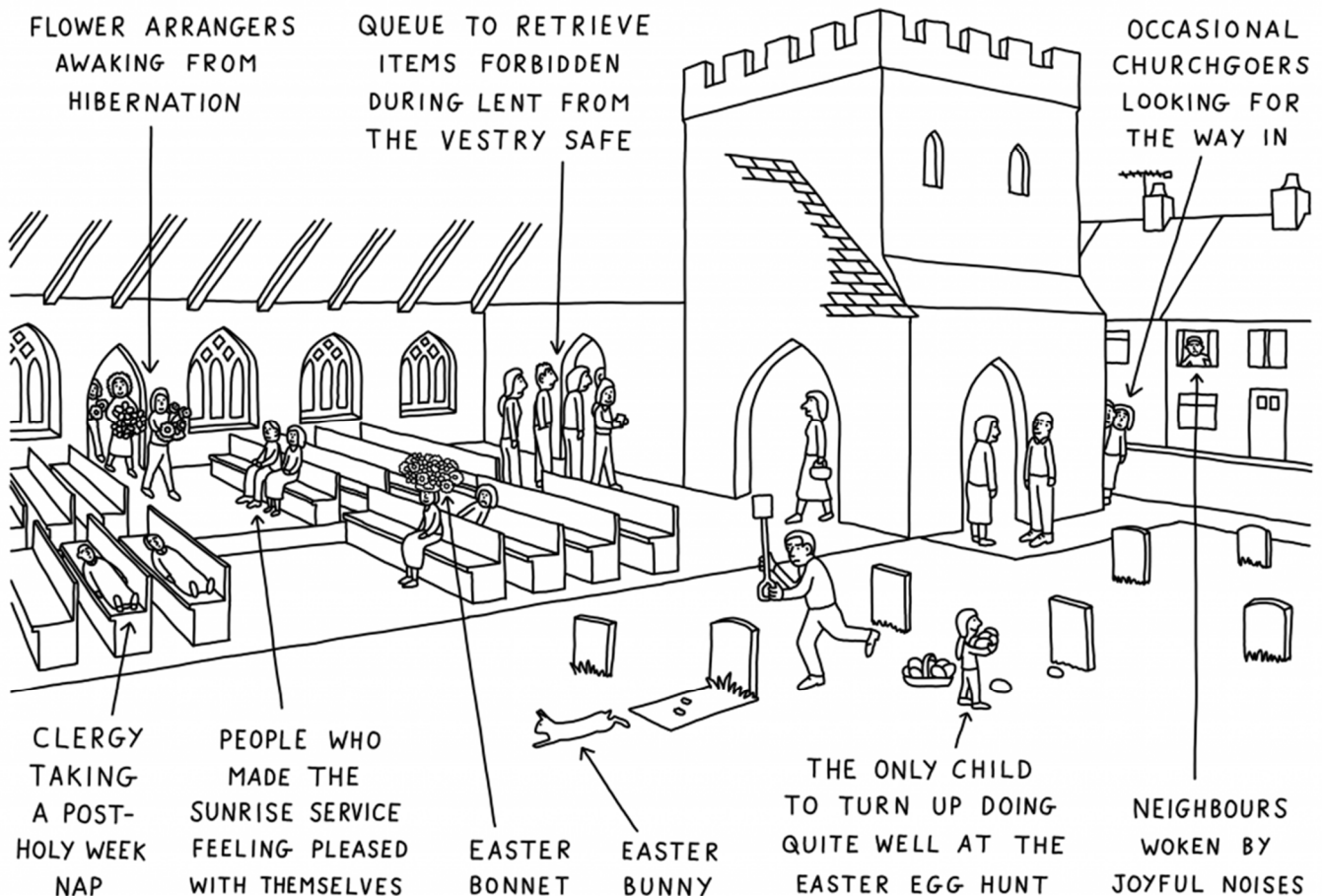
APRIL 2023 INCLUDING HOLY WEEK SERVICES

PALM SUNDAY		MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	MAUNDY THURSDAY	GOOD FRIDAY	HOLY SATURDAY	
2	10:30	3	4	19:00	5	6	7	8
Special Service for Palm Sunday			Online Service of Compline		Service for Maundy Thursday		Broadcast of the Drama "Breaking Day"	
Vigil Service for Holy Saturday								

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
9	10:30	10	11	12	13	14
Online Communion for Easter Day		No Service		No Service		
16	10:30	17	18	19:00	19	20
Online Morning Prayer for Easter 2		Online Service of Compline		Online Service of Prayer for Healing		
23	10:30	24	25	19:00	26	27
Online Morning Prayer for Easter 3		Online Service of Compline		Meeting of Lot House Group & 19:00 Online Service of Prayer for Healing		
30	10:30					
Online Morning Prayer for Easter 4						

Dave Walker demonstrates what a Church Easter Service *might* be like....

THE EASTER SERVICE



CartoonChurch.com

THE SMALL PRINT: ECHO is published by the Ecumenical Church of the Occitanie. It is distributed free of charge to anyone who requests a copy. You are welcome to forward copies in their entirety to other people (without cost) if you would like to, but many of the articles and illustrations in here are reproduced under licence and therefore should not be reproduced or re-used outside of this publication without prior written permission from ECO. Please contact us at echo@ourchurch.fr