



ECHO

ECHO

APRIL 2024 EDITION



THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
ECUMENICAL CHURCH OF OCCITANIE

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EASTER WITH ECO

This year ECO celebrated Easter by recording a live service with our Lot House Group in Puy L'Eveque which we then broadcast on Easter morning.

Regular members and visitors alike gathered to celebrate the Resurrection as we shared communion, seated around a large table in a way very reminiscent of the Last Supper.



We lit a Paschal Candle (which will be used by the Lot House Group during the coming year, and remembered the events surrounding the Resurrection in a series of reflections inspired by the Iona publication "Resurrection Appearances".

We were delighted to welcome Lisa Ross who led in the singing of the Taizé Easter chant "Surrexit Christus"



We were also very grateful to Claire Honegger who played the keyboard for us, as well as, of course, Nils Ankarkrona for welcoming us all to his home.



You can read more about our Easter gathering on page 6 of this edition of **ECHO**.



I'M ONE OF THE NEW EMERGENCY GUARDIAN ANGELS FOR WHEN SOMEONE NEEDS US IN A BIG HURRY

Leviticus and Numbers

What's The Big Idea ? - Leviticus and Numbers

Over the next 2 years, Canon Paul Hardingham, Vicar of St Peter's, Bolton and a regular contributor to ECHO, is writing a series of monthly articles about the books of the Bible, this month looking at Leviticus and Numbers.

These books are concerned with Israel's wandering in the desert, on their journey from slavery in Egypt to the promised land of Canaan.

Leviticus focuses on the regulations about worship, ceremonial cleanness, moral laws and holy days. The key theme is that of holiness, as every detail of our lives is affected by the presence of a holy God. The aim of the sacrifices, feast and Sabbaths was to enable the people to enter God's presence. We should see the instructions and practices in Leviticus as pointing to Jesus. He totally fulfilled the law through the sacrifice of His life, as Easter reminds us. He demonstrated the love and holiness of God, so that we can share His life: 'Be holy, because I am holy' (1 Peter 1:16, cf Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7).

The book of Numbers tells the story of Israel's journey through the wilderness. The people were coming to terms with their identity as God's people and the call to serve Him. They didn't always respond with faith, gratitude and obedience, but with unbelief, ingratitude and rebellion. As a result of their refusal to enter Canaan (ch 14), they were condemned to spend the rest of their lives in the desert. However, God in His grace allowed their children to enter the Promised Land. The book reminds us that the Church is called to be a community that honours God, learns how to deal with sin in ourselves and others, and lives out love and justice in daily life.

'The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.' (Numbers 6:24-26).



After the local mission outreach week had concluded, the three ministers were discussing the results with one another. The Methodist minister said, "The mission worked out great for us! We gained four new families."

The Baptist preacher said, "We did better than that! We gained six new families."

The Anglican priest said, "Well, we did even better than that! We got rid of our 10 biggest troublemakers!"

French Roman Catholic Church Reports Large Increase In Baptisms

The Roman Catholic Conference of French Bishops have reported a large annual increase in both adult and infant baptisms in the period running up to Easter.

In 2024, 7,135 adults were baptised (an increase of 31% over 2023) as well as 5,025 infants (an increase of 50%).

A Press Officer for the Bishops' Conference, Catherine Chevalier, said that this increase was not due to a rebound after Covid-19 but a fundamental increase in expressions of faith.

Mme Chevalier noted that 36% of the baptismal candidates were in the 18-25 age group, while the number of children being baptised had increased by 50% in one year.

"This," she commented "represents a true spiritual thirst among young people. They approach questions of faith in a more uninhibited way. They have a need for brotherhood, to build relationships. They are being called to faith despite living in a Society where 80% of young people have not received any form of religious education."

"A significant number of this year's candidates come from households who describe themselves as having 'no religion'.

The challenge remains, however, how to provide ongoing spiritual support to the approximately 29% of newly baptised members of the Church who live in rural areas, who can find themselves isolated in their first years in the Christian community.

Catholic churches are embarking on a number of initiatives to provide support. These range from worship groups and fellowship meetings to monthly "apéro evenings".



I DECIDED TO COME PREPARED AFTER THE VICAR'S SERMON LASTED FOR OVER AN HOUR LAST WEEK.

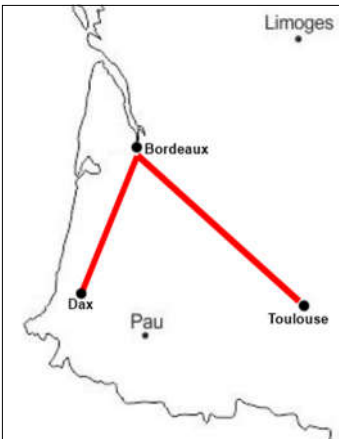
THE TGV COMES TO OCCITANIE: NEW LINES FROM BORDEAUX TO TOULOUSE & DAX



An opinion poll performed in both the French and Spanish side of the Pyrenees has identified overwhelming public support for two new TGV lines to be constructed - from Bordeaux to Toulouse and to Dax (a route which would serve Biarritz)

8 out of 10 French people and 9 out of 10 Spaniards supported the construction of these two lines.

The lines were considered to be environmentally friendly, by reducing the need for car journeys, while building stronger economic and social connections, not only across France but also between France and Spain, with the potential to greatly increase tourism.



It is estimated that, once completed, the two lines will attract an extra 5 million passengers per year.

Opposition still remains however on the basis of how the budget of €14 billion for the two proposed lines will be funded, since after contributions from the EU and the French Government, 40% will have to be raised by local communities.

This will involve a special tax levied on the 2,340 communities which lie less than 60 minutes' drive from one of the stations on the new lines.

The Bordeaux to Toulouse line will have two new stations at Agen and Montauban along its 220 kilometres length, while the Bordeaux to Dax line will have a new station at Mont de Marsan along its 90 kilometres.

Arguments are raging as to why local communities should meet the cost of what is regarded as a national infrastructure project. The mayors of Bordeaux, Bayonne and Irun are united in demanding an upgrade to the coastal line which links their communities.

The Occitanie is currently the only region in France not served by the TGV network. It would be possible to complete work on the two lines by 2032, and would create 100,000 new jobs during construction.

Christophe Huau, the regional director of SNCF, commented that this will be one of the largest engineering projects in France for the next 8 years.

Work has already begun on upgrading 19km of line between Saint-Jory and Toulouse.

THE END OF WINDSCREEN INSURANCE CERTIFICATES



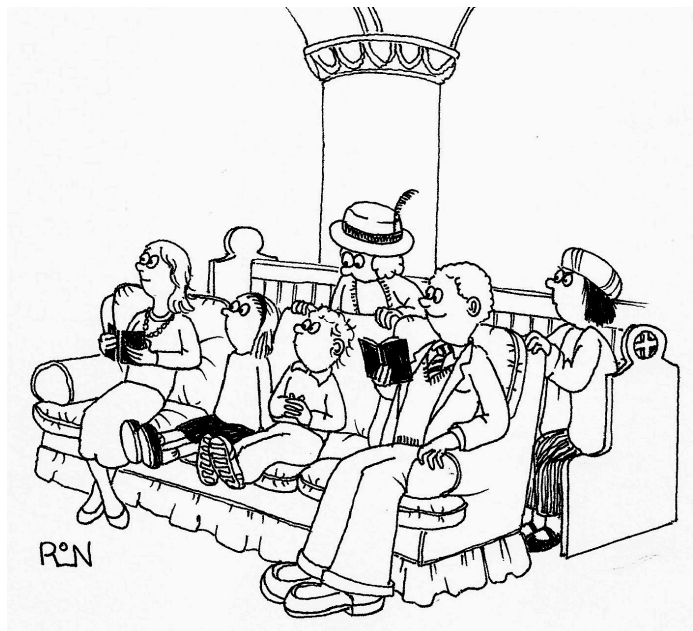
With effect from 1 April, it no longer necessary to display a motor insurance certificate on the windscreen of your car.

The certificates, known as Fichiers des Véhicules Assurés (FVA) have now been replaced by an online database which is accessible by police officers and other authorities.

A complication exists, however, because the European accident reporting form (the constat amiable) requires the insurance certificate number and also its date of validity. It is being reported that the constats can be submitted with these fields left blank because the details can be obtained by insurers from the online database.

A new Constat may be issued later in the year.

When you take out a new insurance policy, the insurers will issue a credit-card sized Mémorandum Véhicule Assuré which provides proof of insurance while the online database is updated. It is being recommended that this is kept in the car because it also contains other information, for example how to call breakdown services.



Under St Mary's new "Frequent Worshipper" Scheme, members could use points to be upgraded to the First Class Pews on Sundays. This included being allowed to use the Priority Queue for coffee after the service.

Reflecting Faith: Easter Sepulchres

Revd Dr Jo White considers a very ancient feature found in some churches.



Over the last few months we've been looking at churchyards, grave memorials and the lychgate where the coffin may be rested on its entry.

This month we are going inside the church building to find a somewhat different and only really found in older churches that have survived re-ordering and renovations: the Easter Sepulchre.

A sepulchre is essentially a place of burial – a tomb – but in churches it can also be a receptacle for religious relics.

Easter Sepulchres can be very grand affairs. I'm aware that many writers say that they are constructed in wood, but I have only seen stone ones. They can be plain or intricately carved. They can be low to the ground or reaching up to the roof. Each style, of course, reflects both the richness and generosity of the patron, as well as their theology.

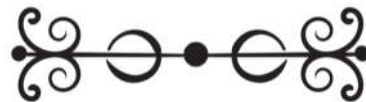
Some have 'layers' of carvings, with the angels at the top, then the patriarchs, followed by the Fathers of the Church and so on. Others are very simple and almost plain.

They are normally set into or against the northern side of the sanctuary in which stands the altar, and which is traditionally considered to be the 'holiest' place in a church building.

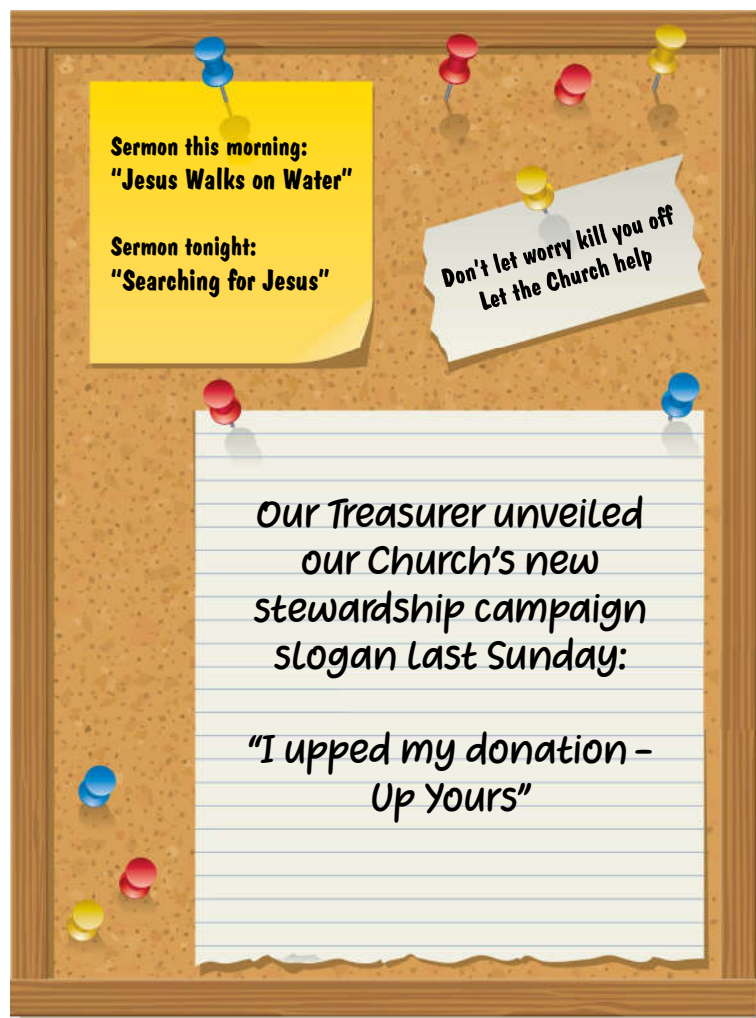
Their use is given in their name – on Good Friday some consecrated bread and wine and often a crucifix (rather than an 'empty' cross) is placed inside it and people take it in turns to 'stand watch' until Easter Sunday morning, when it is taken out with great ceremony and often paraded through the building. The reason is to reflect the death of Christ, His being placed in a tomb and His subsequent resurrection.

Today's ceremonies are usually less ostentatious, and whilst folk often take turns keeping watch on the Maundy Thursday, reflecting the disciples being asked to stay awake whilst Jesus went and prayed alone in the Garden of Gethsemane, less is made of the Sepulchre watch.

The items are simply removed before any Easter resurrection service takes place, either on Easter Saturday evening or early Easter Sunday morning.



The following appeared in church bulletins or were announced at church services



Church Mice

Karl Zorowski





Rediscovering My Catholicism - Part 2

Peter Newsham

Our friend Peter Newsham has kindly shared with us his journey back to Catholicism.

In Part 1 last month, we followed Peter's story until the evening of 10th August 1977 when he found himself in Malta. Now read on...

I didn't have to fall off a horse on the road to Damascus – it all happened in Birgu, near the docks on the feast of St. Lawrence at the eponymously named church, and it was here that I witnessed something that rocked my emotional and spiritual awareness. As the great float, with its precious burden, the Saint's enormous, garish statue, was beginning to navigate the difficult passage through the low portico of the church at the beginning of its procession out into the town, there was an agonising cry.

It pierced the noise of the celebration and stilled the boisterous, yet respectful and expectant crowds, and it rose above the chanting of the Rosary by a huge phalanx of ancient black-veiled women. The shuffling feet under the skirts of the heavy platform ceased their shuffling and Saint Lawrence, from his superior perch rocked gently to a halt, seeming to look down on a young man, perhaps nineteen, who had prostrated himself in his path.

Kneeling, with tears coursing down his cheeks on the dusty stones in front of the Saint's float, the young man, dressed for basketball and wearing a prominent St Lawrence scapula around his muscly neck, raised his two joined hands above his head in a devotion alien to Europe's North, and cried, 'Most Holy Saint Lawrence, you, who gave succour to all who asked you, I beg you to save our baby son from the Evil One – Santo Lorenzo, for the love of God, bring back our baby boy to us.'

Then, stretching himself full-length on the stones in front of the Saint's effigy, he craned his neck to gaze upwards into the seemingly unmoved eyes of the plaster face and said in a firm but quiet voice of supplication, 'Santo Lorenzo, Ti amo – give me a sign.' The silence hung heavily for what seemed an age, and then, with a suddenness which shocked, the boy's face, until then scarred with ravines of pain and misery, metamorphosed into a glowing mask of beatific happiness. He got up; he had had his answer. He blew a kiss to the Saint and ran off.

It is a story which invites mockery, perhaps scoffery - or worse, indifference, amongst the many of the Christian cognoscenti, yet that unschooled young man's faith, perhaps because he was a human being who didn't approach God through a filter of doctrine or scripture or

intellectual or theological argument, moved me more than I can say. How I long for a faith like his.

When I was young I might easily have dismissed what had happened on that Maltese night as overblown emotion. Now I marvel at it. Now, when I re-read Lawrence Durrell's vignette about the Sicilian peasants who took the statue of their village's patron saint out of the church on his feast-day, laid it face-down on the earth of a nearby field of failed crops and lashed the statue as if it had been the Saint himself who had failed in his duty to protect his flock from hunger, I think I have a lot to understand.

And when I remember the transformative power of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, the belief of those who are drawn to Fatima or Lourdes and the extraordinary events that those Portuguese children reported in 1917 and Bernadette Soubirous spoke of in 1858, I am assailed by doubt - yet mightily encouraged.

Here, in Castelfranc, some of the old people tell the story of Saint Roch, who turned back the plague and saved the village, and of the gabarriers who navigated the Lot taking cargoes of wine to Bordeaux, but who paused at churches en route to place their ex-votos on the altars as a token of their unshakeable faith in the power of God to protect them – just look at Notre Dame de l'Isle, near Luzech; it's full of these touching testaments to belief. All of these make me aware that I have left the icy realms of Calvin and of Knox where such things have no purchase, and have washed up on Mediterranean shores, so close to us in Southern France.

It isn't that I've come to renounce the Faith of my upbringing; rather that in my more mature years I've embraced a broader, more humane 'Southern' form of Catholicism which celebrates forgiveness more than reproof, the mysticism of the beauty of great Art and the transformative power of Music, the ancient human and spiritual traditions of a Church which takes its beginnings from my own patron saint, the innate goodness of humanity, even though at times like the present it may be hard to accept that, the mystery of things that cannot be understood by the human mind - the possibility of miracles.

All this puts me firmly in the category of those who look to human experience for inspiration, who are accused of nostalgia as if it were a criminal offence and of dismissing the future as if it were automatically more promising or more certain than what had gone before. Where else should we look for inspiration? The future doesn't exist because it hasn't arrived yet; the present is only here for an instant before it becomes the past. Time past is the great repository of human knowledge – there is no other.

The question is; shall we dismiss all of that because it does not fit the template of 'modern' life? I know my answer because in my age I've found my spiritual home.

Lot House Group - APRIL 2024

lot.group@ourchurch.fr

Janet Varty

Our April meeting was a combination of worship in our spontaneous film studio in our good friend Nils' home, and a joyful birthday celebration.

Firstly, we celebrated Easter in song, prayers and readings, sharing Communion sitting around a table which made us think about the first celebration of Communion in an upper room 2,000 years ago.



And then after the service, a group of us adjourned to a local restaurant to celebrate Linda Billenness' 70th Birthday. Champagne corks popped and Linda was served a birthday dessert adorned with candles.



Our Group will next meet on Thursday 25th April.
For more details please contact Janet Varty.



Half A Century Of ABBA

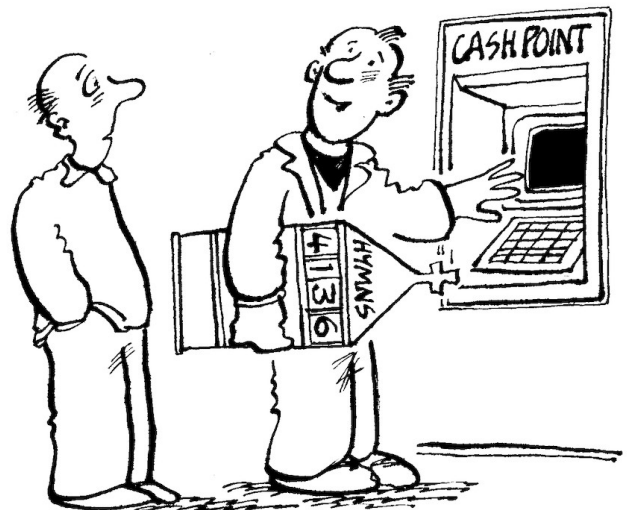
Incredibly it is 50 years since 6th April 1974 when a young group called ABBA won the Eurovision Song Contest, giving Sweden their first ever victory with their song *Waterloo*.

The name ABBA comes from the singers' first initials, but they also had to get permission from the Abba Swedish canned fish company - who have enjoyed the name connection ever since.

The singers have stayed in showbiz ever since, with the *Mamma Mia* films. The musical is estimated to have been seen by more than 60 million people across the world.

ABBA hit the jackpot again when their revolutionary new project, *ABBA Voyage*, launched in 2022. In it, Agnetha, Björn, Benny and Anni-Frid perform their love-songs digitally with a live 10-piece band, in a purpose-built ABBA arena at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in London.

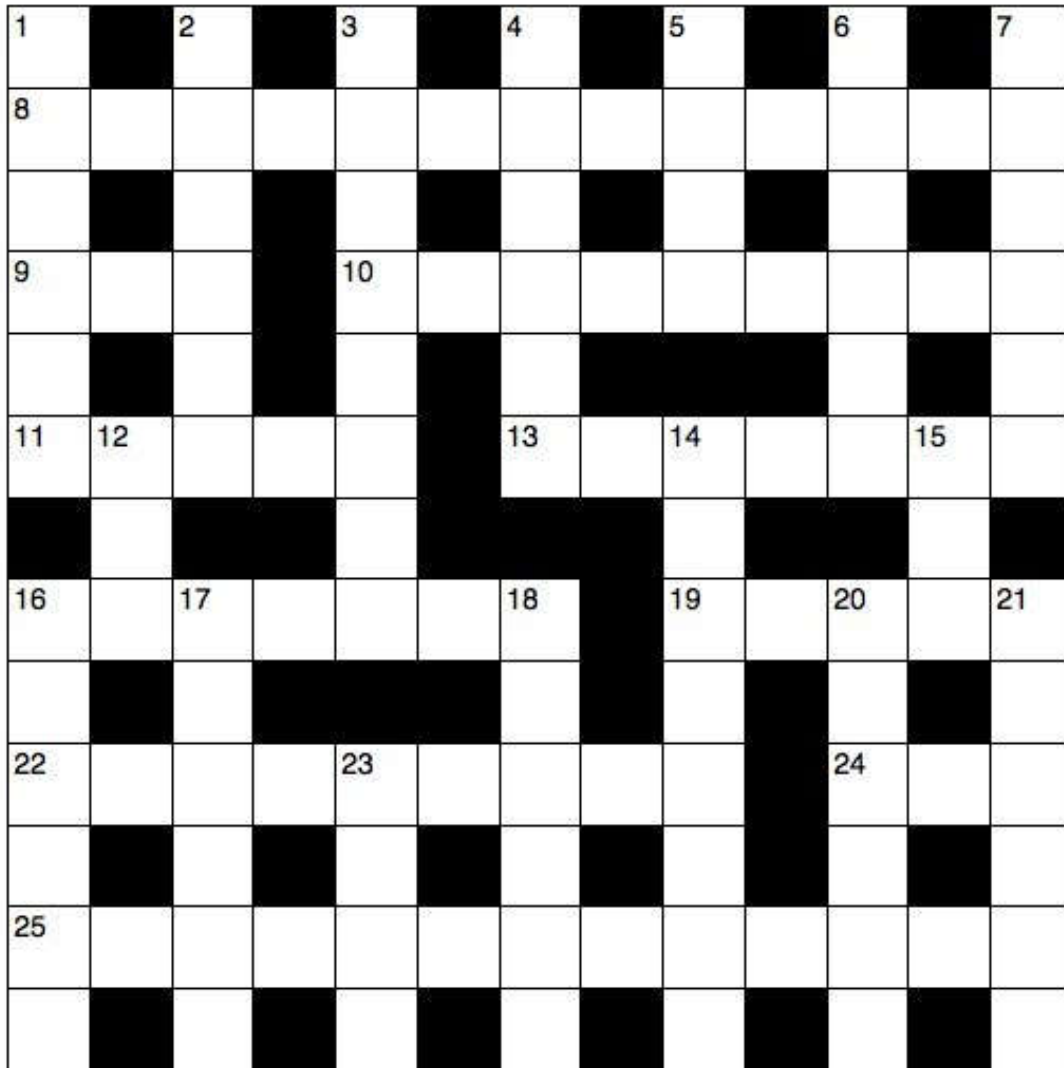
Now in their 70's, they remain superstars.



...between you and me, it's the
only way I can remember my PIN number!

The ECHO Church and Bible Crossword

Can you solve this crossword ? Answers are at the bottom if you get stuck
with thanks to our crossword compiler John Capon



Across

- 8 'He poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the — ' (Isaiah 53:12) (13)
 9 'When they had sung a hymn, they went — to the Mount of Olives (Matthew 26:30) (3)
 10 Comes between Galatians and Philipians (9)
 11 'Your heart will — and swell with joy' (Isaiah 60:5) (5)
 13 Muslim holy month (7)
 16 Ten ears (anag.) (7)
 19 Under (poetic abbrev.) (5)
 22 How Abram described himself to God when he complained that his inheritance would pass to a servant (Genesis 15:2) (9)
 24 'Go to the — , you sluggard' (Proverbs 6:6) (3)
 25 Debar from receiving Communion (13)

ACROSS: 8, Transgressors. 9, Out. 10, Ephesians. 11, Throb. 13, Ramadan. 16, Nearest. 19, Neath. 22, Childless. 24, Ant. 25, Excommunicate.
 DOWN: 1, Utmost. 2, Easter. 3, Assemble. 4, Archer. 5, Isis. 6, To hand. 7, As a son. 12, Hoe. 14, Monastic. 15, Apt. 16, Nuclei. 17, A piece. 18, Tied up. 20, Ararat. 21, Hatred. 23, Dome.

Down

- 1 My — for His Highest (Oswald Chambers' best-known book) (6)
 2 Festival of the resurrection (6)
 3 'His sons will prepare for war and — a great army' (Daniel 11:10) (8)
 4 'Let not the — string his bow' (Jeremiah 51:3) (6)
 5 Name of the River Thames in and around Oxford (4)
 6 'From then on Judas watched for an opportunity — — him over' (Matthew 26:16) (2,4)
 7 'But Christ is faithful — — — over God's house' (Hebrews 3:6) (2,1,3)
 12 Long-handled implement used to till the soil (Isaiah 7:25) (3)
 14 Order to which monks and nuns devote themselves (8)
 15 Appropriate (Proverbs 15:23) (3)
 16 I, uncle (anag.) (6)
 17 'They gave him — — of broiled fish' (Luke 24:42) (1,5)
 18 'Weren't there three men that we — — and threw into the fire?' (Daniel 3:24) (4,2)
 20 Mountain where Noah's ark came to rest (Genesis 8:4) (6)

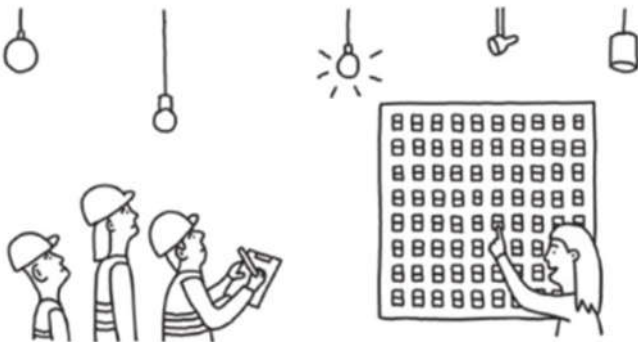
ECO WORSHIP CALENDAR APRIL 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3	4	5	6
NO BROADCAST WORSHIP DURING THIS PERIOD						
7 10:30 Online Morning Prayer for Easter 2	8 20:00 Live Evening Worship on Zoom	9	10	11	12	13
NO BROADCAST WORSHIP DURING THIS PERIOD						
14 10:30 Online Communion for Easter 3	15 20:00 Live Evening Worship on Zoom	16 20:00 Online Service of Compline	17	18 20:00 Online Service of Prayer for Healing	19	20
21 10:30 Online Morning Prayer for Easter 4	22 20:00 Live Evening Worship on Zoom	23 20:00 Online Service of Compline	24	25 20:00 Online Service of Prayer for Healing	26	27
28 10:30 Online Communion for Easter 5	29 20:00 Live Evening Worship on Zoom	30 20:00 Online Service of Compline				

As Church AGM's approach, this is Dave Walker's guide to

TRAINING

ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR NEW CHURCHWARDENS



WHICH LIGHT SWITCH DOES WHAT



WHEN TO PUT THE URN ON



THE BASICS OF THE HEATING SYSTEM



ROLE PLAY: HOW TO HOLD A CONVERSATION WITH A VISITOR

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