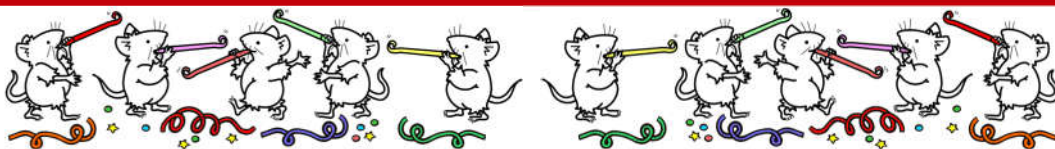




ECHO 2024

JANUARY 2024 EDITION



THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ECUMENICAL CHURCH OF OCCITANIE

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ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIESTS TO BE ALLOWED TO BLESS SAME-SEX AND UNMARRIED COUPLES

At the same time that the Church of England has begun allowing the blessing of same-sex couples (*see inside*) the Vatican's Doctrinal Dicastery - the body entrusted with promoting and protecting Catholic doctrine - has received approval from the Pope to permit the blessing of same-sex couples and also of couples who are not married.

This will also enable divorced Catholics to receive a blessing following a second marriage.

The Pope gave his approval to a document *Fiducia Supplicans* in a meeting with Bishop Armando Matteo and Cardinal Victor Fernández on December 18th. This document states that blessings should be offered provided that they cannot be confused for a celebration of the sacrament of marriage.

The document has been welcomed by Bishops in European dioceses as well in America and some other parts of the world, while the bishops of Kazakhstan, Malawi, Senegal and Zambia have immediately banned the use of such blessings.

In the USA, Republican presidential candidate Chris Christie, a previous opponent of same-sex marriage, has announced that *Fiducia Supplicans* has caused him to drop his opposition.

He said "Society has changed and what people are accepting in our country now is different than when I was growing up, certainly than when I was your age. And you know I don't have any objection to it any longer. In the end, I think I've been convinced."

It seems likely that this document will cause as much controversy in the Catholic Church as *Living In Love and Faith* has done in the Church of England. ECHO will report on further developments.



His Holiness Pope Francis with Msgr Armando Matteo (left) and Cardinal Victor Fernández (right)



Oops! It looks like I picked up the wrong present. I do hope my wife likes Myrrh

CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS WITH ECO

It was a great delight to us that so many people chose to worship with us over the Christmas period.

ECO broadcast on three separate internet channels: YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. Our website rebroadcasts the transmission from YouTube. Each of these provide us with their own viewing figures which are publicly visible to anyone using the channels. Of course, one 'view' does not imply that only one person was watching at the time, as many people watch our broadcasts on smart TV's and so we make an estimate that each 'view' involves 1½ actual people.

Our actual viewing figures were as follows:

suggesting that over 1,600 people joined us for worship

	YouTube	Twitter	Facebook	TOTAL
24/12 Lessons/Carols	284	186	8	478
24/12 Crib Service	27	158	10	195
25/12 Christmas Communion	395	27	6	428
TOTAL	706	371	24	1,101

over Christmas.

One Twitter viewer shared on her page:

"If you ever can't get to church for any reason (I've been struck down by a Long Covid relapse...) I heartily recommend joining these folk in Southern France for a really well-produced online service in English. "

We would like to thank everyone who supports us either by joining us in our online worship or volunteers to provide the material that we broadcast.



A BIG THANK YOU....

...To everyone who generously donated to raise money to purchase goods for Christmas parcels for distribution by Secours Catholique.

Thank you also to Patricia Gillespie and her entire team in Alet les Bains who so kindly organised the preparation of these parcels.

Solstice

Last night the world turned.
Let me be precise:
At 4.27am on December 22, 2023.
The Sun stood still. Solstitium.
A standing start for a new solar year.

Old questions remain.
Will old wars end, new ones begin?
Does the cold ground bring hope
Or fresh disappointment?
Will the dial move on
From injustice and lies?
Which species will we choose to make extinct?
Will our wearing-out bodies make it,
Our weary eyes see the new shoots?

Three days and Christmas and
The fight-back already begun.
Longer days to bring us hope.
We fight to win
Against cold, wind and rain,
Against ourselves, against it,
Against them.
Change there must be.
Last night the world turned.

Neil Batcock



LATEST UPDATE ON PROGRESS ON CHANGES IN VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR UK PASSPORT HOLDER WITH SECOND HOMES IN FRANCE



Senator Berthet, who represents the Savoie Region

After a lengthy and quite animated debate in the French Sénat on the 18 and 19 December, the new French Law on Immigration was approved still containing the clause which will permit British second-homeowners to spend up to 180 days in France at any time during a period of 365 without the need to split their stays into 2 periods of 90 with a gap of 90 days in-between.

At one point, it had looked like the amendment to the law, introduced by Senator Martin Berthet, might be removed from the Bill after it was rejected by the French Assembly's Law Committee.

However, this clause was re-introduced successfully during the debate on the 18 and 19 and was approved.

Do not pop champagne bottles just yet though:

The law must now be formally approved by the Constitutional Council to ensure that it complies with the provisions of the French Constitution. The outcome of these deliberations will not be known until possibly late in January 2024.

The Council of State must then decide how to implement this new provision and a decree must be drafted specifying how the new rules will work. It is possible that Senator Berthet will become involved in this process, since the clear intention behind the proposal has been to make the process as simple as possible.

It may be that second homeowners will be required to show proof of ownership of a property when arriving in France.

There is some pressure on the French Government to implement these provisions before the summer holiday season begins, because the company employed by the French Government to administer the process of issuing long-stay visas for France in the UK is reportedly being completely swamped by applications from second homeowners because this was never envisaged to be part of their workload and very long queues are building up in the 3 offices in England and Scotland.

We will continue to monitor progress on this matter and update you.

EXCÈS DE VITESSE INFÉRIEUR À 10 KM/H

CONTRAVENTION CLASSE 3
Si vitesse limitée à plus de 50 km/h
Amende hors agglo
68€
15 Moins - 45€ | Majorée - 180€

CONTRAVENTION CLASSE 4
Si vitesse limitée à 50 km/h ou moins
Amende en ville
135€
15 Moins - 90€ | Majorée - 375€

-1 Point

1 5

-0 Point

À partir du 1er janvier 2024, les excès de vitesse de moins de 5 km/h ne sont plus sanctionnés que par une amende de 68€.

Site 1 of 4 with 36 observations et 10000 visiteurs

LegiPermis
Sécurité Routière et Législation
<https://www.legipermis.com>

CHANGES TO SPEEDING LAWS WILL MEAN FEWER POINTS DEDUCTED FROM DRIVING LICENCES

With effect from 1 January 2024, drivers who are caught exceeding speed limits by less than 5 km/h (after the deduction of the 'tolerance' which is currently applied) will no longer lose points from their licenses but will simply have to pay a fine.

After Government statistics revealed that more than two-thirds of speeding offences relate to motorists exceeding the speed limit by less than 5 km/h (3 mph), it has been decided to remove the sanction of deducting one point from the driver's licence, although the table of fines remains unchanged.

Whatever speed is actually measured by speed cameras or radars, a 'tolerance' of 5 km/h is deducted from the measured speed in areas where the limit is between 30 and 100 km/h after which, the deduction is 5% of the measured speed.

Where a speeding offence is detected by one of the new camera cars, the tolerance is 10 km/h of the measured speed below 100 km/h and 10% above.

In future, if, after deducting this 'tolerance' the speed is less than 5 km/h above the speed limit, then no points will be deducted.

It is anticipated that these changes will reduce the workloads created by dealing with the updating of driving licence records after speeding offences were committed (16.9 million speeding offences in 2022).

However, 3,550 people were killed in road accidents in France in 2022, and there is concern that if drivers pay less attention to their speeds if they are only faced with a fine and not with a possible loss of their licence, accident rates will rise.

Both the French Government and road safety organisations will be watching the statistics closely over the next few years and penalty points may be re-imposed if accident rates start to rise.

SAVE THE LIPIZZANERS

Margaret Cross



When the Cante Vivace choir was asked if we would be willing to sing Christmas Carols at a Christmas Market to support the plight of the Lipizzaner Horses, I for one was most intrigued.

I had visited the Spanish Riding school in Vienna some years ago, from where their story began in 1580, but I did not know that there are estimated to be only 8000 Lipizzans left in the world, making it an endangered species.

In 2022 eight European Countries made a joint bid to the UN's Cultural agency to grant the tradition of the Lipizzan horse breeding UNESCO heritage status . This was granted on December 1st 2022.

The Lipizzan horse is one of the oldest breeds in Europe. The breed started in 1580 when Archduke Charles of the Austro-Hungarian Empire established a stud farm at Lipizza near the Adriatic Sea in modern day Slovenia. This occurred shortly after his brother, Maximilian II, had imported Spanish horses to Austria and founded the court stud at Kladrub. It was from the stud farm at Lipizza that the breed gets its name. Archduke Charles greatly desired to create a horse that was not only suited for war, but also for pulling carriages and performing in the manner of classical riding.

At roughly the same time as the breed was being developed in Lipizza the Spanish Riding School was getting its start in Vienna. The school was founded in 1572 and to this day it is world renowned for their preservation of the art of classical horsemanship. It takes years for horse and rider to achieve the movements of the Haute Ecole or High School.

The horses performed for emperors and kings and were highly valued the world over.

In March of 1938 the Anschluss put Austria under German control. Every aspect of Austrian life was threatened. The Lipizzans were no exception. Nazi Germany required that everyday life continue as normal and therefore the Spanish

Riding School must continue to give performances during the first few years of the Anschluss. Not only were the stallions in Vienna threatened, but the majority of the royal herd located in Piber was in grave danger of losing its unique bloodlines.

The staff of the Spanish Riding School accompanied some of the horses, however, and kept them safe, by happy chance ending up in a castle which was then occupied by General George S Patton.

For the other horses, however, located in Hostau, Slovenia, there were greater dangers. In April of 1945 the Germans had been driven out by the advancing Russian Army. The Soviets were starving and it was not uncommon to use any available livestock as a source of food. The future of the Lipizzans could be snuffed out in a matter of days.

However, a German officer contacted the US Army, and General Patton organised a long freight train to evacuate the Lipizzans to US-occupied Bavaria, thereby securing the breed.



Lipizzans are distinguished by their grace, beauty and swan-like necks, as is so beautifully demonstrated at their displays offered throughout Europe. Their training aims to develop what is already a natural movement born in them.

They must be reared with patience, love and trust, in order to get the best results. They are naturally versatile, can be a dressage horse, a carriage driving horse or one for casual riding. A Lipizzan stallion can cost over €100,000 to buy.

Today the Lipizzan horse plays a special role in the everyday cultural and social life of communities in rural areas. It is said that they are the proudest of horses, as well as the most temperamental and energetic.

The centuries-old horse breeding tradition continues today in eight European countries: Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Sadly some are often in need of help and support.

We gladly went along to offer our help to support the volunteers who in their small way endeavour to rescue, care for and train these beautiful horses and so ensure the continuation of this exceptional breed.

Church Mice

Karl Zorowski



CHURCH OF ENGLAND ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL HEAVILY CRITICISED FOR FAILURE OF CHURCH'S INDEPENDENT SAFEGUARDING BOARD

An independent report into the closure of the Church of England's Independent Safeguarding Board (ISB), has heavily criticised the Church's main management board, The Archbishops' Council, for its role in the closure in June 2023.

The 185-page report, prepared by a leading independent barrister, Sarah Wilkinson KC, found that the Council failed to properly define roles and responsibilities of the ISB members and the Council. Her investigations had shown that the Council had never even been shown or asked to inspect the Terms of Reference prepared for the ISB.

Ms Wilkinson criticised Archbishop Justin Welby for trying to impose unreasonable timescales for the creation of the Board, and also commented that the task of creating the Board was placed in the hands of people without adequate specialist skills or knowledge.

Ms Wilkinson's report has been produced alongside work being undertaken by team under Professor Alexis Jay considering the future of safeguarding within the Church of England. Her report, which has been sent to Professor Jay, has recommended that the Safeguarding in the Church should never be entrusted again to any Church of England body, but should be entrusted to an outside agency or consultants with relevant safeguarding experience.

The impact on abuse survivors whose cases were being dealt with by the ISB has been severe. One victim stated that he had attempted to commit suicide when he learned of the decision to wind up the ISB.

Ms Wilkinson has recommended that the members of the Council should receive trauma training to enable them to better address matters such as this.

Although there had been allegations that the ISB had been wound up with great haste because of fears that they were about to identify senior members of the Church who were implicated in abuse scandals, Ms Wilkinson said she had seen no evidence of this.

Several independent commentators, as well as abuse survivors, have described the events as "A Catastrophic Failure of Governance" and have demanded that members of the Council resign at once.

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have issued a statement expressing "deep regret" and have promised a more detailed statement early in the New Year.

We will report in due course on how the Wilkinson Report is responded to .



CHURCH OF ENGLAND CHURCHES USE PRAYERS FOR SAME-SEX COUPLES FOR THE FIRST TIME

With effect from Sunday 17th December, the Church of England authorised the use of its Prayers of Love and Faith, which were approved by its General Synod a few weeks earlier.

One of the first members of clergy to use these was Canon Andrew Dotchin, the vicar of Felixstowe, who offered prayers over two priests who are associates in his own parish, Reverends Jane Pearse and Catherine Bond, before sharing The Peace with the rest of the congregation.



The event received press coverage from all over the world, with messages of goodwill arriving from overseas also.

Here in France, our ECO Service that morning included Prayers of Love and Faith in our intercessions to express support and solidarity with our Anglican colleagues. Because of the vagaries of timezone differences, it is possible that our morning broadcast was the very first church service in Europe to have broadcast these prayers.

Our Service achieved a new record in the number of people viewing us, as we recorded over 500 logins on YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and our website.

In the meantime, opponents of the Prayers of Love and Faith are putting plans in place to withdraw financial contributions to the Church of England and to refuse to recognise the authority of majority of Bishops who have voted to recommend these prayers for use in Anglican Churches and to instead set up their own separate hierarchy.

Lot House Group - December 2023

lot.group@ourchurch.fr

Janet Varty

Twenty of us met for Carol singing and contemporary readings for our last meeting of 2023.

We began with Lisa's rendition of Pie Jesu as a prayer for all those who have died in the land we knew growing up as the Holy Land. (You can watch this in the recording of our Christmas Day Communion Service on our website)



It was Nils' debut on the piano with his playing of Hark the Herald Angels Sing. Then Howard took up the mantle. Silent night was opened by Tony in German, Margaret in English, Nils in Swedish and all of us in French.



Our contemporary readings:

What do you want for Christmas?

We bought the Christmas tree today and
Christmas Lights

were taken from the book "Walking Backwards To Christmas" by the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, and were read by Mairi, Linda and Margaret.

We welcomed newcomers and our occasional visitors. Tasty goodies were shared and Christmas greetings exchanged. It was super uplifting afternoon and we were so thankful for our talented participants.

We will meet again in January - venue and date to be confirmed. [Details will appear in our weekly bulletin]

If you would like to join us, or simply to get more details about us or about any of these events, then please contact me at lot.group@ourchurch.fr

Why?

A young couple invited some people to dinner. At the table, the mother turned to their six-year-old daughter and said, "Would you like to say the Grace?"

"I don't know what to say," the girl replied.

"Just say what you hear Mummy say," her father answered.

The daughter bowed her head and prayed, "O Lord, why on earth did I invite all these people to dinner?"

Remembering Clarice Cliff



If you like ceramics, and enjoy colour, then you are bound to be familiar with the work of Clarice Cliff. Her glowingly vibrant plates, cups, teapots, and vases are world famous – and still loved.

She was born 125 years ago this month, on 20th January 1899, in Tunstall, Stoke-on-Trent. Clarice's father worked in an iron foundry, and her mother washed clothes to help feed their seven children.

Clarice left school at 13 to work in the potteries. She so enjoyed the work that at 17, she moved on to the factory of A J Wilkinson in Newport, Burslem, to gain more experience. Soon she was modelling figurines and vases, keeping pattern books, and learning to hand-paint ware.

Clarice's talent was noticed, and then encouraged by one of the factory owners, Arthur Colley Austin Shorter. As the years went by, he enabled her to go to the Royal College of Arts and then study in Paris. He gave her own studio, and later he married her.

Clarice's use of colour was immensely popular. Her brilliantly coloured plates, cups, vases, and teapots helped cheer people up during the Depression. Clarice's shapes were also eye-catching: sometimes 'Modern', with angular and geometric lines; sometimes 'Art Deco' – with abstract and cubist patterns.

By 1930, Cliff was Art Director at Newport pottery. She went on to have a worldwide impact, as her patterns, shapes and colours sold in large quantities in many countries.

Her most famous quote was: "Having a little fun at my work does not make me any less of an artist, and people who appreciate truly beautiful and original creations in pottery are not frightened by innocent tomfoolery."



After Clarice's death, Wedgwood came to own the Clarice Cliff name. The world record price for a piece of Clarice Cliff is held by Christie's in London, who in 2004 sold an 18-inch (460 mm) 'charger' (wall plaque) in the May Avenue pattern for £39,500.

THE EDITOR'S NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS

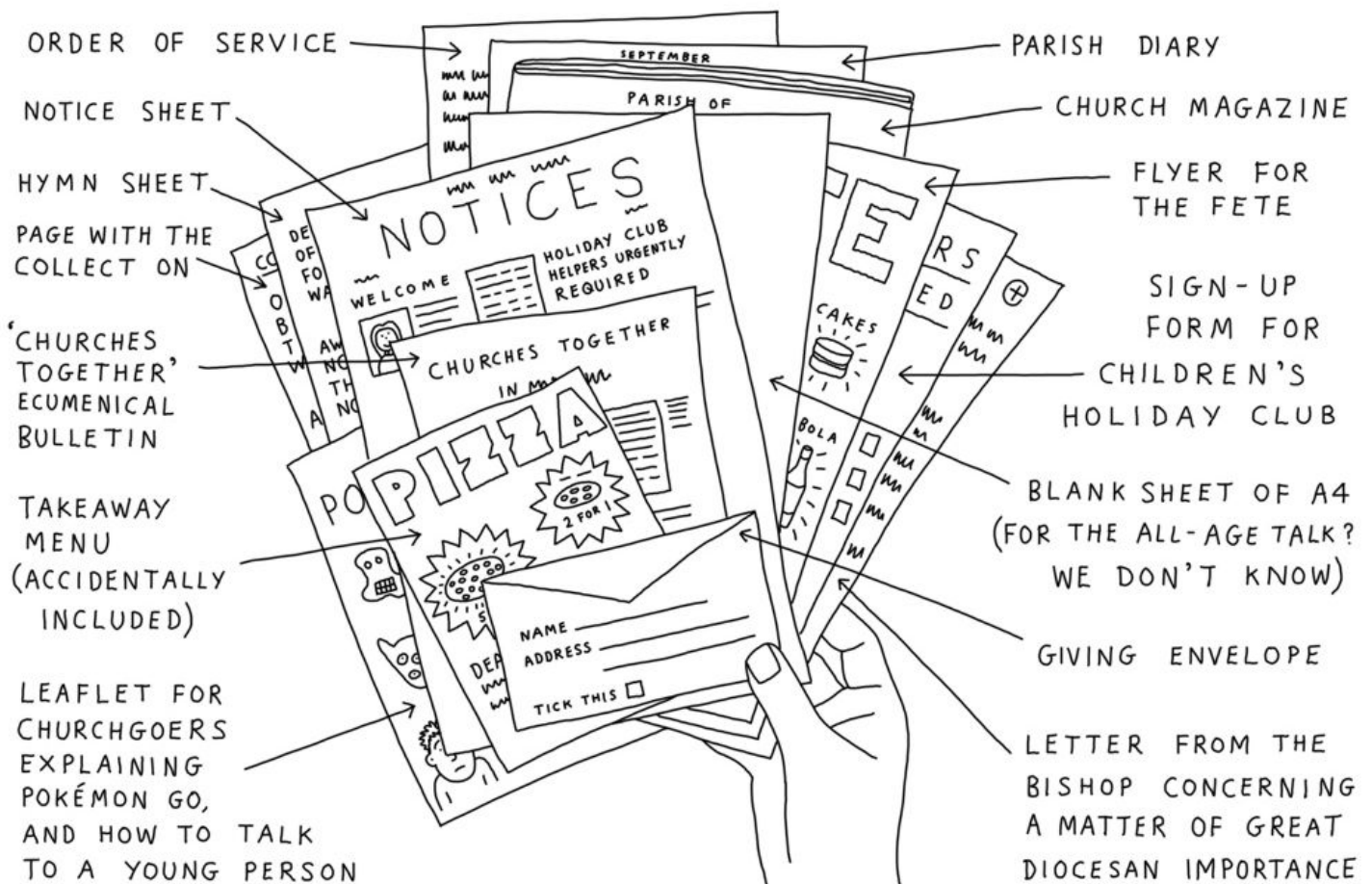
Dear Readers, some of you may have noticed that the quality of ECHO slips every now and then. To improve this, I have made a number of resolutions for how we will edit the magazine in 2024:

1. Verbs HAS to agree with their subjects.
 2. Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.
 3. And don't start a sentence with a conjunction.
 4. It is wrong to ever split an infinitive.
 5. Avoid cliches like the plague. (They're old hat.)
 6. Also, always avoid annoying alliteration.
 7. Be more or less specific.
 8. Parenthetical remarks (however relevant) are (usually) unnecessary.
 9. Also too, never, ever use repetitive redundancies.
 10. No sentence fragments.
 11. Contractions aren't necessary and shouldn't be used.
 12. Foreign words and phrases are not apropos.
 13. Do not be redundant; do not use more words than necessary; it's highly superfluous.
 14. One should NEVER generalise.
 15. Comparisons are as bad as cliches.
 16. Eschew ampersands & abbreviations, etc.
 17. One-word sentences? Eliminate.
 18. Analogies in writing are like feathers on a snake.
 19. The passive voice is to be ignored.
 20. Eliminate commas, that are, not necessary.
 21. Never use a big word when a diminutive one would suffice.
 22. Use words correctly, irregardless of how others use them.
 23. Understatement is always the absolute best way to put forth earth shaking ideas.
 24. Eliminate quotations. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "I hate quotations. Tell me what you know."
 25. If you've heard it once, you've heard it a thousand times: Resist hyperbole; not one writer in a million can use it correctly.
 26. Puns are for children, not groan readers.
 27. Go around the barn at high noon to avoid colloquialisms.
 28. Even IF a mixed metaphor sings, it should be derailed.
 29. Who needs rhetorical questions?
 30. Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.
- And the last one...?
31. Proofread carefully to see if you any words out.

ECO WORSHIP CALENDAR JANUARY 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3	4	5	6
NO BROADCAST WORSHIP DURING THIS WEEK						
7 10:30 Online Communion for Epiphany 1 / Baptism of Christ	8 20:00 Live Evening Worship on Zoom	9 19:00 Online Service of Compline	10	11 19:00 Online Service of Prayer for Healing	12	13
14 10:30 Online Morning Prayer for Epiphany 2	15 20:00 Live Evening Worship on Zoom	16 19:00 Online Service of Compline	17	18 19:00 Online Service of Prayer for Healing	19	20
21 10:30 Online Communion for the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul	22 20:00 Live Evening Worship on Zoom	23 19:00 Online Service of Compline	24	25 19:00 Online Service of Prayer for Healing	26	27
28 10:30 Online Morning Prayer for Epiphany 4 / The Presentation of Christ	29 20:00 Live Evening Worship on Zoom	31 19:00 Online Service of Compline				

Dave Walker's Guide to All the bits of paper they give you when you walk into a physical church service



CartoonChurch.com

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