ECHO

FEBRUARY 2024 EDITION

The Monthly Newsletter of the Ecumenical Church of Occitanie

www.ourchurch.fr

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CELEBRATING THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

Each year, churches take the week which falls between the Feast Days of St Peter and St Paul and dedicate it to prayer for Christian Unity between the many different denominations.

This year, members of ECO took part in ecumenical worship in different parts of the Occitanie as well as broadcasting our own Service for Christian Unity in which ministers from the Catholic and Protestant churches took part.

The theme of this year's Week of Prayer was created by the churches of Burkina Faso and was based on the theme of Luke 10 v.27 "You shall love the Lord your God … and your neighbour as yourself " taken from the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

Burkina Faso has been riven by religious tensions between its Muslim, traditional African and Christian communities, leaving 3,000 people dead and over 2 million inhabitants internally displaced. Christian churches have been targeted while leaders of all faiths are working to achieve peace.

They ask for our prayers to support them as they work together to achieve a lasting peace.

"Thou shalt make backups"

After his slight accident on the way back down the mountain, Moses was too embarrassed to admit that there had been an 11th Commandment

What's The Big Idea ? - Genesis

Over the next 2 years, Canon Paul Hardingham, Vicar of St Peter's, Bolton and a regular contributor to ECHO, is going to write a series of monthly articles about the books of the Bible, starting this month with the first book, Genesis.

As the title suggests, Genesis is primarily about beginnings. In chapters 1-11, it records the creation of the heavens and the earth and human beings; marriage and family; sin's effect on society and the world. The following chapters record God's dealings with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, and their families. In this story of the Patriarchs we see God establishing a people called to bless the world, as He blesses them.

The book of Genesis is key to understanding the whole Bible. It is supremely about relationships; the relationships between God and the created order, God and human beings, and between human beings themselves. Fundamentally man has been created in the image of God, so that he can relate to God in a personal way: *'God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them'* (1:27).

However, Genesis plots how this relationship was broken by sin, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, resulting in the fall of human beings and the created order. By creating people with free will, God risked the possibility that they might reject Him. This is inherent in His love for human beings.

In Genesis, God enters into covenants with the world (the rainbow following the flood) and with Abraham and his descendents (circumcision), pledging His love and faithfulness to them and calling them to respond to Him in faith. It reminds us that God is fundamental to living. Without a sense of the centrality of God's place in our lives, we can never get our lives right.

Life on a spin - Thinking About the Purpose of Lent

Many years ago, at the Pleasure Beach at Blackpool, there was a certain 'ride' or amusement that was strictly for the physically fit. It consisted of a flat wooden disc about 20 feet in diameter and set at an angle of 45 degrees in the floor. When it began to rotate, the aim was to get to the centre where there was a pole. As the disc rotated faster and faster, everyone who failed to get to the pole got flung off.

The principle of the game was a basic law of physics. When any wheel rotates, the outer rim moves fastest of all. Half way to the centre and you are moving a lot more slowly. And, at least theoretically, at the absolute centre will be a point which is totally still. That's why anyone who reached that pole could stand there quite comfortably.

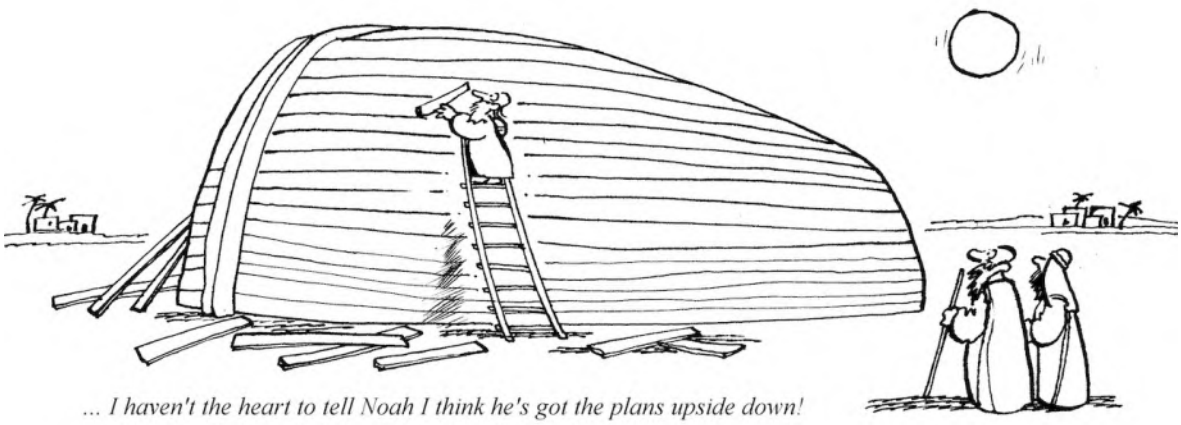
We have just started the Church's season of Lent. It's generally thought of as being a time for giving up chocolate, wine, whatever. But it's really a time to remind us that in our own rapidly spinning world, God is the still centre.

All around God is motion, sound, change and decay – galaxies circling, seasons and years rotating, life developing and decaying. And at the still centre, where there is no variableness, is God, the same yesterday, today and forever.

Only about seven weeks ago Christians worldwide were thinking of God getting involved in a special way in the ever moving and changing life of the world. And one great characteristic of Jesus was His stillness. Busy, harassed, injured people found someone with neither clever chat nor idle gossip, neither vulgar boasting nor loud opinion. His life always seemed to rotate round a still central point, which gave Him balance and authority.

"Be still then and know that I am God" wrote the Psalmist. Lent is a time for us to try and do just that – to find the still centre of God in our own individual lives.

Of course, we're all of us very much in the world, and must live our lives in all of its busyness. But it may do none of us any harm to be a little more silent than we often are – quick to listen and slow to speak. And the more silent spaces we give ourselves, the more we'll give that still, small voice within each one of us the chance to be heard.



... I haven't the heart to tell Noah I think he's got the plans upside down!

NEW VISA RULES FOR BRITISH SECOND HOMEOWNERS ON HOLD - FOR NOW

Senator Berthet, who represents the Savoie Region

Disappointing news for British second-homeowners that the French Constitutional Council has ruled that the amendment to immigration rules included in the recent Loi Immigration allowing them to remain in France for up to 180 days without having to comply with the Schengen 90:90 rule must be removed from the law.

The removal of the provision came as a result of a technicality, and not because of a ruling about the provision itself.

The removal came after a group of left-wing MP's who had opposed the second-home visa complained that its inclusion was contrary to Article 45 of the French Constitution which requires that any amendments must relate to the original purposes of the law as it was published.

This amendment, tabled by Senator Martine Berthet, was held by the Council not to have related to the original purposes of the Law and so could not be attached to it.

Several other amendments were disqualified for the same reason.

The status quo therefore remains that British second-homeowners must continue to apply for a special visa if they wish to stay for longer than 90 days in a period of 180.

The Council stressed, however, that it was not making any ruling against the principle of making such a provision.

Senator Berthet has accused the Council of 'meddling in political matters', but is now determined to re-introduce this amendment as part of any other law where it would qualify, or to join with other members of her Républicain Party to introduce a new Immigration Law in which this amendment would form an integral component.

She has also pledged to approach the Ministry of the Interior to see what might be done to make the existing procedures for second-homeowners less onerous.

ECHO will continue to follow this story as it evolves and will keep you updated.

REGISTRATION FOR UK OVERSEAS VOTERS NOW AVAILABLE - REGISTER NOW !

Following the abolition of the 15-Year Rule, up to 3.5 million Britons living overseas are now eligible to vote in UK elections - the equivalent of the population of 50 constituencies. 21,000 voters have already done so, with 6,000 people registering on the first day.

Overseas voters can also appoint a Proxy to vote on their behalf in the UK, to avoid being disenfranchised by postal delays in receiving or returning ballot papers.

Given that there must be a General Election in the UK during 2024, everyone who is now eligible to do so is urged to register to vote as quickly as possible.

Full details on how to register are shown on the Government website

https://www.gov.uk/voting-when-abroad

A member of the group British in Europe said "There are many constituencies where the votes of overseas voters could swing the election. This will motivate parties and candidates to think about their policies which could affect electors who live abroad."

While the use of Chip and PIN credit card terminals for the collection was generally very successful, unfortunately Mr Jones kept forgetting his PIN, necessitating an extra verse or two in the Offertory Hymn….

February 2nd is

La Chandeleur

Shrove Tuesday, Pancake Day, La Chandeleur.... all over the World, over the next few days people will be flipping pancakes or crepes into the air and (hopefully) catching them again.

Now very much a Christian tradition as we mark the beginning of Lent, the origins of this culinary festival lie back in pagan times.

Chandeleur ('Candlemas') is set at 40 days after Christmas Day reflecting the Jewish custom to present a first-born male child to God in the Temple in Jerusalem on the 40th Day after their birth. This is 2 February, and the date when, by tradition in France Christmas decorations and especially the Crib must be taken down and put away.

Prior to the arrival of Christianity, there was a Roman pagan festival of Lupercalia, held between 13 and 15 February when Rome was ritually 'purified' after the winter. Interestingly, the purification ceremony involved instruments known as 'Februa' which is the origin of the month's name.

Similarly, Celtic pagans have a ceremony called Imbolc, held between 1 and 2 February which in Ireland became St Brigid's Day.

In the 5th Century AD, however, Pope Gelasius banned the festival of Lupercalia and introduced a new ceremony in which candlelit processions were held to represent Jesus as the light coming into the World. In this Candle-Mass, candles were blessed and were then taken to Christians' homes to place them under Jesus' protection.

So where to crêpes come into this ? Well, in three ways.

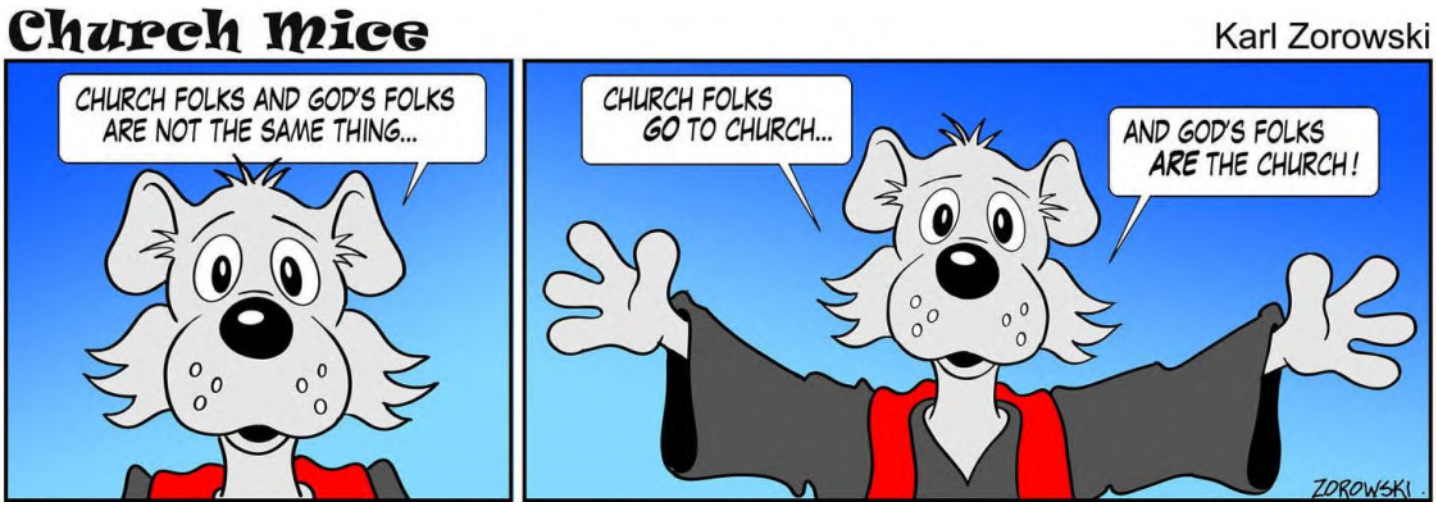
Firstly, the circular, golden crêpe represents the sun, now returning as days grew longer. Secondly, this is the season when the first seeds are sown for the coming summer harvest, and so the flour used to make the crêpes represents last year's harvest and the hopes for the year ahead.

The third reason moves us forward from the 2nd February, a fixed date on the calendar, to Shrove Tuesday, which falls 47 days before Easter Sunday. This year the interval between the Candlemas and Shrove Tuesday is quite short (13th February), but, depending on the date on which Easter Day falls, it can be as late as March 9th.

Shrove Tuesday marks the eve of the beginning of Lent, and is the last opportunity to use up any eggs and fats stored in the house before embarking on the days of fasting through Lent. In Anglo-Saxon England, Christians attended Church in order to be 'shriven' - absolved from their sins - before Lent began. A bell would be rung on that Tuesday to call the faithful to confession, and became known as "The Pancake Bell". Pancakes were then seen as a delicious way of disposing of eggs and fat, and recipes for pancakes can be found as far back as in a 1439 recipe book.

In the UK this can also involve racing with pancakes. The most famous pancake race in England takes place at Olney in Buckinghamshire (photo above), where in 1445 a housewife was making pancakes when the bell rang to come to confession at church, and she ran to the church still holding her pancake pan.

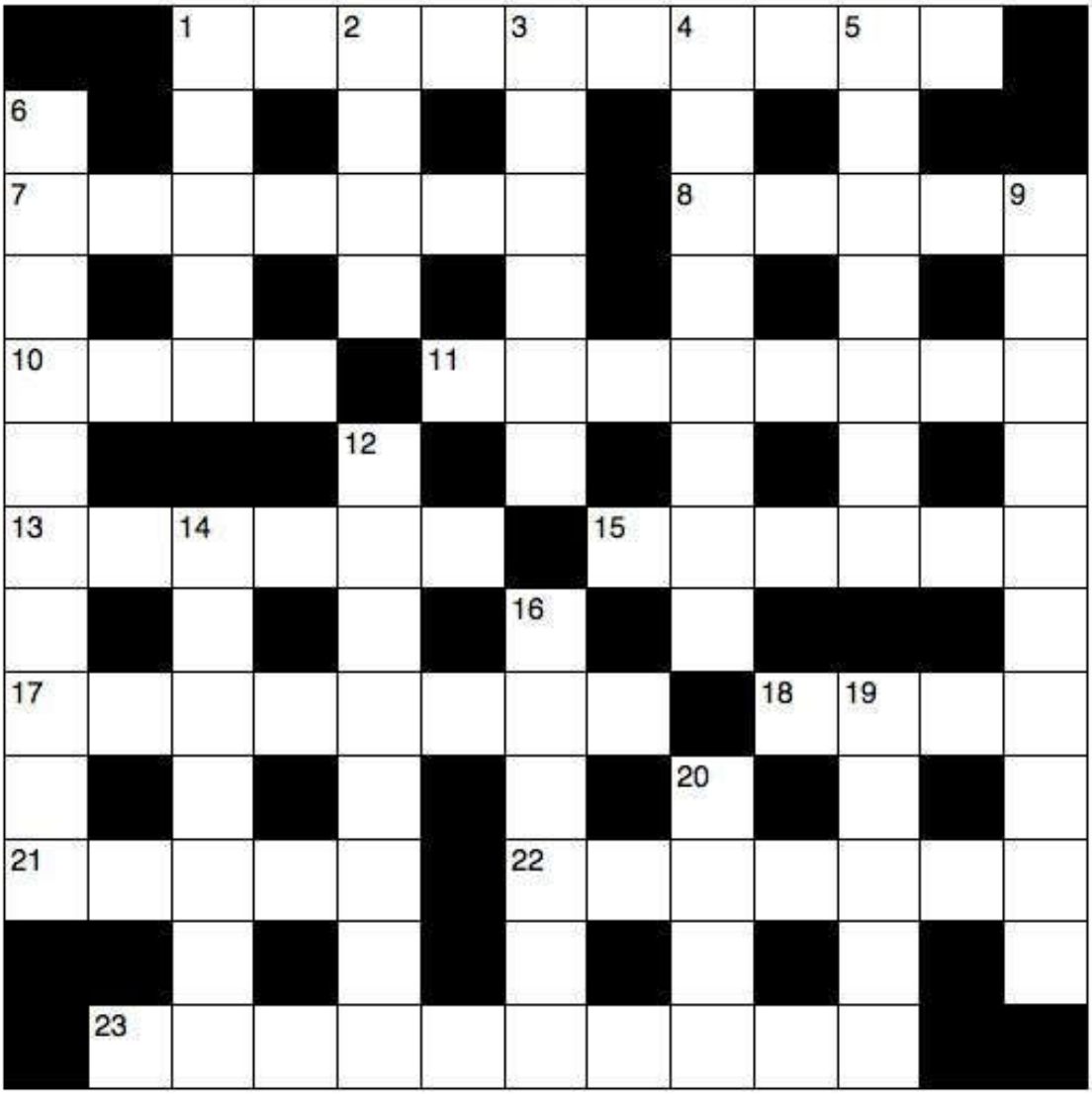
There are many other pancake traditions which we will look at in future years. But whichever day (or both) you enjoy your crêpes or pancakes: Bon appetit !



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

1 Success or wealth (Deuteronomy 28:11) (10)
7 Forbidden fruit for Nazirites (Numbers 6:3) (7)
8 Concede (Job 27:5) (5)
10 Look at (Psalm 48:13) (4)
11 Much in evidence after weddings (8)
13 Condense (Job 36:27) (6)
15 Breakwater (6)
17 Give a tan (anag.) (8)
18 More usually now called Pentecost, — Sunday (4)
21 After living for 365 years, it was said of him that 'he walked with God' (Genesis 5:23–24) (5)
22 Trampled (Judges 9:27) (7)
23 For example, Miriam, Deborah (Exodus 15:20; Judges 4:4) (10)

Down

1 Arrogance (Proverbs 8:13) (5)
2 Roman poet from first century BC (4)
3 So rapt (anag.) (6)
4 Declare again (2 Corinthians 2:8) (8)
5 Paul's 'fellow worker', to whom he sent two epistles (Romans 16:21) (7)
6 God's foreseeing care and protection (Job 10:12) (10)
9 Traditional form of Roman Catholic Mass (10)
12 'The Lord... has given the — of Israel to David and his descendants for ever' (2 Chronicles 13:5) (8)
14 'My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my — ' (Luke 1:46–47) (7)
16 The central element in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, identified and interpreted by Daniel (Daniel 2:31) (6)
19 'On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of — will not overcome it' (Matthew 16:18) (5)
20 City where Paul was under house arrest for two years (Acts 28:16) (4)

ACROSS: 1, Prosperity. 7, Raisins. 8, Admit. 10, View. 11, Confetti. 13, Distil. 15, Groyne. 17, Navigate. 18, Whit. 21, Enoch. 22, Trodden. 23, Prophetess.
DOWN: 1, Pride. 2, Ovid. 3, Pastor. 4, Reaffirm. 5, Timothy. 6, Providence. 9, Tridentine. 12, Kingship. 14, Saviour. 16, Statue. 19, Hades. 20, Rome.

Lot House Group - JANUARY 2023

lot.group@ourchurch.fr

Janet Varty

We met twice this month, stepping out of the Lot Valley to travel to the Tarn to visit Lauzerte, acclaimed as one of the most beautiful villages in France. Lauzerte is a 12th Century settlement on the Camino, the pilgrim route to Santiago de Compostella.

As 5 of us gathered in the Eglise Saint Barthelemy in Lauzerte on Saturday 13th January we joined the Iona Community call to protest for peace in the Holy Land. People were encouraged to walk in demonstrations, write to their MP's and join in Prayer. We thought of joining our prayer voices to theirs on the same day in the setting of an ancient church.

The church boasts a splendid working organ (see below)

There is also an interesting art display of panels depicting scenes of Châteaux in monochrome shades of blue.

They are the work of / attributed to the artist Jean Marie Joseph Ingres and possibly his students.

Ingres was born 29 January 1755 in Toulouse and died 14 March 1814 in Montauban. His work is to be found in Notre Dame de l'Assomption Cathedral and the Ingres Bordelle Museum in Montauban. He was skilled in multiple competences including sculpture, interior design, and miniatures. He was the father of Jean August Dominique Ingres the renowned Neo Classic French Artist.

Later in the month we met for our worship at the home of John and Margaret who also live in Lauzerte.

It was a glorious sunny afternoon and we were made so welcome at John and Margaret's home in Lauzerte. We centered on Prayers for Christian Unity this month. Afterwards we had a veritable feast as there were two birthdays to celebrate.

While we were at Lauzerte, Howard Bould ran his expert eye over the organ there. He writes:

To say that finding church organs in Occitanie is as rare as hen's teeth. Is something of an exaggeration but also there is an element of truth. There are fine instruments in the major cities and towns, in the cathedrals and abbeys but once you move into the smaller parishes it is a different story.

Nowadays the keyboard rules, although you might find an ageing and retiring harmonium hidden in some corner. Lauzerte has a retired harmonium but also an interesting pipe organ.

The organ was built by the Victor Magen, son of Jules Magen who founded an organ building firm in Agen.

Jules Barthélémy Magen, born 1812, son of a plasterer met Josephine Samers, a teacher, but to satisfy her parents he needed a suitable profession. He decided he would be an organ builder and so set off to Paris to study under the great Astride Cavaillé-Coll. He returned to Agen and set up his own business in 1842. On his death in 1882, the business was continued by his sons Victor (1847-1905) and Paul (1850-1929). The firm constructed thirty organs across the Lot and Garonne, Gironde, Gers, Tarn, Hautes-Pyrénées and Haute-Garonne.

Both Victor and Paul held organist posts in Agen at the Église des Jacobins and Église Ste. Hilaire

The organ at Lauzerte is interesting as it was originally constructed in 1899 for the Petit Séminaire at Moissac but then acquired by the church in Lauzerte in 1908.

Now restored, the organ is listed as being of National significance.

WATCH THIS SPACE - ECO LENT COURSE

During the period of Lent, ECO will be holding a series of online Zoom meetings on Thursday evenings starting at 8pm in which we will follow a course on the ancient practice of Lectio Divina. This will replace our normal Services of Prayer for Healing on Thursday evenings during Lent. More details will appear on our website shortly. The dates will be 15,22 and 29 February and 2 and 21 March

Torvill and Dean - and the Bolero that made Olympic history

Forty years ago, on 14th February 1984, figure skaters Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean won the gold medal in ice dancing at the Winter Olympics in Sarajevo. They scored the first perfect 6.0 in Olympic history.

Both are from Nottingham and, despite the obvious chemistry between them, they have never been romantically involved with each other. Jayne is married, and Christopher is in a long-term relationship. Jayne was originally an insurance clerk and Dean a policeman, and they built up their ice partnership while working full-time – though they eventually received a grant from Nottingham City Council that enabled them to concentrate on their skating.

This was much like a full-time job. Christopher later described it as "obsessive…almost like being in a monastery. It was a religion in its own way".

At Sarajevo they became the highest scoring figure skaters of all time for a single programme, which they skated to Ravel's Bolero (it came in just within the time limit) and were awarded 12 perfect 6.0s – including a 6.0 from every judge for artistic impression – and six 5.9s. In 2002 this performance was voted into eighth place in a TV poll of the 100 Greatest Sporting Moments.

The pair turned professional after Sarajevo and won the world professional championships five times. Their innovations had a lasting impact on the sport, and in 2000 they were made OBEs for their outstanding contributions to skating and to British sport.

The National Ice Centre in Nottingham is now accessed through Bolero Square; a housing estate in the Wollaton area of the city contains a street named Torvill Drive and an adjoining one called Dean Close.

Suspicion in Eden……

When Adam stayed out very late for a few nights, Eve became upset. "You're running around with other women," she charged.

"You're being unreasonable," Adam responded. "You're the only woman on earth." The quarrel continued until Adam fell asleep, only to be awakened by someone poking him in the chest. It was Eve. "What do you think you're doing?" Adam demanded.

"Counting your ribs," said Eve.

Why tea is "the drink of getting things done" and can cause international diplomatic incidents

The drinking of tea has found an unexpected new champion: James May, the former Top Gear presenter.

Speaking recently on Radio 4, James May said: "I'm just worried that the cult of coffee is going to destroy tea. And I don't like coffee, it is just rubbish. I like tea." He added: "Tea is the drink of getting things done."

How did tea get so embedded in UK culture? Food historian Polly Russell says the answer lies in the Industrial Revolution of the mid-18th century. "Tea became less expensive and at the same time you had agricultural wages slumping, and agricultural workers literally not able to buy food, to buy fuel, or to afford a hot meal. So, tea became a way of having something hot and restorative – often with sugar – and that habit then also translated into the urban, as the industrial revolution expanded into our cities."

And so it was that "tea became absolutely central to the diet of the working poor." And this provided the basis for the idea "that tea and sugar were fuelling the industrial nation."

James May argues that tea drinking is still fundamental to "bringing everyone together and ensuring happiness as well as productivity."

He believes: "Tea in the British workplace is more than a drink, it's a social glue. Britain is falling apart because we don't drink enough tea."

Meanwhile, an American scientist has created a new controversy about tea - by proposing adding salt to your cuppa. In her new book "Steeped: the Chemistry of Tea" published by the Royal Society of Chemistry, chemist Michelle Franci argues that adding a tiny pinch of salt to your tea can make it seem less bitter.

In a tongue-in-cheek reaction from the US Embassy in London, the US acknowledged that Franci's proposal had "landed the US/UK relationship in hot water".

"Tea is the elixir of camaraderie, a sacred bond that unites our nations. We cannot stand idly by as such an outrageous proposal threatens the very foundation of our Special Relationship," the embassy said. "...the unthinkable notion of adding salt to Britain's national drink is not official United States policy. And never will be."
The embassy continued to say that it intends to show "steeped solidarity" with the people of Britain.
"When it comes to tea, we stand as one," they said before quipping, "The U.S. Embassy will continue to make tea in the proper way – by microwaving it."

STOP PRESS.....

As we were preparing to publish this copy of ECHO, we received a copy of this lovely card sent by the team at Secours Catholique in Quillan thanking everyone who donated so generously to raise €770 to help brighten up at least a few people's Christmas.

We felt that we should share this with you.

Chère Patricia,

L'équipe du Secours Catholique de Quillan wishes you a very happy New Year, full of health, peace and friendship.

All the families which received the gifts you prepared thank you a lot.

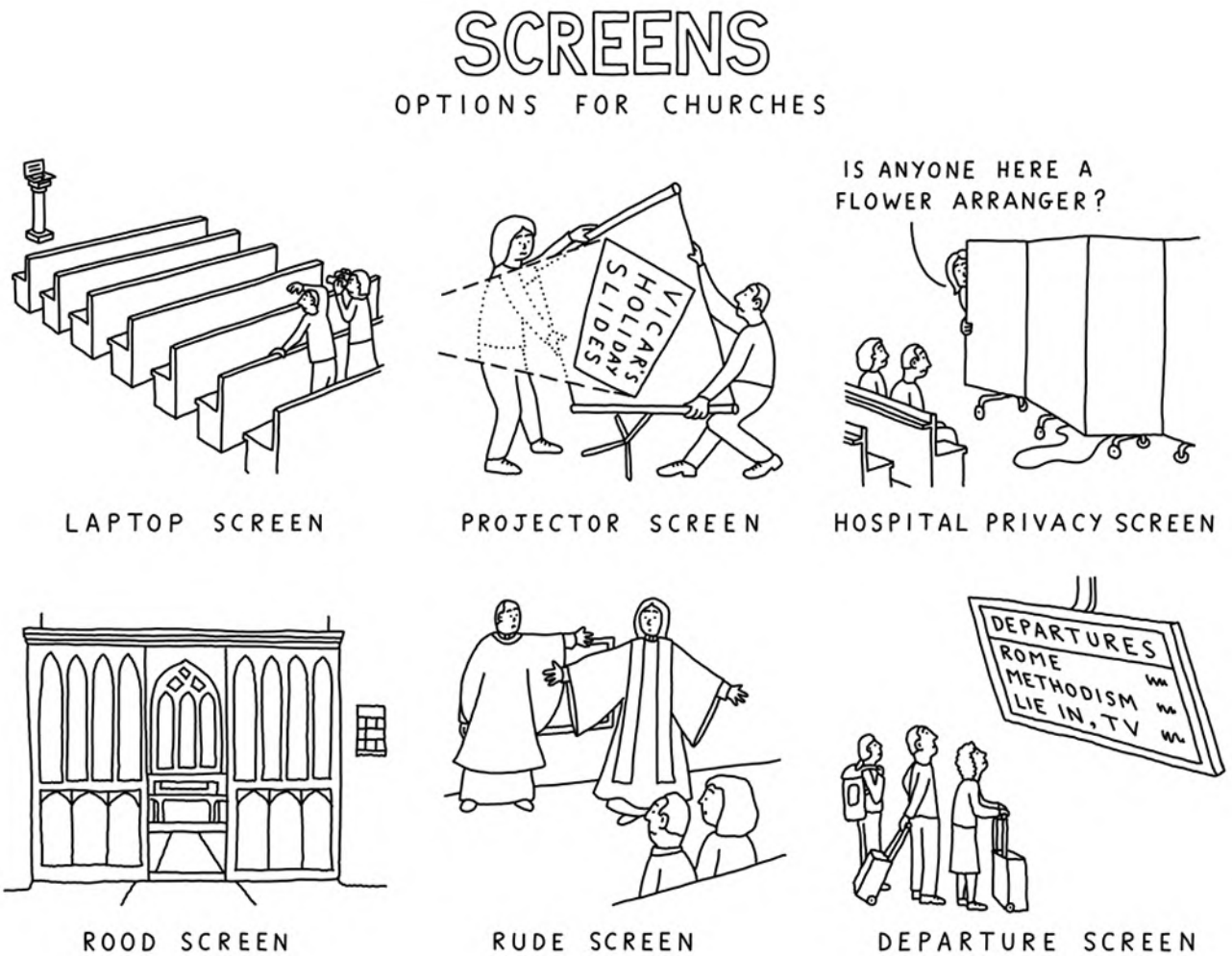
We explained everybody how you and your friends prepared the bags full of good presents. They were really very happy and had a good Christmas ... remembering what you did for them.

We will be happy to receive you for the traditional "galette". I will write the date. Love from us all Andrée

ECO Worship Calendar
February 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 **20:00** Online Service of Prayer for Healing	2	3
4 **10:30** Online Communion for 2nd Sunday before Lent	5 **20:00** Live Evening Worship on Zoom	6 **20:00** Online Service of Compline	7	8 **20:00** Online Service of Prayer for Healing	9	10
11 **10:30** Online Morning Prayer for Sunday next before Lent	12 **20:00** Live Evening Worship on Zoom	13 **20:00** Online Service of Compline	14	15 **20:00** ECO Lent Group on Zoom ** This replaces our Healing Service during Lent*	16	17
18 **10:30** Online Communion for Lent 1	19 **20:00** Live Evening Worship on Zoom	20 **20:00** Online Service of Compline	21	22 **20:00** ECO Lent Group on Zoom ** This replaces our Healing Service during Lent*	23	24
25 **10:30** Online Morning Prayer for Lent 2	26 **20:00** Live Evening Worship on Zoom	27 **20:00** Online Service of Compline	28	29 **20:00** ECO Lent Group on Zoom ** This replaces our Healing Service during Lent*		

Dave Walker's Guide to
Screens (in churches and elsewhere)



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