



ECHO

JULY 2024 EDITION



THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ECUMENICAL CHURCH OF OCCITANIE

www.ourchurch.fr

X @occitaniechurch



ECO VIEWERS EXCEED 1,000 ON YOUTUBE FOR THE FIRST TIME ON TRINITY SUNDAY.

As ECO celebrated its third birthday on Trinity Sunday, for the first time our viewership on our YouTube channel exceeded 1,000 for a single Sunday service.

Although our total viewing numbers for a Sunday Service across all our social media channels (YouTube, Facebook and Twitter) occasionally exceed 1,000 views during the week following their broadcast, Trinity Sunday 2024 marks the first time that we have exceeded 1,000 views on YouTube alone.

With 152 followers on our Facebook page and many hundreds of views of our services each week on multiple Twitter channels, we have progressed a long way since 2021, and we will continue to work to grow our community of faith in coming years.

Our website has reported 125,000 hits over the past year which is almost double our visits during the previous year.

This is a great way to celebrate our 3rd Birthday and we would like to acknowledge everyone who joins us for worship each week and also thank the many volunteers who help us to prepare and present our worship.

Thank you all for your support.

CHRISTIAN POP STARS CALL FOR AN INDEPENDENT INQUIRY BY CHURCH OF ENGLAND INTO ABUSE SCANDAL



Husband and wife Christian musicians Matt and Beth Redman have issued a call for an independent inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the multiple complaints of abuse made about the Soul Survivor organisation and its leader, Mike Pilavachi.

During July, the General Synod of the Church of England will be debating a call by over 140 General Synod members for an independent inquiry into how Pilavachi, who has been stripped of his permissions as a priest in the Church of England and has now left the UK to live in South Africa, was able to abuse multiple victims despite warnings having been given to at least one Bishop.

The Church has conducted a limited inquiry into Pilavachi's actions, but this will not consider the wider organisational safeguarding failings within the Church as a whole which allowed him to abuse people over an extended period - including the Redmans themselves. They have criticised the official report as "sanitised and minimised so as to not draw attention to the scale and spectrum of the substantiated abuse"

Synod members will debate this on Sunday 7th July and can be watched live on YouTube.



What's The Big Idea ? - Ruth

Over 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 the Book of Ruth

The book of Ruth is a story of God's grace operating in difficult circumstances, during the period of the Judges. It unfolds as a four-act drama, telling the story of how Naomi, her husband and two sons left Judah for Moab, where her sons married. When Naomi's husband and sons died, she returns to Bethlehem in Judah.

In the first act, Naomi tells her Moabite daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, to stay in Moab. However, Ruth refuses to leave Naomi and accompanies her to Bethlehem (chapter 1). In the next act Ruth meets Boaz, a relative of Naomi, while gathering barley in his fields (chapter 2).

The third act takes place at the threshing floor where Boaz is asleep and Ruth lies at his feet. She expresses her desire to marry him, as her kinsman-redeemer. But Boaz tells her of another prior claim (chapter 3). Finally, at the city gate, the other relative renounces his claim, and Boaz marries Ruth (chapter 4).

In Ruth's story we see God's unseen hand directing the lives of the characters to accomplish his purpose e.g. 'Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning' (1:22). He transforms Naomi's sorrow into joy, rewarding Ruth with a place of honour in Israel's history. In Boaz, we see a foreshadowing of the work of Jesus Christ, as he pays the price to secure Ruth's future.

'In its artful telling of this 'outsider' widow, uprooted and obscure, who turns out to be the great-grandmother of David and the ancestor of Jesus, the book of Ruth makes it possible for each of us to understand ourselves, however ordinary, as irreplaceable in the full telling of God's story'. (Eugene Peterson).

VATICAN SUMMONS ARCHBISHOP TO ROME TO FACE CHARGES OF 'SCHISM'



Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, former apostolic nuncio (the Pope's Ambassador) to the United States, has posted on his "X" account a communication from the Dicastery for the Doctrine

of the Faith summoning him to Rome to face an "extrajudicial penal process" (also known as an "administrative process") for the canonical crime of 'Schism'.

The Archbishop was required to either present himself in Rome or appoint a defence lawyer to "take notice of the accusations and evidence concerning the crime of schism of which he has been accused (public statements which result in a denial of the elements necessary to maintain communion with the Catholic Church; denial of the legitimacy of Pope Francis; a rupture of communion with him; and rejection of the Second Vatican Council)." Failure to comply with this instruction, he was warned, could lead to judgement being reached in his absence.

In 2018, the Archbishop had published a letter demanding Pope Francis' resignation over the case of Cardinal Theodore McCarrick who was accused of sexual abuse over a long period of time and subsequently removed from all office in the Catholic Church. Although a subsequent investigation by the Vatican showed that Pope John Paul had failed to act when accusations were first made, no such failure to act was attributable to Pope Francis.

Viganò has also associated himself with the late French Archbishop, Marcel Lefebvre, in criticising the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, as well as expressing scepticism about Coronavirus and supporting a number of ultra-conservative Catholic causes. He had also defended Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

Action was taken now owing to rumours that supporters of Viganò intended to disrupt the Pope's planned canonisation of some new saints in the Vatican in July.

The case will be reported in due course.

Lot House Group

lot.group@ourchurch.fr

Janet Varty

We met in Mairi's beautiful garden in the village of Soturac.



Our outdoor service was partially accompanied by bird song and we raised our voices to All Things Bright And Beautiful and listened to a choral version of Each little flower.

The Iona Creation Liturgy includes an eclectic range of readings and ideas. As the temperature rose we spent time sauntering in the garden, seeking shade, where we found 12 prayer stations. Each place had a bible reference to a plant, some information and an accompanying prayer.



In due course we reconvened in the cool of the house for our refreshments, informal chat and a warm welcome to Michele who joined us from Lot et Garonne. Thanks to everyone it was a super afternoon of Christian fellowship.

Our next meeting will be on July 25th in Puy-l'Eveque at 3pm.



Update from Church and Peace (The European Ecumenical Peace Network)

This years the Schwelle Foundation's Bremen Peace Prize has been awarded to Maria Biedrawa, a board member for Church and Peace.



Maria has been active in peace work for 20 years in various African countries, particularly in the Central African Republic where religions have been 'instrumentalised' to fuel armed conflicts.

Together with local groups, Maria supports the psychosocial and spiritual counselling of people who have experienced trauma to interrupt the spiral of retaliation. People feel empowered to build local security and peace processes together with their Christian or Muslim communities through non violent resistance and reconciliation work.

The Bremen-based Schwelle Foundation also awarded a group prize to Connection e. V. as for over 30 years they have been protecting conscientious objectors - today primarily in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. Conscientious objection has been a human Right recognised by the UN since 1987.



These honours are encouraging signs in times like these when global armaments spiral upwards.

The Church and Peace Conference takes place in October in Brussels, bringing together people with experience in war torn regions to discuss the opportunities and limits of non-violent resistance in times of war and ways of interrupting the spiral of violence through community engagement.



RECTOR OF PARISH IN THE UK AND HIS CHURCHWARDEN ORDERED TO SEARCH FOR MISSING PEWS

In an unusual case heard by the Consistory (“Church”) Court in the UK Diocese of Bath and Wells, a Rector and his Churchwarden have been instructed by its Chancellor (“Judge”) to search for pews which have gone missing.

In May 2017, the Church of St Michael in the village of Bath Twerton-on-Avon applied for permission to temporarily place their hand-carved oak pews, dating from 1885 into storage.

This was approved, and the pews were taken to be stored with some other pews from nearby Bath Abbey which were already in storage. Initially they were kept in an aircraft hangar, but were later all moved to a warehouse.

Sadly, by accident, Bath Abbey sold the pews from the Church, along with their own pews to a Mr Owen Thomas, who had proceeded to sell them off via EBay and other websites not knowing that he did not have the right to do this since they were not the property of Bath Abbey.

Mr Thomas could now no longer be located, and the Court was asked to approved in retrospect the disposal of the pews.

The Chancellor declined to approve this for now, and has decided to wait until 2028 (the 6th anniversary of the loss of the pews being discovered) before considering the matter again. In the meantime, the Rector and his Churchwarden have been instructed to use “their best endeavours” to locate any of the missing pews that they can, and recover them.



The Olympic Games

This month sees the start of the Olympic Games in Paris.

In describing the Christian life as a marathon race, the writer of Hebrews (12:1-2) challenges us to finish well.

‘throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles’ (1)

As in a normal race, we have to get rid of any burdens that weigh us down (eg possessions, worries, what others think of us) and besetting sins (wrong habits or attitudes). We can cast our burdens on the Lord (Ps 55:22) and be assured of His forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

‘run with perseverance the race marked out for us’ (1)

The Christian life is like a marathon not a sprint race, which calls for endurance. The course is marked out for us, as we all have a unique race to run, with its opportunities and difficulties. God knows our path and will provide all that we need to complete the race.

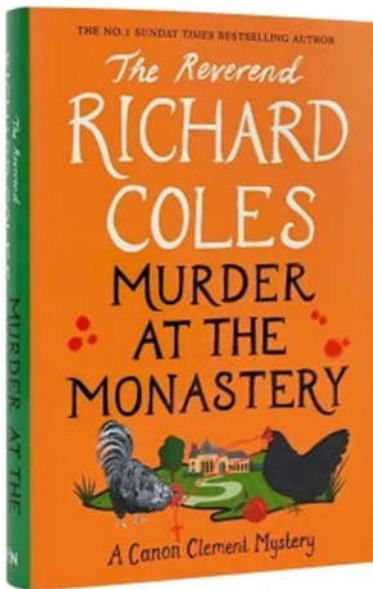
‘fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith’ (2)

The runner keeps their focus on the finishing line and avoids all distractions. Our focus is on Jesus, who has run the race before us (‘author’), but is the one who can show us how to finish well (‘perfecter’).

We are also surrounded by a ‘great cloud of witnesses’ (1).

These are God’s people, both past and present, who are cheering us on!

During the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, the British athlete Derek Redmond was running in the 400 metres semi-finals. About 250 metres from the finish his hamstring tore, and he fell to the ground in pain. However, his father ran on to the track to support him in completing the race. Let’s not forget that whatever we face, God is there beside to enable us to finish the race!



ANOTHER MURDER FOR CANON CLEMENT TO SOLVE: THIS TIME IN A MONASTERY

Clive Billenness has settled down in the garden with his summer whodunnit



THE UK ELECTORAL COMMISSION WOULD LIKE YOUR OPINION ONLINE

All British Citizens who have resided at least three years in the UK are now able to register to vote in UK General Elections. (It is now too late to register to vote on 4th July, if you have not already done so.) About 60,000 British citizens had registered as Overseas Voters at the date that the General Election was called, which seems relatively low given that an estimated 3.5 million people were entitled to vote.

We have been contacted by the Electoral Commission who are conducting a survey about the registration process, including asking for input from those who have not registered to vote, for whatever reason.

The survey is easy to complete and takes about 5 to 10 minutes. Please do consider taking part as your feedback will be incredibly useful to the Electoral Commission.

If you would like to take part, please go to

<https://eu.research.net/r/ElectoralCommissionOverseasVoter2024survey>

(THIS ARTICLE CONTAINS NO SPOILERS)

Former Church of England vicar and member of the pop group The Communards, Revd Richard Coles has delivered his third murder mystery, featuring Canon Daniel Clement, the Rector of Champton.

Canon Clement has suffered a secret humiliation and in order to recover, he has gone on retreat in Ravensburn Monastery in Yorkshire, a place where he once served as a Benedictine monk.

His precipitate departure from his parish, less than an hour after the previous book finished, is causing gossip and increasing speculation about what has happened to him.

Meantime, Daniel's retreat, already punctuated with moments of deep sadness becomes anything but peaceful as a particularly gruesome murder strikes in the monastery which is a melting pot of secrets and tensions.

Daniel excels in his second profession as a sleuth and the last page of the book opens new avenues for future writing.

Richard Coles' latest novel has shot straight into the Sunday Times' Best Seller list and was simultaneously released as both an audiobook and an e-book, so it is already on a lot of people's bookshelves (real or virtual).

When Richard Coles began writing these mysteries, he had described it as a 'trilogy'. That milestone has now been reached, but the inhabitants of Champton and their Rector have become so much a part of many people's reading lives that the question now arises "Are there more episodes to come?" We await 2025 with interest



THE VICAR DECIDED TO TAKE NO CHANCES WITH THE WEATHER ON THE PLANNED DATE OF THE CHURCH SUMMER FAYRE



Moses with the 10 Commandments
Philippe de Champagne (1648)

THE US STATE OF LOUISIANA SUED OVER THE 10 COMMANDMENTS

The US State of Louisiana has been sued over a new law signed by the Republican Governor Jeff Landry on June 19 requiring all public school classrooms throughout the State to display a copy of the Ten Commandments.

The new law is part of a broader push by US conservative groups to make expressions of faith a more prominent part in society. There is some hope that if the law is challenged in court, it will begin the long journey which may end in the US Supreme Court where there is a 6 - 3 conservative majority and the law may be received sympathetically.

The Supreme Court has ruled twice before on related matters. In 1980, the Court had declared as unconstitutional a similar law passed in Kentucky to require the display of the Ten Commandments. However more recently, in 2022, the Court had sided with a high school football coach in the state of Washington, stating that he had a constitutional right to pray with his players on the pitch after a game.

The complaint this time has been lodged with the court in Baton Rouge by 9 families, including several members of clergy, seeking an injunction against the law on the grounds that it violated the First Amendment of the US Constitution prohibition against state establishment of religion and "simply cannot be reconciled with the fundamental religious-freedom principles that animated the founding of our nation."

However, the promoters of the law argue that the Commandments have a historic value and have been "a prominent part of American public education for almost three centuries."

The law's journey to the Supreme Court may take many years - ECHO will update you on its progress.

"SOCIAL MEDIA IS MAKING US STUPID" Church of England Report Claims



A report by the Church of England investigating why it has lost the trust of not only the wider public but also its own congregations claims that high use of social media places people "in danger of becoming stupid".

The report, which will be shared with the Church's General Synod meeting in York in early July, was commissioned to consider how to 'repair and preserve trust in the Church's organisations and structures' in the face of surveys finding that trust in Church of England clergy has fallen dramatically since the 1980's, with now only 38% of people saying that they would trust clergy to tell them the truth.

The report suggests that over-use of social media makes people 'trigger happy' and that they do not take enough care to check that information is accurate or reliable.

It goes on "We delude ourselves into thinking we are more informed because of the ease of access to volumes of information," the report stated. "However, through our indiscriminate use of social media we are in danger of becoming stupid in our judgment of where to place our trust."

The report acknowledges multiple issues which have contributed to loss of trust, citing "numerous divisions within the church, including over the handling of gay rights and of abuse cases", and warned that "these issues had resulted in the church being accused of "major and traumatising breaches of trust" and had led to a "culture of distrust" .

One priest has reacted, however, claiming that church leaders had sought to avoid blame for their own part in the breakdown of trust within the church: "This report on is so painfully bad. Everyone is blamed apart from the leadership, especially social media"



In-Person Communion Service
at
Alet les Bains
3pm - 25th July

On Thursday 25th July ECO will be holding an in-person Communion Service at Les Marguerites, Alet les Bains, by kind invitation of Keith and Antoinette Fairhurst.

Our worship will begin at 3pm.

We are continuing to take a few precautions against Covid-19, so please let us know if you are planning to join us by either sending an email to **contact@ourchurch.fr** or by speaking to any member of the ECO Team.

We will be recording the service for broadcast on Sunday 4th August.



We hope that this will not be the only in-person worship in the South of Occitanie this summer, and we will send further bulletins if and when dates are known.



HOLIDAY PLANNING

The vicar went to the bank and asked for a statement of his account, adding: "We want to know how far afield we can go for our holiday."

Handing him his statement the manager replied "Have you got a field at the back of your garden, Reverend?"

YET MORE FROM THE CHURCH NOTICEBOARD



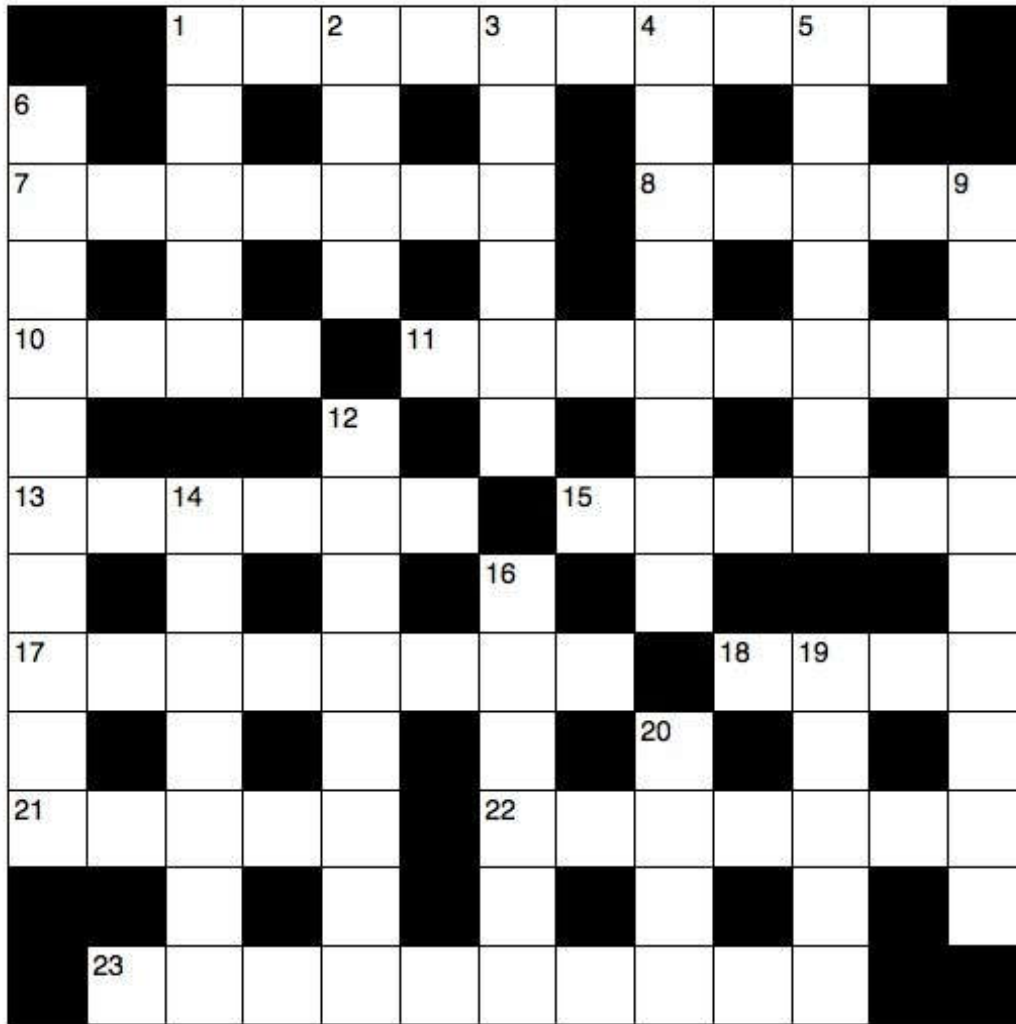
Church Mice

Karl Zorowski



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 Relating to the Jewish day of rest (10)
 7 Point of view (Matthew 22:17) (7)
 8 20th-century Brethren philanthropist whose construction company became one of the UK's biggest, Sir John — (5)
 10 Girl's name (4)
 11 Peter was accused of being one in the courtyard of the high priest's house (Luke 22:59) (8)
 13 The fifth of the 'seven churches' (Revelation 3:1-6) (6)
 15 'Now the famine was — in Samaria' (1 Kings 18:2) (6)
 17 Banned by the seventh Commandment (Exodus 20:14) (8)
 18 Insect most closely associated with itching (1 Samuel 24:14) (4)
 21 Bantu tribe which gives its name to tiny landlocked country in southern Africa (5)
 22 Familiar material in churches that use an overhead projector (7)
 23 Last book of the Bible (10)

Down

- 1 The young David's favourite weapon (1 Samuel 17:40) (5)
 2 'Your vats will — over with new wine' (Proverbs 3:10) (4)
 3 Once yearly (Exodus 30:10) (6)
 4 Milled it (anag.) (3-5)
 5 Region north of Damascus of which Lysanias was tetrarch (Luke 3:1) (7)
 6 Comes between Philippians and 1 Thessalonians (10)
 9 Lake where the first disciples were called (Luke 5:1-11) (10)
 12 Abusive outburst (8)
 14 Are loud (anag.) (7)
 16 Printing errors (6)
 19 'Take my yoke upon you and — from me' (Matthew 11:29) (5)
 20 Jacob's third son (Genesis 29:34) (4)

ACROSS: 1, Sabbatical, 7, Opinion, 8, Laining, 10, Olga, 11, Galliean, 13, Sardis, 15, Severe, 17, Adultery, 18, Flea, 21, Swazi, 22, Acetate, 23, Revelation.
DOWN: 1, Sling, 2, Brim, 3, Annual, 4, Ill-timed, 5, Abilene, 6, Colossians, 9, Gennesaret, 12, Diatribe, 14, Roulade, 16, Errata, 19, Learn, 20, Levi.

