

# **THE CARLOPS PATCHWORK**

**A service to mark the tenth anniversary of refurbishing  
Carlops Church  
Sunday 31st March 2019, at 10am**

**Designed and led by  
Andy Armstrong, Laura Armstrong and Julie  
Gamble**

**Welcome and introduction  
Mary McElroy**

This month, it is ten years since Carlops Church re-opened after the major refurbishment undertaken in 2008-09. In marking that anniversary, we wanted to look forward as well as back, so we asked a team of the younger people in our congregation if they would create and deliver a service for us. In this service, they reflect upon what they think is special and valuable about Carlops Church, and how they hope and envisage it may develop in the future.

I know how much thought and effort Andy, Laura and Julie have put into this service for us all, and I am pleased and excited to welcome them and invite them to lead our worship this morning.

**Call to worship     *Philippians c1 v3-7a*  
Julie Gamble**

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart.

## **Hymn 205     *Lord can this really be?***

### **Prayer**

**Laura Armstrong**

Dear Heavenly Father, we meet before you this Sunday being grateful for many moments in the week that has passed.

We thank you for each person we have come across and for all the love and kindness we have benefitted from or been able to express. We think of the challenges we faced and came through, and those that remain with us. We pray for wisdom to negotiate them.

On this Mothering Sunday, we thank you for the gift of little ones and the hope, entertainment and joy they bring to us. Our hope is that they will grow up here in this place and feel a sense of belonging that becomes part of who they are.

Lord, we are humbled to have the chance to celebrate the continued support of the community around us – we know that we are blessed to have them and we pray that we can keep and strengthen these ties. Not every church enjoys these circumstances and we remember those around the world who face persecution for the simple act of worship.

God, we give thanks this morning for the folk who make up our congregation – their talents, patience, hard work, and open hearts and arms. We pray that the church continues to look outward, opening the doors at every opportunity, seeking guidance from your word, and inspiration from the life of Jesus.

We ask all these things in your name, Amen.

## **Hymn 251     *Here I am Lord***

### **The Carlops patchwork**

**Laura Armstrong**

The brief that Julie, Andy and I were given for this service was, on the occasion of the ten-year anniversary of the church's

refurbishment, to look ahead to the future of Carlops Church, from the point of view of the younger members of our congregation.

How do we see our church, and what do we envision for its future? What sort of church would we like our children, Maddy, Mary and Juliet, to be part of, thirty years from now?

My first thought was unhelpful: "It's an impossible question, as how can you improve on perfection? I like Carlops Church just the way it is, thank you very much!" So perhaps an easier place to start is to look at what is special about our church, congregation and community now; and what we might hope to pass on to these ragamuffins down at the front here as they grow up.

Mary Levison was kind enough to lend us this patchwork: a work in progress, apparently begun some thirty years ago! I think it's beautiful. Many scraps of fabric, all different, mismatched, carefully stitched together to create something vibrant and colourful. Something that will not only look lovely but also be extremely useful. Something much, much more than the sum of its parts.

You will notice there are several patchworks decorating the church today. This was the image that we kept coming back to as we thought about what is special to us about our church.

It was during a conversation with the McElroys that Julie and I were struck by just how much work is going on in our church community that we were not aware of and, in particular, how much goes on outwith Sunday services. That there are many who are regularly involved with church activities who don't attend on a Sunday, was a surprise to me at least.

We were struck that the reach of our little church extends well, well beyond its four walls and regular Sunday congregation. So many people contributing their own time and knowledge and skills, whatever those may be, to create a community that is vibrant as well as useful, a community that is more than the sum of its parts. We could take the metaphor further and say

that perhaps our shared Christian values are the thread stitching it all together.

So we thought that today, what we would like to do is to look at all the various projects and activities our church is involved with, and try to construct our own patchwork. You'll notice everyone should have found a patchwork piece on their seat when they came in. Andy, Julie and I have tried to come up with a list, though I suspect there will be much we have missed, for which we apologise.

**Re-creating the Carlops patchwork in images**  
**Laura Armstrong, assisted by Andy Armstrong, Julie Gamble and the congregation**

*Photographs representing all the activities organised by Carlops Church had been distributed before the service. These activities were announced in turn, described briefly and the relevant images brought forward and displayed in a honeycomb pattern which has a picture of Carlops Church at its centre.*

*The finished article is displayed in the church.*

**Hymn 247      Moved by the gospel, let us move**

**Carlops 2050; a reflection**  
**Julie Gamble**

Over the last couple of weeks we have enjoyed celebrating the past and present. Let's now turn to the future. There is of course an official plan for the near future of our church, which has been produced with much thought, time and effort. A bit less diligence and authority may have been applied to what I'm about to say here but nevertheless, let's turn our mind's eye to the further future – to Carlops 2050 – the 200th anniversary of the building we stand in now.

In 2050, these cute little people in front of us will be in their early 30s, perhaps with children of their own. A bulging Sunday school would be very welcome – let's start work on an extension!

No doubt in 2050, technology will have reached beyond what we can imagine now: we'll have gone completely wireless; mobile phones, bank cards, cash will all be old news; and we'll have chips embedded under our skin instead. This is just a small taste of what biotechnology could have achieved by then.

Self-driving, rechargeable cars could make getting to the kirk easier for older folk.

We could have Presbytery-allocated cyborgs or holograms instead of ministers. Some might say that would be a huge advantage because they would have an off switch!

Imagine Sunday morning in 2050, you come in to church and put on your virtual reality headset. Immediately you are somewhere else – perhaps on the banks of the River Jordan. Look around and you will see Jesus being baptised and the Holy Spirit descending on him in the form of a dove. We could have the option to observe many of the famous scenes in the Bible this way during worship. Wouldn't that be quite something: the feeling of being there and witnessing the action?

What about outreach in 2050 – perhaps we will be broadcasting our services online by then; folk could tune in and watch from anywhere. Is the world ready for a Carlops service?!

Imagine if the local area had its own online channel full of local characters and interests – we could be a part of that. In America, churches have annual events called “Homecoming” where everyone in the local community and everyone else who has ever had a connection to it or to the church is invited “home” for a huge meal. This is a lovely idea and could be wonderful to try here.

The eco-future of the church could well see a wind turbine in the place usually reserved for a weather vane. Solar panels could be providing part of our electricity and powering a notice board outside.

But some things hopefully won't change: there is no substitute for a bowl of soup, home baking or a warm cup of tea or coffee. Perhaps in 30 years we will still be working our way through the teabags and coffee that folk had stockpiled for a no-deal Brexit. I hope (and I am confident) that the warm welcome that Carlops Church extends to everyone won't change either; nor will its focus on helping people and contributing something valuable to their lives.

Whatever plans and projects come up in the future, whatever bumps there are in the road, we can be sure that God will be here to guide us and that we can lean on each other. We hope that Carlops Church, both us and the building, continues to look outwards and provide as much as possible to those in need, wherever they may be.

At one point during the preparation for this service, Laura and I shared our mild panic that the future of the church could partly be in our hands. However, we should not fret. It is clear what is required – that we shine our light and look to the greatest light – Jesus.

In the New Living translation of the Bible, *John 1 verse 5* reads: "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness can never extinguish it." This idea of an inextinguishable light is inspiring in many ways, but mostly it is reassuring.

We take further heart from *Jeremiah 29 verses 11-13*: "'For I know the plans I have for you' declares the Lord, 'Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.'"

**Hymn 641     *Seek ye first***

**Offering**

**Reading *Romans c12 v3-13***  
**Andy Armstrong**

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophecy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

### **Hymn 501     *Take this moment, sign and space***

#### **Prayer** **Julie Gamble**

Dear Lord, we thank you again for this place and those from all around who spend time here. We pray that our patchwork will grow and will always have room for more pieces. We pray for the continuation of your work far into the Carlops future.

#### **Benediction** **Mary McElroy**

With such love may we serve the world, and serve it kindly

With such love may we serve each other, and serve each other generously

With such love may we serve God, and serve God faithfully

**A Patchwork of Psalms**

**Closing music composed and played by Murray Campbell**

*The music for A Patchwork of Psalms may be used by others without formality or fee, though acknowledgement of source would be appreciated.*