



# ECHO

16TH JUNE 2021

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE  
ECUMENICAL CHURCH OF OCCITANIE  
[www.ourchurch.fr](http://www.ourchurch.fr)



**OUR FIRST ONLINE COMMUNION SERVICE will be broadcast this Sunday on our website at 10:30 am.**

Based on an Iona Communion Liturgy, which permits communion to be shared on the internet, you need have a small piece of bread and some wine or fruit juice beside you as you watch our service next Sunday.

Also, for the first time next Sunday we will be simultaneously broadcasting our service on YouTube and Facebook Live, so you can join us on any of your favourite platforms. We will be adding other social media platforms later on.

Would you like to be kept informed about our future services and events ?

If you go to our website

**[www.ourchurch.fr](http://www.ourchurch.fr)**

You can find details of all our forthcoming services, copies of the orders of service which we will be using (where the words of the service will not be appearing on screen)

You can also subscribe to this newsletter, which will be sent to you via e-mail. You can, of course, unsubscribe at any time that you wish. Just follow the link on the front page of our website to subscribe, or send an e-mail to

**[echo@ourchurch.fr](mailto:echo@ourchurch.fr)**



It already appears that Occitanie is much bigger than we imagined, as we have been joined by viewers from all over the world !



**Follow us on Facebook**

Look up:

**[@Ourchurchinfrance](https://www.facebook.com/Ourchurchinfrance)**



Owing to low numbers attending when physical worship restarted, Eric suddenly realised that he wouldn't be able to mime the singing of the hymns this morning and would have to stay awake during the sermon

**Watch us on Facebook Live next Sunday**



## NEXT WEEK'S WORSHIP AT

### ECO

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

**[www.ourchurch.fr](http://www.ourchurch.fr)**

#### **Sunday June 20th - Trinity 2 - Proper 6**

##### **10:30 am Online Communion Service**

This service will include a Communion Service which you are all welcome to participate in, irrespective of whether or not you are confirmed.

On the 20th you are welcome to either join us on Facebook Live or on YouTube.

All the words of the service will appear on-screen but we will also place a copy of the Order of Service on our website.

After the service, you are cordially invited to come and join us in our Virtual Zoom Coffee Bar

#### **Tuesday June 22nd**

##### **19:00 - An Iona Service of Evening Prayer**

This is a short service of prayer and readings from the Bible which is available as a video and also as a Podcast to download and listen to at the close of the day. We also provide the order of service in .PDF for you to download and keep so that you can follow it on your smartphone, tablet or computer if you wish.

#### **Thursday June 24th**

##### **19:00 - A Service of Prayer for Healing**

Each week, we come together to pray by name for God's healing touch for those who are in special need at this time. We are happy to include anyone known to you in our prayers (we only refer to people by their first names)

Please send any names of people whom you would like to be included to

**[healing@ourchurch.fr](mailto:healing@ourchurch.fr)**

by Wednesday evening.

## WHY ECO ?

### ***THERE APPEAR TO BE SOME MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT ECO, SO WE THOUGHT WE SHOULD CLEAR THEM UP AND DISPEL SOME FALSE RUMOURS***

In 2018, the Anglican Chaplaincy of Midi Pyrenees and Aude undertook a review of its Mission in the Occitanie. From this, it emerged that there was a need to offer ministry and worship online to a wide group of English-speaking Christians of different denominations who live in Occitanie but have no easy contact with any church in this area.

The events of 2019 and 2020 forced a greater emphasis on Online Worship, and enabled us to understand the challenges and opportunities which presented themselves in worshipping online.

Now in 2021, as churches prepared to resume their normal pattern of worshipping in buildings, an opportunity arose to progress online worship in order to keep contact with the many friends whom we have made during the lockdowns and also to provide a means of meeting the needs of English-speaking members of the French Protestant Churches.

This was discussed with the senior local members of the Church of England in May 2021, and for various reasons, an opportunity presented itself to initiate ECO on 1 June.

In order to avoid legal complications and financial issues which can arise when trying to incorporate a French-based religious organisation with English church rules (especially in the light of the forthcoming new laws governing religious organisations in France), ECO is being registered with the French authorities as a separate religious organisation. It also emphasises the independent and Ecumenical nature of the organisation and demonstrates that it is not simply an integral part of the Church of England.

We are grateful to the French Protestant churches for their assistance in helping to set up our legal framework, which will allow us to obtain insurance to hold events in rented premises and also a bank account to pay for this.

**ECO does not accept any money from people who worship with us** - the founders are committed to financially supporting this project. People who "attend" our events are invited to donate to a charity of their choosing in the name of their faith.

People who attend our online worship are also encouraged to remain members of any other church to which they belong and to attend those when and if they can.

**ECO is a supplement to worship in the Occitanie, and is not intended to be replacement. Please do not let anyone tell you anything different.**



## A VISION OF THE CHURCH IN 2025

Church blogger Carey Nieuwhof has been looking at what are the likely characteristics of churches in 5 years' time. This is a summarised version of a longer article he recently published.

**5 years from now, many churches will be in decline. There are 7 reasons why this may happen, and why it is important to take action now to prevent this happening to our church.**

### The leaders bet everything on a physical return to church

Early indications are that although many people do wish to return to physical worship in the aftermath of Covid-19, "in-person church" may well not be the only kind of church in the future.

In America, the UK and here in France, returning attendances can be as low as 40% of previous numbers in the congregation. A recent opinion poll of church ministers showed that almost half of all respondents believe that in-person attendance will be lower once Covid-19 has passed or at least come under some kind of control.

### Success is still measured by the number of people who attend physical locations

One of the largest way in which most churches measure their success is by counting the number of people who walk in on a Sunday morning. If people engage with church differently via digital, home-based or community-based gatherings, the church which defines success by worship attendance alone in a church building will grow more and more frustrated. It is instead necessary to measure *spiritual growth* across a whole range of activities.

### Online ministry is seen as an afterthought or lesser form of worship

There is a real danger that as physical worship resumes, online ministry will fall into disuse or be an afterthought. Perhaps just a YouTube video of last Sunday's service. However, people are living more digitally than ever, and most businesses continue to rethink their strategy in light of it, reducing physical locations and pivoting to online. Online worship is a new opportunity to reach more people. Luke 5 tells us how Jesus innovatively put out on Lake Galilee in a fishing boat to be able to preach to a larger group of people. We should do the same.

### All feedback comes from the echo chamber

This is a fascinating and challenging observation.

Present congregations tend to strongly favour being in a Church on a Sunday morning. This has been the pattern for decades if not centuries, and so it is what both ministers and congregations feel comfortable and confident with. Ministers have trained for this for years. Everyone around them will tell them that this is the right thing to do. Even social media posts will support this because social media are programmed to show you things you like.

Carey asks this question: "Did you ever have a craving for a new food before you had first tried it?"

He warns that "Leaders of declining churches surround themselves with like-minded voices and influences, convinced they're right and everyone else is wrong."

### Returning to the "4 Songs and a Message Format" is a mistake

The COVID disruption and mass move to online has meant most churches quickly discovered that what 'worked' in terms of in-person weekend services didn't translate online, and many pivoted to shorter services, less or different music and more engaging, interactive formats to engage people.

Carey says "The key is to keep faithfully experimenting and exploring what helps people best connect with God."

### The church building, not the home or community, was re-established as the sole locus of ministry

One thing this crisis has revealed is how facility-centric the dominant model of ministry has been for generations in the Western Church. Take away our buildings, and we're all a little lost.

One trend developing before our eyes is the home as the new center of life. In the last year, work, food preparation, entertainment, school, and shopping are now more home-based than ever. And that's also been true of church.

In the future, dying churches will see their building—not the home and community—as the primary locus of ministry. Growing churches won't.

### Don't underestimate the depth of the chasm in the Culture Gap

There is a video on YouTube showing some teenagers reacting to Phil Collins' "In The Air Tonight". This was considered a highly innovative song when it was first released, but the teenagers barely relate to it.

The "Smartphone" was introduced in the early 1990's but within 10 years, its growing presence led to the founding of YouTube, which we now take as much for granted as regular television. The explosion of high-performance mobile devices has meant that your entire world can be with you wherever you go. For anyone born post-1980 the universal availability of any kind of information or service at the press of a phone key is an intrinsic part of their lives.

Newspapers and books are losing ground to online digitally available services. Even art museums are now in danger as you can purchase a "smart picture frame" which can be programmed to display your choice of 200,000 classic art works as well as your own creations.

**Failure to reach out to people where they are, and by all means possible is likely to increasingly marginalise traditional churches if they cling to a way of preaching the good news of the Gospel that no one is actually around to hear.**