

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

**CHURCH OF ENGLAND SAFEGUARDING
WOES CONTINUE AS ISB ABOLISHED**

The issues over the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults in the Church of England have escalated further since our last issue, with the decision by the Archbishops' Council of the Church of England taking the decision to terminate the contracts of Steve Reeves MBE and Jaswinder Sanghera CBE, the two independent experts on safeguarding issues who were appointed as members of the Independent Safeguarding Board (ISB) and close it down, or 'reset' it.

Reeves and Sanghera, who are both widely acknowledged specialists in the safeguarding field, had been complaining for months about their work being obstructed by the Church of England, and had lodged multiple formal complaints with the C of E management.

The announcement of their sacking was made in a press announcement by the Church which was only notified to them an hour before it became public.

Victims of Church of England abuse, including several people who have made public the details of how they were sexually assaulted by members of clergy have reacted with shock and outrage to the news of their removal.

At least 50 victims of abuse who had been working with Reeves and Sanghera have notified the Church of England that they will not consent to their personal data being shared with anyone other than these two people.

Richard Scorer, a lawyer who specialises in representing victims of Church abuse commented "What a disgraceful, dishonest charade. Nothing about the CofE can be trusted"

The General Synod of the Church will meet in York on 7th to 11th July and it is expected that there will be many criticisms from elected Synod Members there.



Photo: Brett Murphy

In Parliament, MP Sir Ben Bradshaw has called for a statement from the Church of England's representative Mr Andrew Selous for MP's and Members of the House of Lords.

This is an ongoing story, so we will update our readers further next month.



The Reformation could have started slightly sooner if only Martin Luther had been a bit handier with a hammer.



A Day Of Icons

At the end of May, Janet Varty spent a day at the Retreat Centre at Columba-le-Roc run by Ian and Joanne Evans-Boiten....

A group of 12 of us gathered in the Chapel with a meditation led by Rev'd Joanne aimed at tuning us in and preparing us for our encounter with Icons. Icons are the windows to God. We moved into the beautiful gardens and had a time of silent reflection.

Then Bridget gave a lecture on the origin and purpose of Icon's and we shared our ideas.

A religious icon is a sacred image or representation of a religious figure, such as Christ, the Virgin Mary, or various saints, that hold significant religious and spiritual meaning within a specific faith.

These icons serve as aids to worship and are often used in religious ceremonies, personal prayer, and meditation.

Religious icons can be traced back to the Byzantine Empire, which spanned from the fourth to the fifteenth century AD.

As Christianity spread throughout the empire, religious icons emerged as a distinct form of art, deeply embedded in the cultural and spiritual fabric of Byzantine society.

These early icons were characterised by their distinctive style, heavily influenced by both Greco-Roman and Oriental artistic traditions.



The style developed by Byzantine craftsmen used gold leaf and egg tempera (a mixture of egg yolk and different coloured pigments) to produce glowing figures which were supposed to give off a divine light.

There are strict rules about what may be represented on an icon which vary depending on which Orthodox Church one belongs to. For example Christ may not be represented as a Lamb, nor God as a human being.

It is also strictly forbidden to hang icons in inappropriate locations, such as in a night club or casino.

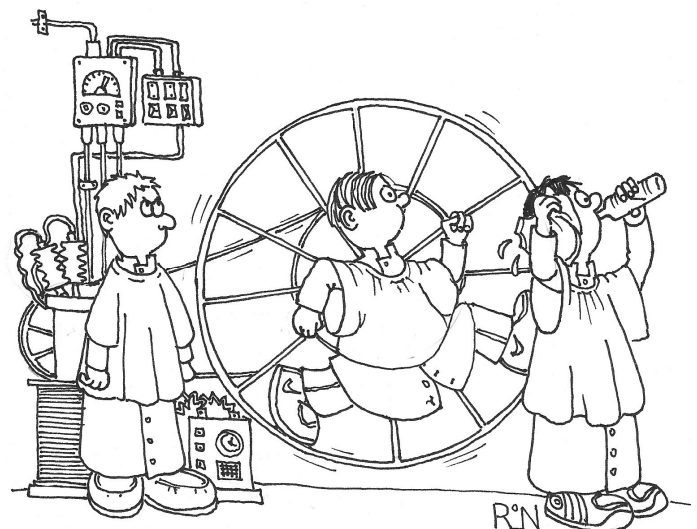
In the afternoon Mairi led an atelier, demonstrating the making of tempera coloured paints and giving us our own icon to complete.

At the end of the day we said a prayer of blessing over what we had produced in humility.

The day was a real treat for us all.

Ian and Joanne Evans-Boiten welcome international and ecumenical guests to their retreat centre at

www.columba-le-roc.org



Rev Jones had a Plan B for the days when it was too cloudy for the solar panels to generate enough electricity to power the church organ.



3rd July is the Feast Day of St. Thomas the Apostle

Thomas, one of Jesus' 12 apostles, was an impulsive, confused, honest sceptic. Jesus could understand and work with such a man. Thomas' impulsiveness was evident when Jesus prepared to visit Lazarus in Bethany.

It was a dangerous trip to make, because of the Jews, but Thomas urged his fellow disciples: "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." (John 11:16) Instead, Jesus brought Lazarus back to life.

Thomas' confusion is shown in later talks with Jesus. He was not really sure where Jesus was going long-term (John 14:5). But Jesus accepted this confused commitment, and began to untangle it, patiently explaining: "I am going to my Father", and "No one comes unto the Father but by me."

Finally, Thomas' honest scepticism is revealed after the Resurrection, which he flatly refused to believe - unless he could touch the wounds of the risen Jesus. Sure enough, Jesus appears - but instead of scolding him, shows him the wounds. Thomas responds: "My Lord and my God" (John 20.26ff).

Thus, Doubting Thomas' honest doubts, turned to honest faith, have become a reassurance for thousands of men and women across the centuries who also want to follow Jesus, but who require some proof of this amazing event - the Resurrection. In Doubting Thomas' complete affirmation of faith, after meeting the risen, crucified Christ, they can find support for their own faith.

Ancient legends tell how Thomas went on to India as a missionary and founded Christianity there.

The apostles came together in Jerusalem and divided the areas of the known world among themselves. Each apostle would travel to the land where the Lord had requested he go. Thus it was that Saint Thomas was assigned to India. However, he was initially unwilling to go to India.

"How can I, who am a Hebrew, travel there and, preach the Gospel to the Indians?" he wondered.

While he was considering this, Jesus appeared to him in the night and said to him: "Fear not, Thomas, go to India, and preach the Word there, for my Spirit is with you."

To this, he responded, "Send me somewhere else, wherever thou wilt, for I will not go to India."

Then, in his dream, Abbanes (also referred to as Habban), a merchant, arrived. He had received instructions from King Gondophares (also called Gundafor) to buy a carpenter and bring him to India. Jesus saw him around noon in the market and asked, "Dost thou wish to buy a carpenter? I have a slave who is a carpenter, and I wish to sell him."

He pointed to Thomas in the distance, and Abbanes agreed to purchase him for three pounds of silver. Thus, the Saviour wrote a bill of sale, which read as follows: "I, Jesus, son of Joseph the carpenter, confirm that I have sold my slave, named Judas, to you, Habban, merchant of Gundafor, king of the Indians."

When the bill of sale was ready, the Saviour took Judas (also referred to as Thomas) and led him to Abbanes. When the merchant saw him, he inquired of Thomas, "Is this man your Master?"

The apostle answered that this was indeed the case, and Abbanes informed him that he had just bought him. So ended the dream. The following morning, during his prayers, Thomas decided that he would go to India as had been requested of him, as he understood it was Jesus' plan for him.

As per the book Acts of Thomas, written in Edessa sometime in the 2nd to 4th centuries AD, on his first mission, St. Thomas the Apostle reached the capital of the Indo-Parthian king, Gondophares. Gondophares ruled Afghanistan and Punjab—with Taxila as the capital—along with the trader Abbanes. On his second mission, he travelled to a kingdom in southern India ruled by a first-century dynasty.

According to tradition, St. Thomas evangelized this area and then crossed over to the Coromandel Coast of southeastern India. He was martyred while carrying out his mission at Mylapore near Madras. Mylapore is now a neighborhood in the central part of the city of Chennai, India. There, the Gothic-style Santhome Cathedral has been built over the resting place of Saint Thomas.

In 1935, the Taxila Cross was found in a field by a farmer while he was ploughing. This was taken as evidence of Thomas' spreading Christianity to this part of the world shortly after Jesus' resurrection. The Cross was subsequently presented to the Anglican Bishop of Lahore and is now kept at the Cathedral Church of Resurrection in Lahore.

It is believed that Thomas was martyred by a spear on 3rd July, 72AD in Mylapore.





AUDRAMA hold their launch party with Tom Stoppard's "The Real Inspector Hound" Clive Billenness was in the audience...

This article contains no spoilers

A new theatre group, Audrama, burst onto the stage in Pomas, near Limoux, with their performance of Tom Stoppard's one-act play *The Real Inspector Hound*.



With a plot with more twists than a good corkscrew, Stoppard's play transports us to a remote country house, isolated by surrounding marshes and swamps, and with a maniac on the loose.....

Except we aren't. We are in a theatre with two drama critics, Moon and Birdboot, **watching** a play about a murder mystery in a country house being performed badly (a huge acting challenge to which the Audrama cast rose magnificently).

The boundaries between the play and the play-within-a-play become more and more blurred as crises shift from critics' box to stage.



And isn't that a body lying unnoticed under the sofa on-stage ?

Shots ring out from off-stage, victims fall. Are they acting at being dead or are they actually dead ?

The cast move effortlessly from being characters in the play to being actors watching the play unfold around them.

And then, there is of course the other mystery ? Who is the **REAL** Inspector Hound ?

I won't answer any of these questions for you, dear readers, because I sincerely hope that Audrama will be tempted to either repeat their performance or possibly to take it on tour, and then you can try to unravel the plot for yourselves - and good luck!

Stoppard wrote this play in 1968 as a parody of Agatha Christie's murder mysteries.



In a village hall in Occitanie, Audrama's cast reproduced it excellently.

The stage setting and the props gave us a good sense of being back in a 1930's country house, and Chris Barcock put the cream on the cake by giving us a wonderful comedic interpretation of Mrs Drudge, the housekeeper, in a style which outdid Julie Walters' famous "Mrs Overall" character.



This play was, however, the main course of a two-course meal. Before this began, we were treated to a performance of "Dancers" one play in a series of 5 short pieces written by Jean McConnell under the overall title "Deckchairs", featuring a dialogue between two skittish widows who are also enthusiastic tea dancers.

In a short and sharp dialogue very reminiscent of playwright Alan Bennett's soliloquies, company members Nora Green and Marjorie McConnell demonstrated great comedic timing and prepared us nicely for the main play.



We are informed that Audrama will be returning with a new play in time for Christmas, and we will make sure that ECHO readers are informed about dates and venue in good time to let them reserve places when the box office opens.





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

We met this month for a Ceilidh Communion - a liturgy from the Iona Community. Based on the Gaelic tradition of ceilidhs, which were informal gatherings in people's homes. It is an opportunity to share music and stories and food and drink. We did it all, bar the dancing!

The sharing of food in this service is similar to an *Agape*, a reminder of the ministry of the whole people of God. Gathered around a table, we did as Jesus did, and asked his disciples to do throughout the ages. We shared bread and wine but alongside token tastes of local produce, this time cherries and walnuts. We believe we were all invited to share this meal, without the necessity for the presence of clergy.

"As we share and hold these simple things, we thank God for all that gives life meaning, for our daily bread, for food that nourishes us, for companionship and laughter that sustains us. And we share silence too."

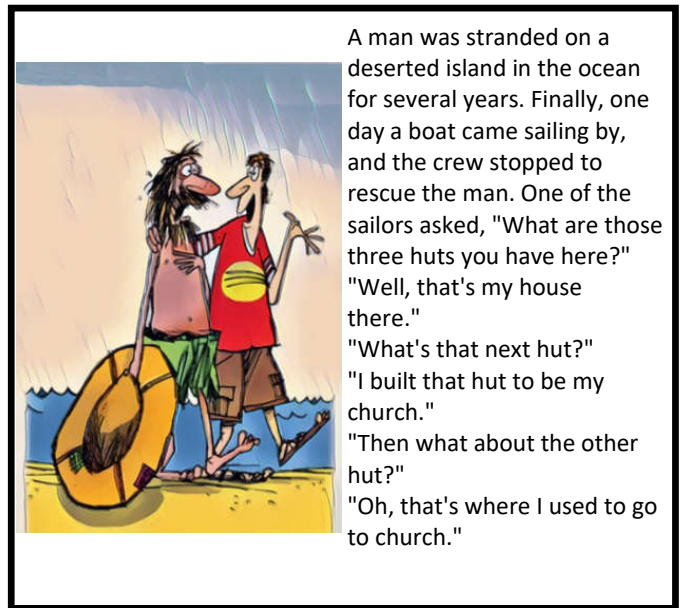
The format allows for someone to offer a story from the week, then we read a story from the Bible and also the story St Paul tells about the Last Supper. We are all free to engage with this as our faith allows, remembering as a group we represent a wide range of denominations.

Our group seeks what unites us not what divides us.

It is also possible for those who may still struggle with God to engage with the simple act of pouring water, which remains on the table as a symbol.

"As we pour out clean, cool water - which is present on the table at every meal we share, and is carried on pilgrimage to quench our thirst - we remember the Living Water with which God surprises us and enriches and transforms our lives."

We left blessed, ready to face the onward challenges and looking forward to next month when we meet again on Thursday 20th July.



A man was stranded on a deserted island in the ocean for several years. Finally, one day a boat came sailing by, and the crew stopped to rescue the man. One of the sailors asked, "What are those three huts you have here?" "Well, that's my house there." "What's that next hut?" "I built that hut to be my church." "Then what about the other hut?" "Oh, that's where I used to go to church."



"It's not a new stained-glass window – the Youth Club put its skateboard ramp too close to the church's west wall!"



Nessie - Monster or Myth ?

It was 20 years ago this month, on 27th July 2003 that a team from the BBC officially announced that the Loch Ness monster “did not exist”. They had swept every inch of the loch with 600 sonar beams guided by satellite navigation and had found no sign of the monster.

The whole operation was featured in a BBC 1 documentary “Searching for the Loch Ness Monster”

Earlier reported sightings of the monster had led to speculation that it might be a plesiosaur – a marine reptile from the age of the dinosaurs. The BBC team had hoped that air in the monster’s lungs might be detected by their instruments, but these remained stubbornly blank.

The earliest report of a strange water monster in the area involved the Celtic monk St Columba in the sixth century AD. He was said to have banished a monster from the River Ness into the loch. But there are many more recent sightings: in 1933 the local paper reported that a water bailiff had seen it, and it was not long before photographs were published – the first taken by Hugh Gray that year and the second by surgeon Robert Wilson in 1934.

But the BBC report did not kill off interest. Nessie continues to be sighted, and the Loch Ness Centre in Drumnadrochit, near the shores of the loch, has just reopened following a major transformation. This is said to mark the 90th anniversary of the “first sighting”.

Presumably St Columba didn’t count.....



BIBLE HOWLERS

For a church school exam, young children were asked questions about the Old and New Testaments. These were some of the (real) results...

1. In the first book of the Bible, Guinness, God got tired of creating the world, so He took the Sabbath off.
2. Adam and Eve were created from an apple tree. Noah’s wife was called Joan of Ark. Noah built an ark and the animals came on in pears.
3. Lot’s wife was a pillar of salt during the day, but a ball of fire during the night.
4. The Jews were a proud people and throughout history they had trouble with unsympathetic Genitals.
5. Sampson was a strong man who let himself be led astray by a Jezebel like Delilah.
6. Samson slayed the Philistines with the axe of the Apostles.
7. Moses led the Jews to the Red Sea where they made unleavened bread which is bread without any ingredients.
8. The Egyptians were all drowned in the dessert. Afterwards, Moses went up to Mount Cyanide to get the ten amendments.
9. The first commandment was when Eve told Adam to eat the apple.
10. The seventh Commandment is thou shalt not admit adultery.
11. Moses died before he ever reached Canada. Then Joshua led the Hebrews in the battle of Geritol.
12. The greatest miracle in the Bible is when Joshua told his son to stand still, and he obeyed him.

Church Mice

Karl Zorowski





15th July - St Swithun's Day

St Swithun is apparently the saint you can blame for rainy summers. It is said that if it rains on his special day, 15th July, it will then rain for 40 days after that.

It all began when Swithun was made Bishop of Winchester in 852 by King Ethelwulf of Wessex. It was an important posting: Winchester was the capital of Wessex, and during the 10 years Swithun was there, Wessex became the most important kingdom of England.

During his life, instead of washing out people's summer holidays and damping down their spirits, Swithun seems to have done a lot of good. He was famous for his charitable gifts and for his energy in getting churches built. When he was dying in 862, he asked that he be buried in the cemetery of the Old Minster, just outside the west door.

If he had been left there in peace, who knows how many rainy summers the English may have been spared over the last 1000 years. But, no, it was decided to move Swithun. By now, the 960s, Winchester had become the first monastic cathedral chapter in England, and the newly installed monks wanted Swithun in the cathedral with them. So finally, on 15 July 971, his bones were dug up and Swithun was translated into the cathedral.

That same day many people claimed to have had miraculous cures. Certainly everyone got wet, for the heavens opened. The unusually heavy rain that day, and on the days following, was attributed to the power of St Swithun. Swithun was moved again in 1093, into the new Winchester cathedral. His shrine was a popular place of pilgrimage throughout the Middle Ages. The shrine was destroyed during the Reformation and restored in 1962. There are 58 ancient dedications to Swithun in England.

DEADLINE TO REGISTER YOUR FRENCH PROPERTY EXTENDED

The deadline for owners of properties in France has been extended by one month from 30 June to 31 July. As at 23 June, according to Jérôme Fournel, the head of the DGFIP, only 50% of property owners have made their mandatory declarations. Meanwhile, thousands of enquiries from worried homeowners are awaiting answers from hard-pressed tax officials who are said to be buckling under the pressure.

In Marseille alone there are reported to be 20,000 messages awaiting a reply.

It is possible to register a property either by logging into the website impots.gouv.fr or by telephoning 08.09.40.14.01 although this number can only be called from inside France (or by using an online telephone account - e.g. Skype - which is not subject to geographical restrictions). Also, the line only operates in French.

Previously, there were warnings about fines of €150 for non-compliance with the registration deadline, but these have now been softened, with promises of leniency for late submissions.

The Civil Service Union in France has strongly criticised the French Government for adopting a digital-only approach to registration.



In the meantime, the French tax authorities are planning to extend the use of the software which has already identified 120,000 undeclared swimming pools to locate both undeclared garden sheds and also verandas. It should be noted that small sheds with an area of less than 5m² are automatically exempt from tax, and sheds up to 20m² are only taxable if the local authority decides to make them so.

In addition, there is likely to be an increase in tax d'habitation for owners of second homes in parts of France from 2024. The areas affected are those where there is said to be pressure on housing stock. There is at present no easily accessible definitive list of where these surcharges will apply but ECHO will continue to monitor this and will publish details of areas affected within the Occitanie region when this becomes available.

ECO WORSHIP CALENDAR JULY 2023

SUNDAY		MONDAY		TUESDAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY	
2	10:30	3		4	19:00	5		6		7		8	
Online Communion for Trinity 4				Online Service of Compline				No Service					
9	10:30	10		11		12		13		14		15	
Special Service for Sea Sunday				No Service				No Service					
16	10:30	17		18	19:00	19		20	19:00	21		22	
Online Communion for Trinity 6				Online Service of Compline				Online Service of Prayer for Healing <i>also</i> Meeting of the Lot Valley House Group					
23	10:30	24		25	19:00	26		27		28		29	
Online Morning Prayer for Trinity 7				Online Service of Compline				15:00 In-Person Communion Service Alet les Bains 19:00 Online Service of Prayer for Healing					
30	10:30	31											
Online Communion for Trinity 8													

With thanks to Dave Walker...
As the summer arrives we prepare to welcome visitors to our churches

HOLIDAYMAKERS

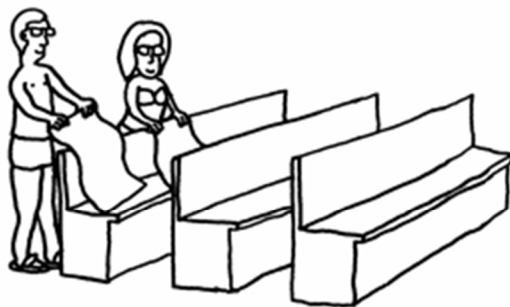
HOW TO SPOT THEM IN CHURCH



THEY ARE DRESSED
RATHER INFORMALLY



THEY ARE NOT AWARE OF
THE WAY WE DO THINGS



THEY ARRIVE EARLY IN THE
MORNING TO RESERVE A BACK
PEW USING THEIR TOWELS



WHEN ASKED, THEY SAY THAT
THEY ARE HOLIDAYMAKERS

CartoonChurch.com

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