

# Carlops Parish Church

[www.carlopschurch.org](http://www.carlopschurch.org)



## NEWSLETTER

**Volume 15, Number 1 January 2021**

In-church services remain suspended owing to Coronavirus  
Contact [sessionclerk@carlopschurch.org](mailto:sessionclerk@carlopschurch.org) for a link to Carlops' Zoom services

### **Zoom Services, January 2021**

3 January 10am	Rev Nancy Norman
10 January 10am	Dr Patsy Campbell
17 January 10am	Rev Chris Levison
24 January 10am	Miss Sheena Livingstone
31 January 11am	Rev Nancy Norman
<i>Note change of time</i>	<i>Linkage-wide Communion</i>

## Thoughts from the Locum ...

My father's train ran from Christmas into the new year. A heavy, handsome Lionel O-gauge model of an American steam locomotive, complete with cow-catcher, coupled to a coal car, a long succession of freight and flat-bed cars and a bright red caboose with an observation deck, defied the weight of the pull as it sped along its track – around the Christmas tree, under the furniture, making a figure-of-eight round the legs of the dining-room table before the straightaway back to the living room, slowing down for the curves and the bridge over the rug, its throaty whistle and twinkling headlamp heralding its arrival from the darkness under the sofa, as we waited entranced on hands and knees to greet it, but suddenly finding it reversing to the other end of the sofa, my father smiling as, at the control box – the transformer, as he called it – he put the engine into forward gear again at the turn of a knob, to send it chugging steadily from its sofa-tunnel to reach full speed before being eased to a graceful halt at its “station” beside the doll house. Never were we surprised to hear sudden bursts of steam engines and train whistles emanating from the stereo speakers which my father had installed under the benches at our breakfast-room table. Mealtimes at home were not entirely serious occasions.

The transformer was a large box, painted green, with an assortment of knobs, switches, dials and buttons. Hidden within the box was a maze of circuits and wires, two of which extended from the transformer to the track. Two small glass-domed buttons, one on the transformer and one beside the track, glowed red when the power was on.

Always intending – and always forgetting – to ask my father what was being transformed, I knew the answer, of course: a slumbering engine instantly catapulted into a flying dynamo by the application of an unseen force. But that was the least of it. The real transformers were my father's infectious delight, his wonderful precision of timing and his love for his family.

An animated electronic Christmas card this year portrays a farmer entering a darkened shed to shine his torch upon a jumble of assorted farmyard implements. The beam of light transforms the ordinary objects into shadow-shapes on the wall – as if there were figures, in the act of kneeling, bending over a small shape in the centre of their circle. The farmer stops, and removes his cap. In silent homage. As if he were witnessing anew that blessed nativity scene two thousand years ago.

Seeing the silhouettes in St Andrew's church garden, did we not feel something of that same instinctive impulse?

Light, love, delight, wonder – these are life-transformers.

At a new year's beginning, may our prayer be for people everywhere to know the audacious, transformative power of these often hidden forces that bubble up in the most unexpected places at the most unexpected times and from the most unexpected sources and probably when we are most in need and expect the least.

Nancy Norman

## **Towards re-opening Carlops Church**

Carlops Church re-opened for some worship in Advent with several short, Wednesday afternoon worship meetings which were welcomed and well-attended.

Concerns about the “new” virus strain which emerged just before Christmas, and government’s post-Christmas coronavirus regulations, have necessitated the withdrawal of such meetings, but it is the intention to reinstate them when it is safe to do so. It may also be possible to open the church for private reflection at certain times. If this is arranged, details will be published widely.

Zoom will remain our main mode of worship until we can all meet in the church to worship, sing, drink coffee and chat in the once-normal way. If current trends receive a fair wind, that may happen later this year.

Re-opening the church involved more than unlocking the door and switching on heating and lights. Necessary regulations required careful planning and preparation, then submission of detailed proposals for independent assessment and approval. We thank all who contributed to that on our behalf and should mention Murray Campbell, Gill Gold and Sheena Livingstone.

## **Happy New Year**

We wish everyone a happy new year. Despite current restrictions, there is much to look forward to in 2021.

Hopefully, we will see some return to familiar ways as vaccination progresses and the risk of infection and illness declines. The article below signals a first step towards that return to normality in our own church community.

We also look forward to establishing our extended linkage with the parishes of Upper Tweeddale. Let us hope that we can put the proper formalities in place soon, then begin to seek a minister for the new, six-church linkage.

## **Locusts in Ethiopia**

Funded by the Scottish Government, Christian Aid is working in Ethiopia to prevent further devastation to crops by locusts. The region will suffer major food problems if they not eradicated. A swarm of 40 million locusts can eat as much food in a day as 35,000 people.

The insects, not seen on this scale for two decades, have been causing problems in Ethiopia since June 2019. Locusts thrive on warm temperatures and heavy rainfall. Climate change is enhancing the conditions they need to emerge and flourish.

Christian Aid is supporting poor farmers to battle the locusts, using hand sprayers to kill the

young hoppers before they swarm. The ideal breeding conditions make these local interventions vital. Christian Aid is also supplying seed so that farmers can provide food for their families and communities.

Robert Higgins, *Chair, linkage Christian Aid committee*

## **The Column** **Bye-bye 2020; hello 2021**

Many of us may think *Good riddance, 2020* as we enter 2021. Recent alarms about a new virus strain notwithstanding, vaccine news is encouraging; release from the *shut down – open up – shut down* cycle may beckon. But before we abandon 2020, let us review the experience; there may be pearls to take forward.

Carlops people showed great concern for their fellows: Jim Eccleston's (still operating) volunteer group; the Allan Ramsay food deliveries; many unnamed people caring quietly for others.

Carlops Church adopted Zoom worship quickly and results were amazingly good: average attendance rose, 28 to 40, and stayed there; new supporters joined the in-with-the-bricks crowd; some occasional worshippers became regulars; the ambience was warm, the key benefit expressed as *being with people who are friends*. (A lesson there for all worship) Those of us who feared technology would exclude many were wrong; few regulars did not zoom regularly, and that by choice, not for technical reasons.

Zoom also saw us successfully through social events and Kirk Session meetings, the latter more focused than some of old, and wholly effective. The national church was moved to legitimise technological practices that will serve well in future.

A lesson to draw as we return to some form of normal, hopefully during 2021, is that we should retain some of these new models; they may have been forced upon us, but they work.

It can't be right to abandon online worship entirely – and reject those who joined us via Zoom. Or to return unquestioningly to sometimes rambling meetings, now we know that some business can be conducted effectively on-screen. Or to drag people out on a snowy night for a talk they could hear in safe comfort at home.

On the other hand: it will be good to meet in the church again: to worship, sing, eat soup and chat with friends, and rejoice. It will be good to go to the hall to watch, listen and applaud. Above all, it will be good to reach our Monday to Saturday friends more often, and to serve our whole community.

These are one person's thoughts. It would be good to build some consensus of what works and how we might go into 2021 and beyond. Do you have a story, an idea, a view? Do get in touch.

Rennie McElroy

## **Forthcoming events**

None currently scheduled. Watch this space!

## **Material for next issue**

To [info@carlopschurch.org](mailto:info@carlopschurch.org) by Monday 25 January 2021 please

**End**