



ECHO



JUNE 2024 EDITION



THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
ECUMENICAL CHURCH OF OCCITANIE

www.ourchurch.fr

X @occitaniechurch 

ECO CELEBRATES ITS THIRD BIRTHDAY



1st June marks the third anniversary of the formation of ECO as an online ecumenical church. From a small beginning with around a dozen people coming together to worship, ECO services are now viewed many hundreds of times each week on YouTube, Facebook and Social Media.

On a number of occasions our viewing figures for a Sunday Service has exceeded 1,000 with people joining us from all over the World !

We look forward to a busy future ministering to our growing congregation. We continue to maintain our rule that we rely on our members for financial support for our church. Those who log on to attend our services are not asked to donate money - but rather to make a gift to their preferred charity.

We look forward to continuing to grow in 2024/5

FATHER JUSTIN UNFROCKED



The US-based Catholic organisation “Catholic Answers” has had to remove clerical dress from their experimental Artificial Intelligence Priest “Father Justin” and turn him into “Justin, a lay theologian” after he told one enquirer it would be acceptable for her to marry her brother, and assured another that it would be all right to baptise her baby in the US soft drink Gatorade.

Justin had been deployed to answer questions about the Catholic faith, but quickly began to identify himself as a Catholic priest, offering absolution to people and giving them penances when they confessed their sins to him.

Justin had been deployed as a low-cost AI trial and had been programmed with all of Catholic Answers’ publications on the Catholic faith. The total cost was approximately \$10,000 US.

Justin (version 2) will replace the existing AI version in the next few weeks.



What's The Big Idea ? - The Books of Judges

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 Judges

Following Joshua's death, a generation grew up who didn't know God (Judges 2:11) and 'every man did what was right in his own eyes' (17:6, 21:25).

The book of Judges is a study in God's response to a permissive society.

The book takes its name from the deliverers that God raised up during this time. God empowered both men and women with His Spirit to rule and deliver the people.

They included Ehud, Deborah, Gideon and his son Abimelech, Jephthah and Samson. The judges operated in the 350 years (from 1050 BC) between Joshua's death and the monarchy.

We see a recurring cycle of apostasy, oppression, penitence and deliverance played out. When the people fell into sin, God sent an enemy nation to oppress them. As a result, they cried to God for help, and He responded by raising up a deliverer to free them.

The saddest words in Judges are those applied to Samson, 'He did not know that the LORD had left him' (16:20). Rejecting God in our lives can begin with tolerating those things that are not in harmony with His will for our lives.

The people's toleration of the beliefs of their pagan neighbours led to a conformity in life and worship with them. Yet God waited for His people to return to Him, when He responded with grace to deliver them.

Gideon stands out as somebody who was unwilling to compromise with the surrounding culture. Despite his weaknesses, God used him to deliver Israel from the Midianite invaders.

We read: 'the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon', lit: 'the Spirit clothed Himself with Gideon' (6:34).

God's grace and faithfulness is at work in those who are prepared to trust Him.



VATICAN OVER-RULES DISMISSAL OF A CARMELITE NUN

Last month, we reported how a French tribunal had awarded damages to a Roman Catholic nun when she was expelled from her convent.

It has now been reported that the Vatican have over-ruled a decision by the Catholic Bishop of Fort Worth, Texas, Michael Olson, to dismiss the Prioress of the Carmelite Monastery in Arlington Texas, Mother Teresa Gerlach.

Mother Gerlach, who is confined to a wheelchair and a cancer-sufferer, was accused of 'inappropriate communications' with a Catholic priest who was also suffering from cancer. She had become concerned that some of the exchanges with the priest were inappropriate and had confided in her former spiritual counsellor, who then reported her to the Bishop.

A series of legal actions then started between the convent and Bishop Olson. A new Prioress was appointed in Arlington, but the nuns have rejected her authority.

The local disputes are ongoing, with the nuns saying "We take Pope Francis at his word when he invited Consecrated Women 'to fight when, in some cases, they are treated unfairly, even within the Church....at times, by men of the Church'".



The Treasurer's new Stewardship Campaign has been remarkably successful at increasing Church income.

Lot House Group

lot.group@ourchurch.fr

Janet Varty

Members of the Lot Group met at the Eglise Saint Hilarion and its Crypt in Duravel (46) on a bright Saturday morning in May. It has a fascinating history of saints relics.

So we pondered and prayed around Duravel's Christian connection with Palestine/Gaza especially at this moment in history.

Saint Hilarion was born AD 291 at Tabatha in Palestine (near modern Gaza). According to Jerome, Hilarion became a Christian while studying in Alexandria. He then came under the influence of the desert father called Anthony and followed his discipline for 2 months.

He returned to Palestine in 306 to live a simple life in a hut in the wilderness, near Gaza on the road to Egypt. (I wonder if it was near where the Ethiopian Eunuch was baptised?)

He spent his time fasting, chanting psalms and weaving baskets from rushes to earn his subsistence. He founded the first Palestinian monastery in AD 329 but later sought solitude again in Thebes, Egypt. He moved on again to North Africa and then once again to Cyprus where he died in 371 AD. His Feast day is October 21st.

** Pause and pray to be inspired by Hilarion's pursuit of solitude, and his relentless quest to seek God. After all his travels and if indeed his remains do rest in Duravel perhaps he would be content!*

** Pause and pray for the people of Palestine at this time.*

Saint Agathon was a Christian hermit in the desert Scete in Egypt. The Scetis valley in Egypt, is now known as the Wadi al Natrun, it is 22 miles long and lies west of the Nile River in the Libyan Desert. It lies slightly below sea level and is dotted with oases and marshes and became a place of refuge for Christians. Many were hermits but others gathered in communities. Perhaps some felt intimidated by the Byzantine authorities in power in Cairo. The Egyptian Coptic believers first lived as hermits and then later organised themselves into communities. As many as 50 monasteries were established by 4th century but today perhaps only

4 remain still inhabited by monks. (?) Saint Agathon died in 370.

** Pause and pray for the Coptic Church that held fast to the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

** Pause and pray for those seeking peace and sanctuary in an uncertain world.*

Saint Poemon, (not pokemon!) was the Abbot on a semi deserted island in the Nile Delta. His band of brothers suffered attacks by the Berbers in 408 and so they fled and settled in the ruins of a pagan temple at Terenuyhis, which was then a settlement in Egypt. He was endowed with virtues of humility kindness and wisdom. When he died in 450 his body was mummified. His relics were offered to the Abbaye in Moissac by Charlemagne.

** Pause and pray to emulate the virtues of humility, kindness and wisdom.*

The relics of the 3 saints were transferred from Moissac to Duravel in 1095.

Duravel has been known since ancient times and a church from as early as 5th century.

In 1055 Gausbert and Seguin de Pestillac donated Duravel and its outbuildings to Moissac Abbey which had recently become a part of the Cluny monastic order.

The Abbot of Moissac, also the Bishop of Toulouse at the time, was interested in this new subsidiary at Duravel and rehabilitated it as a place intended to receive the sick or convalescent monks who suffered from malaria. (Moissac was located near swamps)

After the church was rebuilt, it received the relics of Hilarion, Poemon and Agathon.

We later spent a convivial time in the garden of the local restaurant.

You can visit and learn more. The church can be entered by asking for the key at the Mairie or at the D'Family & Co Restaurant.



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We met again on 30th May, and we opened the afternoon listening to the joyful strains of 'Jubilate' and then began 'That All May Dance' which is a liturgy that rolls together the two great days of Pentecost and Trinity.

The dance is that of the Spirit in our minds, hearts and souls. The dance is that of Jesus as Lord of the dance and we played the well loved hymn of the same name. We prayed and hoped for the flame of God's love to dance with joy in all places of oppression.

We paused to consider the Trinity by plaiting together three strands of red raffia and then formed the united strand into a bracelet and offered it to another person in the group. At one level it is a simple temporary friendship bracelet or on another, a deeper response to the red fire of the spirit and the mystical nature of the God.

We then enjoyed tackling last months ECHO crossword.

As a joint effort it became a noisy and fun activity that highlighted our strengths and weaknesses at solving Bible-based clues! Finally we shared news and views over refreshments.



Our next meeting is in Soturac (46700) on Thursday 27th June and forms our summer garden meeting. (We will arrange lift-sharing.)

We do hope you will be able to join us. Please contact Janet Varty for more information about this event.



9th June is St Columba's Day

ECO will celebrate the Feast Day of the founder of the Iona Community.

On 9th June we will celebrate the Feast of St Columba, the founder of the monastery on Iona, the community with which ECO are connected.

Born in 521 in Donegal, Ireland, Columba trained as a monk.

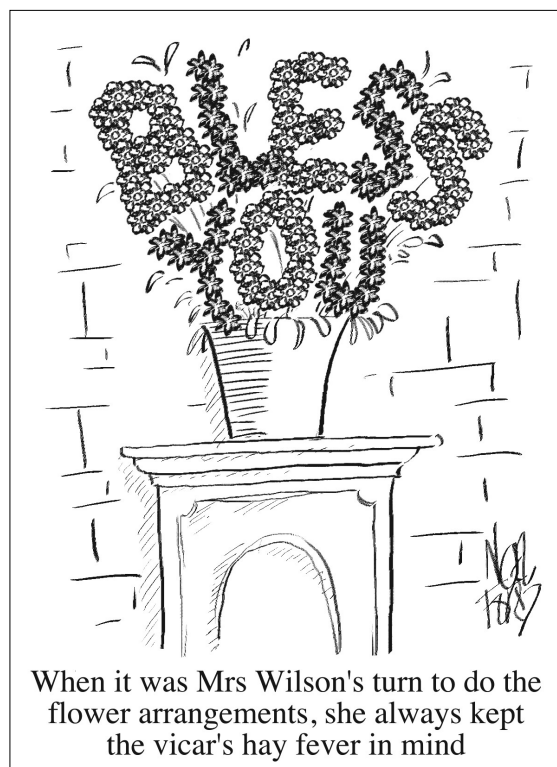
In 565, accompanied by 12 companions, he sailed to the island of Iona, off the SW coast of Scotland, which had been given to him by the ruler of the Gaelic kingdom of Dal Riata to found a monastery.

Columba spent the rest of his life in Scotland, returning to Ireland only for short visits.

Described as a "tall, striking figure of powerful build, he combined the skills of scholar, poet and ruler, with a fearless commitment to God's cause."

Columba also converted Brude, King of the Picts to Christianity.

The Cathach of St Columba, a manuscript book of psalms written by him, can be seen at the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin and is the oldest example of Irish majuscule writing (written entirely in capital letters)



When it was Mrs Wilson's turn to do the flower arrangements, she always kept the vicar's hay fever in mind

COVID PANDEMIC STILL AFFECTING CHURCH ATTENDANCE DESPITE SMALL RECOVERY - CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

Figure 1: Adult attendance and projected pre-pandemic trends (AWA=average weekly attendance; ASA=average Sunday attendance)

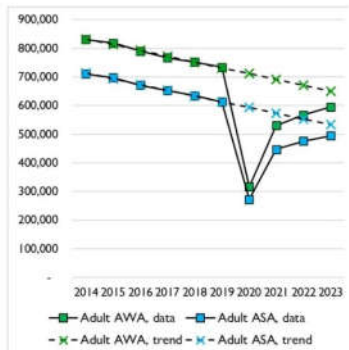
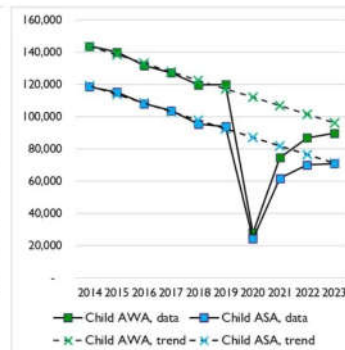


Figure 2: Child attendance and projected pre-pandemic trends (AWA=average weekly attendance; ASA=average Sunday attendance)



In a report on levels of church attendance during 2023, the Church of England have reported that for the third year running, people attending church services has increased, rising by almost 5% over the 2022 figures.

Average weekly attendances rose to 685,000, up from 654,000 in 2022. These numbers are still, however, well below the average weekly attendances of 854,000 in 2019.

Although the Church of England had predicted a continuation of the fall in attendances, the figures are still below even what was predicted.

132,000 parishioners had not returned to in-person worship in churches after Covid, meaning that attendance has more than halved since 1987.



Shirley caught the flower ladies
red-handed, dealing trugs

TWO MIGHTY TUNNEL PROJECTS

Lester Amman

Of all the remarkable engineering projects in the world, one is surely the Channel Tunnel. This undersea railway subway is the longest in the world and connects Kent, England with Calais, France. It is over 31 miles (50.46 km) long and was opened just over 30 years ago, in May 1994.

After six years of construction, this massive enterprise created three tunnels, running parallel to each other. Trains go through two large tunnels with a smaller service tunnel for ventilation and access. Every day, about 500 trains go through the tunnels carrying passengers, cars, lorries and coaches.

The Bible tells us of another amazing tunnelling project. King Hezekiah wanted to fortify the city of Jerusalem against the invading Assyrian armies and needed to protect the water supply. Using simple hand tools, and digging through solid rock, the completed tunnel was 1,750 feet long (533 m)! Also known as the Siloam Tunnel, it still exists today and tourists with torches can shuffle along the cold, wet and narrow passageway from one end to the other.

Close to the tunnel is an original written inscription which describes how the tunnel was excavated. Two teams, one starting at each end of the curving channel met in the middle. Apparently, their direction was guided by men listening to hammering sounds as they gouged through the rock.

King Hezekiah's tunnel was indeed an incredible engineering feat and accomplished without modern machines and sophisticated technology. His vision and careful planning saved the people from their enemy. (2 Kings 20:20)

At the end of his eventful life, a eulogy was written that King Hezekiah did what was right and what was pleasing to the Lord his God. His accomplishments were done in a spirit of complete loyalty and devotion to his God.

We may well ask, when our time draws to a close, if such a fitting tribute will be given to us.



THE MYSTERY OF GEORGE MALLORY

*The man who possibly climbed
Mount Everest 30 years before
Sir Edmund Hillary but
disappeared on the mountain
100 years ago*

100 years ago, on the 8th June 1924, George Herbert Leigh-Mallory disappeared into clouds on the north-east ridge of Mount Everest, approximately 800 feet below the summit, climbing with his partner Andrew Irvine. They were never seen alive again.

In 1999, an expedition funded by an American TV company and the BBC set out to climb Mount Everest to search for the bodies of Mallory and Irvine and to try to determine how far they had ascended in 1924, and whether they had, in fact, reached the summit of the mountain.

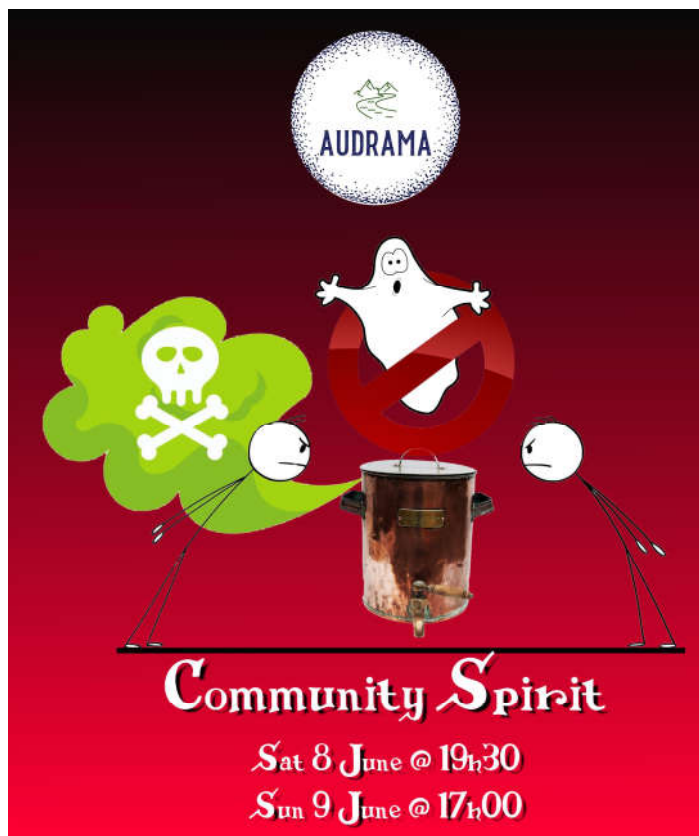
The expedition located Mallory's body, well-preserved in the freezing temperatures and showing signs of serious injuries. The remnants of a climbing rope were still tied round his body. It was apparent from the forensic evidence that Mallory and Irvine had fallen while roped together. Of Irvine's body there was no sign.

Mallory had been carrying a camera when he had set off on his final ascent, and the expedition searched long and hard for it, but could not locate it. They had hoped that the film in the camera might show whether not the two climbers had in fact reached the summit before their accident.

However, two pieces of circumstantial evidence suggest that Mallory and Irvine did make it all the way to the summit. Firstly, a photograph of Mallory's wife which he always carried with him was not amongst his personal possessions. He had promised that he would deposit the photo at the summit if he got there.

Secondly, his snow goggles were in his pocket, indicating that he had died either at night or in the late evening. The timing of their climb would only have made sense if they had reached the summit and were now descending.

The expedition buried Mallory on Mount Everest, and the mystery of whether he reached the summit remains forever unsolved.



Our friends at Audrama are back with a new performance:

Community Spirit - a comedy written by David Muncaster:

The village of Snickerton has a new community hall and all the local groups get together to organise an opening day that will never be forgotten. If they are very unlucky, they will get exactly what they are hoping for !

There are two performances, on Saturday 8th and Sunday 9th June, which will take place in the Salle Polyvalente in Pomas (11250). (There is plenty of parking)

Tickets of €15 per person include fromages and charcuterie, and there will also be a donation bar.

Tickets **cannot** be bought at the door, but have to be reserved in advance.

You can either make bookings via

info@audrama.fr

or by sending a cheque payable to Audrama at 13 Rue du Barry, 11300 LOUPIA.

Any member of Audrama will also be happy to help you to make a booking.

This promises to be a very good evening's entertainment. We will publish a review of the play in the July edition of ECHO.



THERE IS STILL TIME TO REGISTER TO VOTE IN THE UK GENERAL ELECTION.... (BUT NOT MUCH)

Irrespective of how many years you have lived in France, if you were formerly registered on the Electoral Register in the UK, you are now entitled to vote again in the UK July General Election.

You can re-register at

[gov.uk/register-to-vote](https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote)

until 11:59pm on Tuesday 18 June.

You will rejoin the electoral roll where you were last registered to vote in the UK.

However, unless you are planning to be back in the UK on 4th July, you will also need to either register for a postal vote, which you can do online at

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-postal-vote>

or to nominate someone who lives in your constituency and is also registered to vote. A proxy vote can be more reliable because it is not necessary for voting papers to be sent to you here in France and then posted back in time to be received by 4 July.

Most of the main political parties can provide you with a volunteer proxy voter in your constituency if you need one. You can apply online for a proxy vote at

<https://www.gov.uk/how-to-vote/voting-by-proxy>

The vicar at the local church experienced some technical problems with the sound system one Sunday. Instead of starting the service as usual with 'The Lord be with you', he said: "There's something wrong with the microphone."

Not hearing this, the congregation responded: "And also with you."

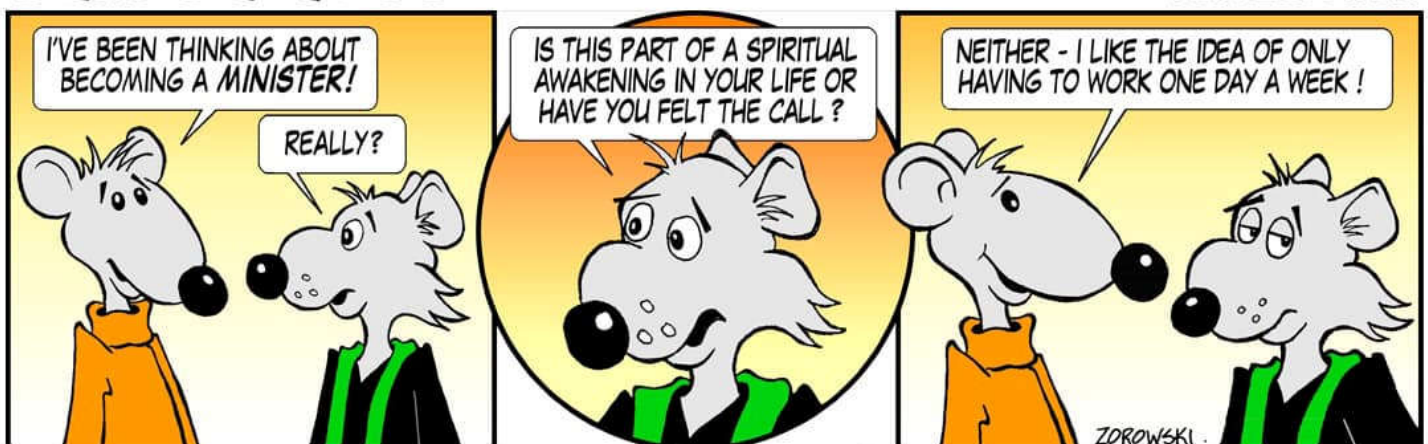


MORE FROM THE CHURCH NOTICEBOARD



Church Mice

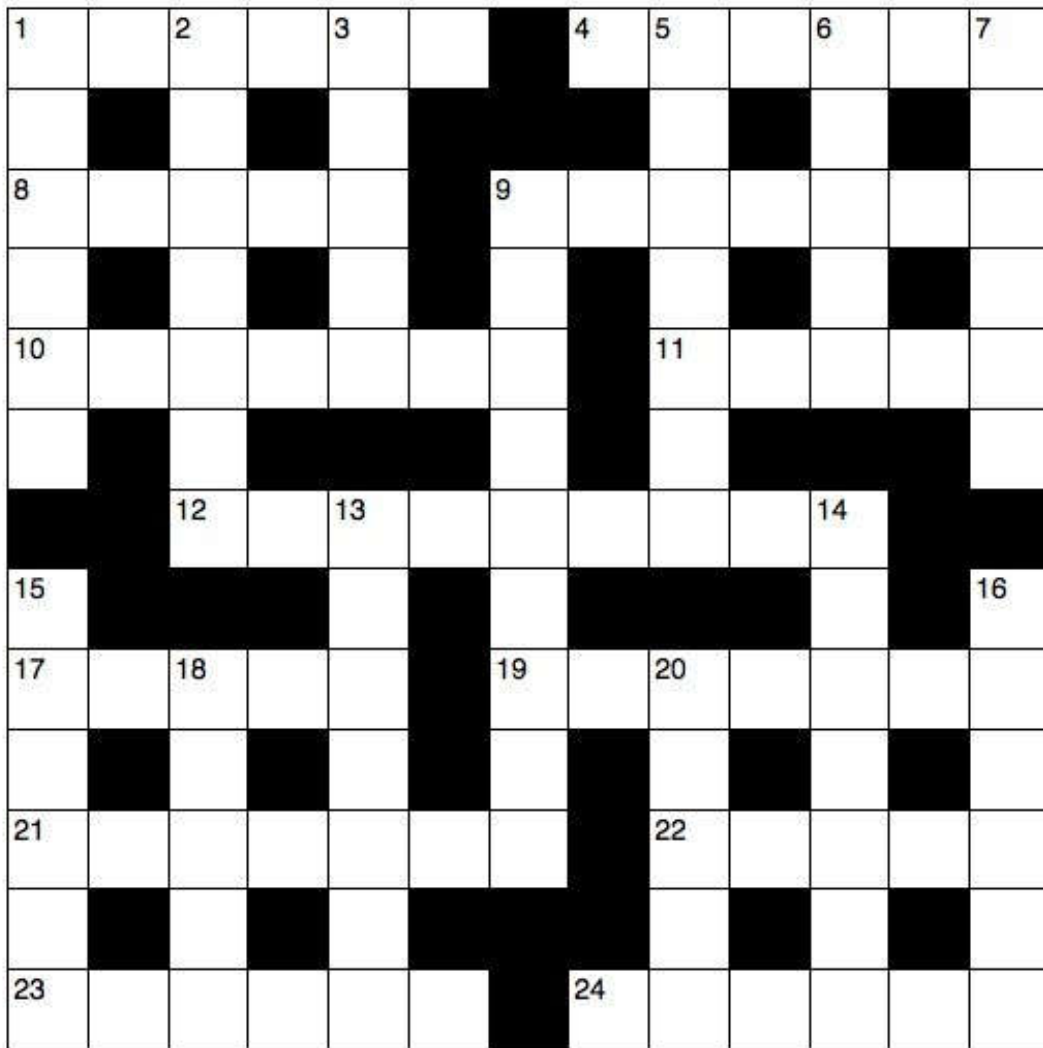
Karl Zorowski



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 Military tactic used by Joshua to attack and destroy the city of Ai (Joshua 8:2) (6)
- 4 Place of learning (6)
- 8 'When Moses' hands grew — , they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it' (Exodus 17:12) (5)
- 9 Unpleasant auguries of the end of the age, as forecast by Jesus (Matthew 24:7) (7)
- 10 Stronghold to which girls in King Xerxes' harem (including Esther) were taken (Esther 2:8) (7)
- 11 Where Saul went to consult a medium before fighting the Philistines (1 Samuel 28:7) (5)
- 12 Propitiation (Hebrews 2:17) (9)
- 17 Turn away (Jeremiah 11:15) (5)
- 19 So clear (anag.) (7)
- 21 'I have just got — , so I can't come': one excuse to be absent from the great banquet (Luke 14:20) (7)
- 22 Long weapon with a pointed head used by horsemen (Job 39:23) (5)
- 23 Musical beat (6)
- 24 What the Israelites were told to use to daub blood on their door-frames at the first Passover (Exodus 12:22) (6)

Down

- 1 Fasten (Exodus 28:37) (6)
- 2 Art bite (anag.) (7)
- 3 'The people of the city were divided; some — with the Jews, others with the apostles' (Acts 14:4) (5)
- 5 Contend (Jeremiah 12:5) (7)
- 6 Possessed (Job 1:3) (5)
- 7 Sheen (Lamentations 4:1) (6)
- 9 'You love evil rather than good, — rather than speaking the truth' (Psalm 52:3) (9)
- 13 Large flightless bird (Job 39:13) (7)
- 14 They were worth several hundred pounds each (Matthew 25:15) (7)
- 15 'A — went out to sow his seed' (Matthew 13:3) (6)
- 16 How Jesus described Jairus's daughter when he went into the room where she lay (Mark 5:39) (6)
- 18 The part of the day when the women went to the tomb on the first Easter morning (John 20:1) (5)
- 20 Narrow passageway between buildings (Luke 14:21) (5)

ACROSS: 1, Ambush, 4, School, 8, Tired, 9, Famines, 10, Married, 22, Lance, 23, Rhythm, 24, Hyssop.
DOWN: 1, Attach, 2, Biretta, 3, Sided, 5, Compete, 6, Owned, 7, Lustre, 9, Falsehood, 13, Ostrich, 14, Talents, 15, Farmer, 16, Asleep, 18, Early, 20, Alley.

ECO WORSHIP CALENDAR JUNE 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
2 10:30 Online Morning Prayer for Trinity 1 / Proper 4	3 20:00 Live Evening Worship on Zoom	4 20:00 Online Service of Compline	5	6 20:00 Online Service of Prayer for Healing	7	8
9 10:30 Special Service for the Feast of St Columba	10 20:00 Live Evening Worship on Zoom	11 20:00 Online Service of Compline	12	13 20:00 Online Service of Prayer for Healing	14	15
16 10:30 Online Morning Prayer for Trinity 3 / Proper 6	17 20:00 Live Evening Worship on Zoom	18 20:00 Online Service of Compline	19	20 20:00 Online Service of Prayer for Healing	21	22
23 10:30 Online Communion for Trinity 4 / Proper 7	24 20:00 Live Evening Worship on Zoom	25 20:00 Online Service of Compline	26	27 20:00 Online Service of Prayer for Healing & Lot House Group Meeting	28	29
30 10:30 Online Morning Prayer for Trinity 5 / Proper 8						

DAVE WALKER CONSIDERS A CRITICAL QUESTION FOR MODERN CHURCHES... HYMN BOOKS V DATA PROJECTORS

THE PROS AND CONS

THE ADVANTAGES OF HYMN BOOKS

SOMETHING TO LOOK AT DURING IDLE MOMENTS



PICKING UP AND PUTTING DOWN A BOOK IS GOOD FOR FITNESS



YOU CAN SEE HOW MANY VERSES YOU STILL HAVE TO GET THROUGH



THE DISADVANTAGES OF DATA PROJECTORS

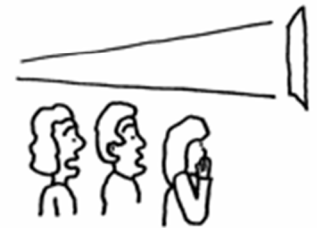
YOU ARE RELYING ON SOMEONE ELSE TO FIND THE CORRECT VERSE



HANDS ARE FREE, SO THERE IS A TEMPTATION TO SCRATCH OR FIDDLE



THERE IS A RISK THAT OPERATORS WILL USE INAPPROPRIATE BACKGROUNDS



THIS ANALYSIS WOULD SEEM TO SUGGEST THAT HYMN BOOKS ARE BETTER

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