



ADVENT 4 EDITION

ECHO



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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
ECUMENICAL CHURCH OF OCCITANIE
www.ourchurch.fr

WORSHIP WITH ECO AND SAVE THE PLANET ?

There is a currently a major focus in churches on how to reduce their carbon footprint and how to promote more environmentally practices.

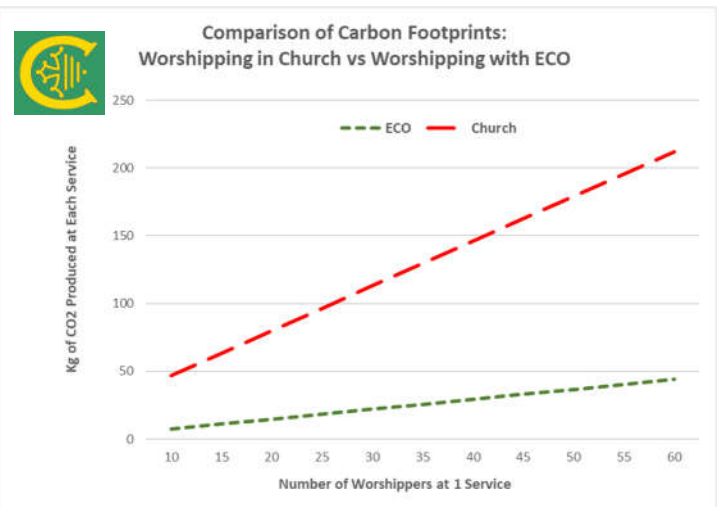
Using CO² emission rates published by the US Environment Protection Agency, we created a Carbon emissions profile for a typical church's Sunday worship and then compared it with the profile of an ECO online service.

As you will see from the graph on the right, unsurprisingly, the Carbon footprint of a church service varies with the number of people in the congregation, but ECO consistently creates only about one quarter of the CO² that a 'conventional' church service would—making it far more environmentally friendly.

Why is this ? Firstly, church buildings tend not to be the most energy-efficient buildings, and in the winter months have to be pre-heated before they can be used. This consumes a lot of energy for a few Sundays each year and the amount of energy used does not vary much irrespective of whether 5 people attend the service or 55. In contrast, people joining online will wish to stay warm while worshipping and will also need to keep their computers on and possibly a light or two. This leads to a variable amount of energy being used, but overall less than warming up a cold building.

And, of course, people worshipping at home are likely to want to make a cup of tea or coffee and so will boil kettles. However, most hospitable churches also like to offer a cup of tea or coffee to worshippers after the service so they, too, boil kettles. A provision has been made in both calculations to allow for this.

The largest factor in these calculations is, however, the amount of carbon produced by people travelling to services. Here in the Occitanie, many people have to travel a long way to attend an English-language service, and in doing so consume a great deal of fuel. Sometimes, of course, people share vehicles (or travel as families), so a very optimistic average of 2 litres of fuel being consumed by each vehicle driven to a church service has been included. This will generate in the order of 4.4kg of CO² per vehicle. ECO, of course, does not lead to any of this CO² production except where a (very occasional) in-person service is held.



While a simple view of Carbon-neutrality would simply say that this is achieved by never meeting in person where travel is involved, but this clearly ignores the human desire to gather together to worship God. Jesus himself declares this in Matt 18.20: "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

One possible way of balancing this is by donating to a Carbon-offsetting Charity to compensate for CO² produced either at an organisational or a personal level.

ECO will be considering all these issues more deeply in 2022.



Reverend Phil was determined not allow being in self-isolation interfere with his plans for a Christmas morning service



CHRISTMAS WORSHIP AT ECO

We have set out below our programme of worship for Christmas week. For all details of our latest worship, always go to the Home Page of our website:

www.ourchurch.fr

Sunday 19th December

10:30 am - Online Service of Lessons and Carols

This Sunday we will hold our Service of Lessons and Carols. Please join us to listen to the Nativity Story and sing along to the Carols as loudly as you wish! Our Virtual Zoom Coffee Bar will be open after the service. Our broadcast starts at 10:15 with a Christmas Trivial Pursuit Quiz online.

Friday 24th December

CHRISTMAS EVE

17:00 - Online Crib Service

As the night before Christmas falls, why not join us (or watch later) as we prepare for Christmas Day in a slightly lighter way intended for the young and the young at heart. Come and find out how the Angel Gabriel felt about going to visit Mary and what the King and the sheep chatted about outside the stable.

Saturday 25th December

CHRISTMAS DAY

10:30 - Online Communion

We hope you will join us on Christmas morning for our online Communion Service celebrated by Rev Neil Batcock. If you would like to participate in Communion, please have a piece of bread and some wine or fruit juice handy. As an Ecumenical Church, you are welcome to participate in Communion irrespective of whether you are confirmed in any church. Our Zoom Coffee (or Champagne and Mince Pies?) Bar will be open after the Service.



THE STORY OF THE CHRISTINGLE

The word 'Christingle' actually means 'Christ Light', and celebrates the light of Jesus coming into the world. Stories of how the Christingle began look back to the Moravian Church, which is found in the Czech Republic. The Moravians have held Christingle services for more than 200 years, and according to them, this is how the first Christingle might have been made:

Many years ago the children in a village were asked to bring a Christmas gift to put beside the crib in the church. One family was very poor, and had no money for gifts, but the three children were still determined to take something. The only nice thing they had was an orange, so they decided to give the Christ-child that.

But then they discovered the top was going green, so the eldest cut it out, and put a candle in the hole. To add some colour, one of the girls took a red ribbon from her hair and tied it around the middle of the orange. It was hard to make the ribbon stay still, so they fastened it in place with toothpicks. The toothpicks looked a bit bare, so the youngest child added some raisins to them.

The children took their decorated orange lantern to the church for the Christmas Mass. The other children sneered at their meagre gift, but the priest seized upon it with joy. He held it up as an example of the true understanding of the meaning of Christmas, for the following reasons: the orange is round, like the world; the candle gives us light in the dark, like the love of God; the red ribbon goes round the 'world', as a symbol of Christ's blood, given for everyone; the four sticks point in all directions, and symbolise that God is over all: North, South, East and West; and the fruit and nuts remind us of God's blessings.



Worship for the Young and the Young At Heart

This weekend, our friend in the Diocese of St Albans, Margaret Pritchard Houston has published a short video for the 4th Sunday in Advent about Mary visiting her cousin Elizabeth. You will find a link to this on our web page for this Sunday's Service.