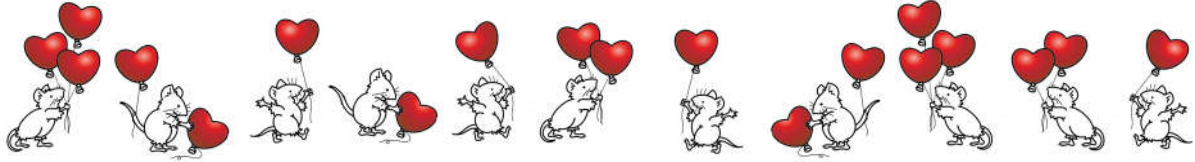




# ECHO

FEBRUARY 2023 EDITION



THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE  
ECUMENICAL CHURCH OF OCCITANIE  
[www.ourchurch.fr](http://www.ourchurch.fr)

## PRAYING FOR CHURCH UNITY

On Saturday 21st February, ministers (photo right) and members of the congregations of Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches, including members of ECO, from around the Ariège gathered in the Protestant Temple in the beautiful village of Carla-Bayle to join in a special service of prayer for Christian Unity as part of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Glacial winds and flurries of snow did not deter worshippers who travelled from considerable distances to the birthplace of the Protestant philosopher Pierre Bayle, who was known for his writings on the theme of religious tolerance.

This week falls each year in mid-January and is celebrated in churches all over the Northern Hemisphere. (Because this period is mid-Summer in the Southern Hemisphere when people are often away on holiday, it is celebrated at other times in different countries) It marks the period between the Saints' Days of St Peter and St Paul, who set out with opposing views about whether Jesus' teachings should be reserved only for Jews (St Peter's original position) or also be shared with non-Jews and preached to the whole world (St Paul's position).

After meeting for a great debate in the city of Antioch, Peter and Paul reached an agreement that Jesus' Word was intended for everyone in the world, and they travelled to Rome, the heart of pagan religion at that time, and helped to found the church there from which would ultimately spring the Catholic church although they were both martyred there.

Each year a different Church Community chooses the theme for the Week, and this year, it was the turn of the Minnesota Council of Churches, who adopted the words of Isaiah 1:17:

*Do good; seek justice*

The ECO Sunday Morning Online Service on 22nd February was dedicated to the the Week of Prayer. If you have not yet watched it, we invite you to do as the theme for 2023 is explained in far more detail.

Also please see Bob Carr's article overleaf.

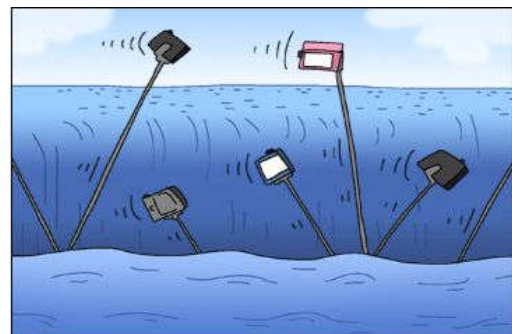


## YOUR PRAYERS ARE REQUESTED

Between 6th and 9th February, the General Synod of the Church of England will be meeting in London to consider their next steps in relation to welcoming members of the Gay, Lesbian and Trans-Sexual Communities into Church, and whether or not same-sex couples should be allowed to marry in Church.

Views on this topic are deeply held both in favour and against, the Synod's Members, comprising Bishops, clergy and members of the laity are divided almost 50:50 on the subject.

Please include them all in your prayers, asking that God will guide them to disagree lovingly and to seek common ground.



CROSSING THE RED SEA TOOK  
A BIT LONGER THAN MOSES  
PLANNED AS THE ISRAELITES  
KEPT STOPPING TO TAKE SELFIES

## Living with Difference

*Bob Carr*

The Morning Prayer service broadcast on Sunday 22nd. January fell in the middle of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This was reflected in the Reflection and the Prayers for Concern during the service.

In times such as the present full of discord and division between faiths, within faiths, between political parties and within it seems easy to blame otherness as the root of our difficulties.

A little while ago I came across the following poem by the 14th, century Persian poet Hafez, who wrote in an age when Muslims, Christians and Jews on the whole existed harmoniously alongside one another. We could do with learning how to emulate that today.

**“I am in love with every church” by Hafez**  
(translated by Daniel Ladinsky)

I am in love with every church  
And mosque  
And temple  
And any kind of shrine

Because I know it is there  
That people say the different names  
Of the One God.

The fact that someone prays on a different day, eats different food or dresses in a different style should be a source of curiosity and an opportunity to learn more about our shared humanity, not cause for fear and mistrust.

As Hafez seems to suggest in his poem, the way in which we choose to achieve something may finally be of no consequence as long as we all end up in what, taking the longer view, turns out to be much the same place.

William Penn (24 October 1644 – 10 August 1718)  
English writer and religious thinker belonging to the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), and founder of Pennsylvania who was an early advocate of democracy and religious freedom expressed similar sentiments:

“The humble, meek, merciful, just, pious and devout souls are everywhere of one religion; and when death has taken off the mask they will know one another, though the divers liveries they wear here make them strangers.”

## 14th February - Valentine’s Day

There are two confusing things about this day of romance and anonymous love-cards strewn with lace, cupids and ribbon: firstly, there seems to have been two different Valentines in the 4th century - one a priest martyred on the Flaminian Way, under the emperor Claudius, the other a bishop of Terni martyred at Rome. And neither seems to have had any clear connection with lovers or courting couples.

So why has Valentine become the patron saint of romantic love? By Chaucer’s time the link was assumed to be because on these saints’ day -14th February - the birds are supposed to pair. Or perhaps the custom of seeking a partner on St Valentine’s Day is a surviving scrap of the old Roman Lupercalia festival, which took place in the middle of February.

One of the Roman gods honoured during this Festival was Pan, the god of nature. Another was Juno, the goddess of women and marriage. During the Lupercalia it was a popular custom for young men to draw the name of a young unmarried woman from a name-box. The two would then be partners or ‘sweethearts’ during the time of the celebrations. Even modern Valentine decorations bear an ancient symbol of love - Roman cupids with their bows and love-arrows.

There are no churches in England dedicated to Valentine, but since 1835 his relics have been claimed by the Carmelite church in Dublin.

The first recorded association of Valentine’s Day with romantic love (1382) is from Geoffrey Chaucer. He wrote, ‘For this was Saint Valentine’s Day, when every bird cometh there to choose his mate.’ This poem was in honour of the first anniversary of the engagement of King Richard II of England to Anne of Bohemia.

Valentine Day is referred to by Ophelia in Hamlet (1600-1601).

To-morrow is St Valentine’s day  
All in the morning betime  
And I a maid at your window  
To be your Valentine.

The modern mention of Valentine’s Day can be found in a collection of English nursery rhymes (1784):

The rose is red, the violet’s blue  
The honey’s sweet, and so are you.  
Thou are my love and I am thine  
I drew thee to my Valentine.

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



Our service of Wholeness and Fellowship began with the hymn For the Healing of the Nations. *(Please also see the article overleaf)*

Our focus was to pray for light to penetrate places where darkness has descended. Out of respect for World Holocaust Memorial Day we heard the wonderful sung prayer **HEAL US NOW** by members of Jewish Federation of North America. Our "activity" was to create our own private prayer list on the Lords Prayer card, to be posted in a prominent place at home.

If you would like to listen to a version of Heal Us Now, it is available on YouTube at

<https://youtu.be/BMom57TA2Js>



After the singing of All my Hope on God is Founded, we held a celebration for Margaret's birthday with Nordic sandwiches, homemade cake and sparkling wine.

Many moral dilemmas currently in the news formed much of our discussions as well.

The Lot House Group will next be meeting on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> February.

As usual, we will share food and drink and share worship and fellowship.

If you would like to join us, please e-mail Janet Varty at the e-mail address shown above.

Love  
Linda Trew



I always feel that February is a strange month, winter is still hanging on but signs of spring are appearing. It is normally the time when I have 'had enough' of the cold and short days. However there is a bit of 'fun' in the middle of the month with Valentines day. If you are an old romantic you may enjoy sharing a card, gift or special meal with a loved one. I remember as a teenager waiting eagerly for a surprise card to arrive from a hidden admirer – I don't believe that ever happened though.

We all want to be loved. Nearly every song we hear on the radio is about love and poets, film makers and authors weave love in all its forms into their work. But what is love and what is its purpose? Wikipedia describes it like this 'love encompasses a range of strong and positive emotional and mental states..' that's great, but why?

The bible tells us that 'God is Love' 1 John 4:7. Not only does it tell us that He is love, but it tells us to love one another, and that to love, is to know God.

God is love. God made us, you and me, out of love, to love, to be in relationship with him and to love others as he loves. What a gift! That beats any box of chocolates!

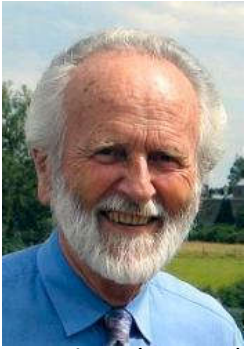
So, this February lets remember that we are loved more than we can imagine, and let us share that love, God's love, with others.

Lots of love, Linda.



*Maurice decided to move the organ outside after the Church Council voted to reduce the heating to save money. He says it's warmer out here !*





Rev Fred Kaan (1929-2009)

## For The Healing Of The Nations

*Janet Varty explores the famous hymn and its composer*

It has been said that Hymns are the life-blood of Protestant spirituality and what Christians sing is far closer to their hearts than what they read in the Bible or hear from preachers!

That should be quite shocking but we know it to be true.

I recall more heated debates over coffee after church about changing the words of 'Onward Christian Soldiers' to Pilgrims, or the correct tune for 'O Jesus, I have Promised' than any of the sermons preached. Its no surprise because singing etches itself into our minds and hearts and explains why where churches are full there is a much greater diet of song and music. Its cross generational and cross cultural, from rock bands to choral singers, from Gospel choirs to Gregorian chants or Taize meditations, and everything in between. There's more or less something for everybody. That diversity must be a good thing as it provides support and comfort at different stages of our lives.

We all have our own well loved hymns but when they were composed a long time ago, it is worth taking a second look at the language to see if it contains inappropriate remnants from the past. People can sometimes find the language outmoded and jarring for their sensibilities and for the "un-churched" some of them make no sense at all.

When looking for a hymn choice recently I re visited 'For the healing of the Nations' and was surprised by its surprisingly inclusive tone so very appropriate for us as we begin to get our teeth into 2023. It was for this reason I decided to look at the life and work of its author.

Rev Frederik Hermanu Kaan ('Fred') was born in Haarlem in the Netherlands in 1929 and died in Britain in 2009.

He was a prolific hymn writer whose poetry was centred on a Jesus who embraced the whole of creation and excluded no one and nothing from his love.

His parents were a part of the Resistance, who by hiding people and guns had risked their lives for others, and three of his family members died of starvation at that time.

Kaan never forgot his teenage years under Nazi occupation and his experience led him to become a committed pacifist.

He accepted a place at Western College Bristol and was ordained into Congregational ministry. He served in Barry, south Wales and mastered the English language completely.

In 1968 he was sent by the Congregational Council to Geneva to help to form the World Alliance of Reformed Churches which he then served for 10 years, he centred on issues of human rights and inter-church relations.

Later his work took him to ecumenical teams in Birmingham and Swindon. He chaired the Human Rights Forum of the Churches in Britain and Ireland.

In addition to all of this he left six collections of hymns which have been translated into many languages!

He was commissioned by Coventry Cathedral to rewrite 'O Valiant Hearts' for Remembrance Sunday. The original words by Arkwright were indicative of that age and Kaan expunged all stoic nationalist theology. He was also commissioned to write a cantata 'Magnificat for a New Millennium' for the world Fair in Hanover for Expo 2000.

The words of the hymn 'For the Healing of the Nations' form a heartfelt prayer for our times:

1 For the healing of the nations,  
Lord, we pray with one accord,  
for a just and equal sharing  
of the things that earth affords.  
To a life of love in action  
help us rise and pledge our word.

2 Lead us forward into freedom;  
from despair your world release,  
that, redeemed from war and hatred,  
all may come and go in peace.  
Show us how through care and goodness  
fear will die and hope increase.

3 All that kills abundant living,  
let it from the earth be banned:  
pride of status, race, or schooling,  
dogmas that obscure your plan.  
In our common quest for justice  
may we hallow life's brief span.

4 You, Creator God, have written  
your great name on humankind.  
For our growing in your likeness,  
bring the life of Christ to mind  
that by our response and service  
earth its destiny may find.

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## 2 February: Candlemas / Chandeleur

In bygone centuries, Christians said their last farewells to the Christmas season on Candlemas, 2nd February. This is exactly 40 days after Christmas Day itself.

In New Testament times 40 days old was an important age for a baby boy: it was when they made their first 'public appearance'. Mary, like all good Jewish mothers, went to the Temple with Jesus, her first male child - to 'present Him to the Lord'. At the same time, she, as a new mother, was 'purified'. Thus, we have the Festival of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple.

So, where does the Candlemas bit come in? Jesus is described in the New Testament as the Light of the World, and early Christians developed the tradition of lighting many candles in celebration of this day. The Church also fell into the custom of blessing the year's supply of candles for the church on this day - hence the name, Candlemas.

The story of how Candlemas began can be found in Luke 2:22-40. Simeon's great declaration of faith and recognition of who Jesus was is of course found in the Nunc Dimittis, which is embedded in the Office of Evening Prayer in the West. But in medieval times, the Nunc Dimittis was mostly used just on this day, during the distribution of candles before the Eucharist. Only gradually did it win a place in the daily prayer life of the Church.



Here in France, Candlemas is referred to as "Chandeleur". The blessing and public display of candles also forms a major part of religious celebrations.

However, crepes also form a part of the festival. The golden colour of the crepe and its circular shape is seen as representing the returning sunlight as winter ends and we welcome the coming of Spring.

There are a number of local traditions associated with Chandeleur. If farmers do not make crepes on the 2nd February, it is believed that their wheat harvest would be poor in the coming season.

If you throw your first crepe in the air from a pan held your right hand while holding a gold coin in your left and then catch it in the pan when it lands again, you will be blessed with prosperity in the coming year—but only if you put the crepe on top of a cupboard !

## Anna - An 'Extra' in the Candlemas Story



Anna - The Prophetess  
Rembrandt (1639)

The story of Jesus' life and ministry is filled with the briefest mentions of people who enter His story and then vanish again.

Jewish tradition (described in Numbers 18 vv 15-16) required that a first-born child be presented in the Temple at least 30 days after their birth and a payment of 5 silver shekels be paid to the Temple Treasury.

In addition, Mary was required to undertake a ceremony of repurification in which either a lamb, or if the parents were too poor, a pair of turtledoves or pigeons could be offered instead.

It is not clear how old Jesus was when this ceremony was performed, since the classic Nativity Story tells that Joseph and Mary fled directly from Bethelhem to Egypt. Both Pope Francis and the late Pope Benedict have published works considering this, and their consensus was that the timelines of these events may have been a lot longer than 40 days - possibly several years.

But whenever the purification occurred, as they left the Temple, the Holy Family met Anna. Anna the Prophetess.

The Bible tells us that Anna was of the tribe of Asher, and it was to one her ancestors, Search, a daughter of Asher, that a secret message from God from the time of Abraham, stating that that He had taken notice of the plight of Israel and promising their redemption, was entrusted. At the time of her encounter with Jesus, Anna was 84 years old, and it is believed that she intervened in the Temple to pray to God for people who had suffered injustice. She had married at the age of 14, been widowed at 21 and spent the next 60 years in the Temple.

Anna was regarded as a prophetess and, as the keeper of the secret message of Redemption, was enabled to see and recognise Jesus as the Messiah.

Anna is commemorated as a Saint in the Catholic Church on 3rd February. It is suggested that the meeting with Mary was not by chance, since Mary had also been a first-born and was therefore presented at the Temple just as Jesus now was, and Anna had been responsible for caring for Mary when she had been presented. She therefore had had a long-standing connection to Mary, so Mary would have sought her out to introduce her to Jesus.

# Candlemas

by Malcolm Guite

They came, as called, according to the Law.  
Though they were poor and had to keep  
things simple,  
They moved in grace, in quietness, in awe,  
For God was coming with them  
to His temple.  
Amidst the outer court's commercial bustle  
They'd waited hours, enduring shouts  
and shoves,  
Buyers and sellers, sensing one more hustle,  
Had made a killing on the two young doves.  
They come at last with us to Candlemas  
And keep the day the prophecies came true  
We glimpse with them, amidst our busyness,  
The peace that Simeon and Anna knew.  
For Candlemas still keeps His kindled light,  
Against the dark our Saviour's face is bright.

## Miscellaneous observations on life...

Marriage licence - the only permit taken out after the hunt is over.

It's easy finding reasons why other folks should be patient.

Families are often like fudge - mostly sweet, with a few nuts.

Some people cause happiness wherever they go. Others, whenever they go.

It is said that if you line up all the cars in the world end to end, someone would be stupid enough to try to overtake them.

You can't have everything - where would you put it?

Latest survey shows that 3 out of 4 people make up 75% of the world's population.

If the shoe fits, get another one just like it.

Love is grand. Divorce is a hundred grand.

Advert in newspaper: Home computer, as new. Never been figured out.

Be nice to your kids. They'll choose your nursing home.

The trouble with referees is that they just don't care which side wins.

A hangover is the wrath of grapes.

Is it true that you never really learn to swear until you teach a loved one to drive?



**DON'T FORGET TO  
DECLARE YOUR  
HOME TO THE  
FRENCH TAXMAN  
BEFORE 30 JUNE**

In case you haven't heard, there is a new obligation for all owners of habitable properties in France, irrespective of whether you are resident in France or not, to officially register who occupies property that they own. Failure to register could incur an immediate fine of €150.

With the abolition of Taxe d'Habitation for principal residences with effect from 1 January 2023, the authorities now need to identify which residences will remain liable for this tax. This mainly applies to secondary residences (e.g. holiday homes).

The French authorities estimate that there are 73 million properties in France to be registered by 34 million beneficial owners. The law applies to both individuals and companies.

The registration is very easy to make. If you already have an online tax account, there is a new tab "Biens immobiliers" on the front page of your main tax page:

Mon espace particulier

impots.gouv.fr

Paiements

Documents

Biens immobiliers

This leads you to a list of properties which the authorities believe you own. You can add further properties if some are missing. Houses, free-standing garages at your home as well as swimming pools may be shown separately.

For each property, you declare who lives there, and set the date of commencement of occupation as **1 January 2023** (no need to search your diary for 1988 !) or the actual date if it falls after that.

The tax authorities have posted a helpful video on YouTube at

<https://youtu.be/w-2ddt4Vyu8>

which allows you to set up English subtitles if you prefer in order to help with understanding it.

The registration service page also offers an English language version if you prefer.

If you don't have an online account, you can either visit any tax office to make the necessary declaration or submit a form by post.

More details can be found at

<https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F42>



## 21st February - Shrove Tuesday (Pancake Day)

Shrove Tuesday is always 47 days before Easter Sunday and falls between 3rd February and 9th March.

Have you ever wondered why we eat pancakes just before Lent? The tradition dates back to Anglo-Saxon times, when Christians spent Lent in repentance and severe fasting.

So on the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, the church bell would summon them to confession, where they would be 'shriven', or absolved from their sins, which gives us Shrove Tuesday. At home, they would then eat up their last eggs and fat, and making a pancake was the easiest way to do this. For the next 47 days, they pretty well starved themselves.

Pancakes feature in cookery books as far back as 1439, and today's pancake races are in remembrance of a panicked woman back in 1445 in Olney, Buckinghamshire. She was making pancakes when she heard the shriving bell calling her to confession. Afraid she'd be late, she ran to the church in a panic, still in her apron, and still holding the pan.

Flipping pancakes is also centuries old. A poem from Pasquil's Palin in 1619 runs: "And every man and maide doe take their turne, And tosse their Pancakes up for feare they burne."

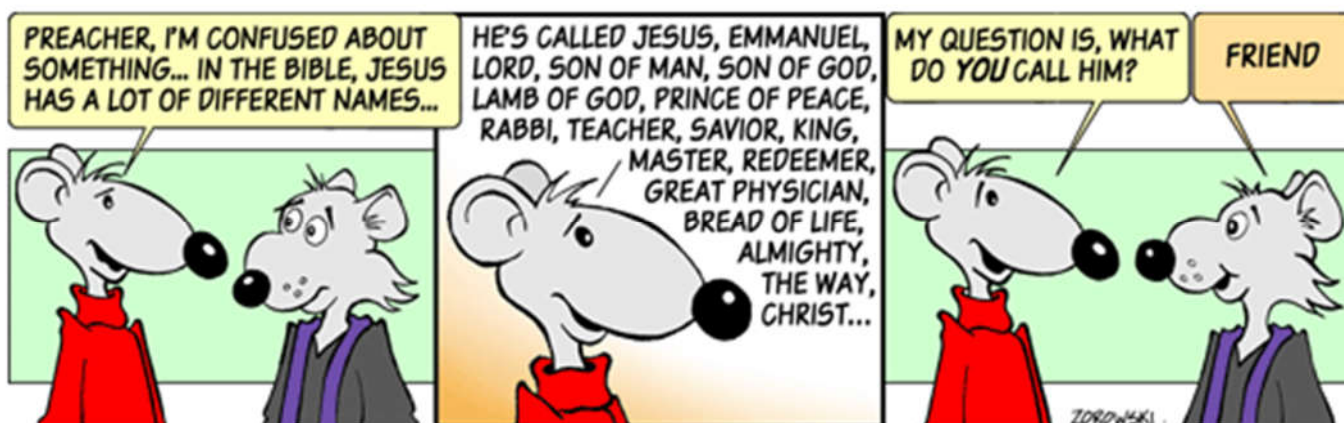
Some people have noted that the ingredients of pancakes can be used to highlight four significant things about this time of year: eggs stand for creation, flour is the staff of life, while salt keeps things wholesome, and milk stands for purity.

Pancake racing is an event which occurs in many British cathedrals. The races are usually hotly contested and feature cathedral clergy and choristers alike. They are now frequently used to raise funds for charities.



## Church Mice

Copyright Karl A. Zorowski



**Followed by.....**

**23rd February**



Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. But why 'Ash' Wednesday? The reason has to do with getting things right between you and God, and the tradition goes right back to the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament, the Israelites often sinned. When they finally came to their senses, and saw their evil ways as God saw them, they could do nothing but repent in sorrow. They mourned for the damage and evil they had done. As part of this repentance, they covered their heads with ashes. For the Israelites, putting ashes on your head, and even rending your clothes, was an outward sign of their heart-felt repentance and acknowledgement of sin. (See Genesis 18:27; 2 Samuel 13:19; Job 2:8, 30:19; Isaiah 58:5; Jeremiah 6:26; Jonah 3:6)

In the very early Christian Church, the yearly 'class' of penitents had ashes sprinkled over them at the beginning of Lent. They were turning to God for the first time, and mourning their sins. But soon many other Christians wanted to take part in the custom, and to do so at the very start of Lent. They heeded Joel's call to 'rend your hearts and not your garments' (Joel 2:12-19). Ash Wednesday became known as either the 'beginning of the fast' or 'the day of the ashes'.

The collect for today goes back to the Prayer Book, and it stresses the penitential character of the day. It encourages us with the reminder of the readiness of God to forgive us and to renew us.

The Bible readings for today are often Joel 2:1-2, 12-18, Matthew 6: 1-6, 16 – 21 and Paul's moving catalogue of suffering, "as having nothing and yet possessing everything." (2 Corinthians 5:20b - 6:10)

The actual custom of 'ashing' was abolished at the Reformation, though the old name for the day remained. Today, throughout the Church of England, receiving the mark of ashes on one's forehead is optional. Certainly, the mark of ashes on the forehead reminds people of their mortality: "Remember that you are dust and to dust you will return..." (Genesis 3:19)

The late medieval custom was to burn the branches used on Palm Sunday in the previous year in order to create the ashes for today.

### **The Prayer for Ash Wednesday is**

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing that you have made and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may receive from you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one



### **LENT WITH ECO**

Lent is a time for preparation and reflection, and ECO will be organising a series of Online Zoom Meetings to reflect on different aspects of our Christian journey through the season of Lent.

We will make more details available shortly, and will include them in our weekly notices.

Anyone will be welcome to join us for our Lent Meetings irrespective of whether you worship with us regularly or not.

Please note also that we will be starting Lent by broadcasting a Special Service of Compline on Ash Wednesday at the usual



# ECO WORSHIP CALENDAR FEBRUARY 2023

SUNDAY		MONDAY		TUESDAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY	
						1	2	19:00		3	4		
								Evening Service of Prayer for Epiphany					
5	10:30	6	7	19:00		8	9			10	11		
Online Morning Prayer				Online Service of Compline									
12	10:30	13	14	19:00		15	16	19:00		17	18		
Online Communion Service				Online Service of Compline				Online Service of Prayer for Healing					
19	10:30	20	21	22		19:00		23	19:00		24	25	
Online Morning Prayer				Special Service of Compline for Ash Wednesday				Online Service of Prayer for Healing also Meeting of Lot House Group					
26	10:30	27	28	19:00									
Online Communion for Lent 1				Online Service of Compline									

**Churches continue to do far more ministry via the Internet these days.  
Dave Walker shares some of the pitfalls which await the unwary**



**PROBLEMS WITH THE SOUND**



**ACCIDENTAL SCREEN-SHARING OF PASTORALLY-SENSITIVE INFORMATION**



**INTERNET BREAKS AT CRUCIAL MOMENT**

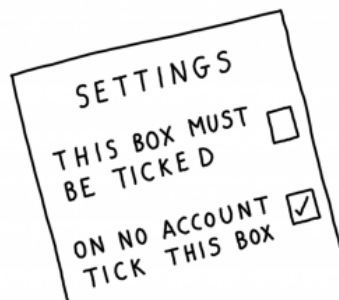


Miriam!  
Have you seen my glasses anywhere?

**FAILING TO MUTE THE CONGREGATION**



**ANIMALS RUNNING AMOK**



**THE APP HASN'T BEEN CONFIGURED**

That'll teach you to broadcast  
"I'm Accepted, I'm Forgiven"  
without the proper license



**LIVE ARREST OWING TO IGNORING COPYRIGHT**



**INVASION BY ROWDY GROUP OF METHODISTS**

CartoonChurch.com

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