

Carlops Parish Church

www.carlopschurch.org



NEWSLETTER

Volume 15, Number 12 December 2021

Services, December 2021

Services are held in church and are also available via Zoom
Contact sessionclerk@carlopschurch.org for the link to Carlops' Zoom services

28 November 10am	David Henderson-Howat
5 December 10am	Rev Dr Tony Foley
12 December 10am	Mrs Mary McElroy
19 December 10am	Rev Chris Levison <i>Lessons and carols</i>
24 December 7pm	<i>Carol service</i>
26 December 10am	Prof Murray Campbell

Happy Christmas, everyone!

Our new minister greets Carlops What is the greatest gift?

Well, it finally happened. On 25th October, at St Andrew's West Linton, I was inducted as the minister of the parishes of West Tweeddale. I cannot tell you how happy I am to be here. My journey away from and back to here has been convoluted, but sometimes a journey tells you a lot about your destination.

We are all born without choosing to be, to parents we didn't choose, into bodies and within borders we didn't choose; but the choices we do decide upon all work to shape the life we make. I am happy to say that I choose to be the minister of West Tweeddale and happily for me, you the people and churches of West Tweeddale, choose me to be your minister.

I don't for one minute imagine that you will all be filling the pews every Sunday simply because I am your minister, or even that you might believe everything that I believe in, or indeed the way that I believe it. But I do want you to know that in as much as I can be of help to you and yours, I will try my best to be here (and there) for each and all of you. I leave you with a poem by Mary Oliver that I think captures what I am trying to say.

What is the greatest gift?

Could it be the world itself - the oceans, the meadow lark, the patience of trees in the wind?

Could it be love, with its sweet clamour of passion?

Something else – something else entirely – holds me in thrall.

That you have a life that I wonder about more than I wonder about my own.

That you have a life – courteous, intelligent – that I wonder about more than I do my own.

That you have a soul – your own, no one else's – that I wonder about more than I do my own.

So I find my soul clapping its hands for yours more than my own.

Peace, Tony Foley

Happy Christmas everyone!

We wish you a happy and peaceful Christmas and extend a warm invitation to you to join in the events we are planning to celebrate. Often, you can attend these in person or participate via Zoom. Events are listed in this issue and on our website: go to www.carlopschurch.org and select *What's on*.

Food for thought in challenging times

The Department of Psychology at Duke University in the United States recently did a study on those habits that best helped people to maintain mental health during times of great social and personal stress. After observing and interviewing a large group of people they noted that those who coped best with the stress of challenging times all had the following things in common ...

1. They did not waste time and energy fighting conditions that they could not change
2. They had all made a conscious commitment to stay involved with the world of their day-to-day life and resisted the temptation to withdraw and become reclusive during difficult times
3. They had learned to accept their limitations and to adapt and not expect too much of themselves
4. They refused to indulge in self-pity and instead intentionally sought to cultivate virtues like love, humour, compassion, and loyalty
5. Finally, that these people all had a faith in something bigger than themselves

Interestingly among the major factors that caused unhappiness in those who scored lowest on any test for measuring happiness were the following:

- A self-centred approach to life coupled with persistent suspicion and resentment and a tendency to nurse grudges
- An unwholesome preoccupation with old mistakes and failures that often resulted in feelings of inadequacy and a free-floating sense of depression

I am so very tempted to launch into a homily on how these findings are all present in the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels. However, space forbids, and I have found that often the wisdom we value most is that which we have discovered for ourselves. Why not take the opportunity during these challenging times to discover the life-changing and life-enhancing wisdom of Jesus by reading one of the four Gospels. If after doing so you find yourself with a multitude of queries and questions I for one would be very happy to talk to you about them. In the meantime, let me leave you with this thought by John Newton.

I compare the troubles which we have to undergo in the course of the year to a great bundle of sticks, far too large for us to lift. But God does not require us to carry the whole at once. He mercifully unties the bundle and gives us first one stick, which we are to carry today, and then another, which we are to carry tomorrow, and so on. This we might easily manage if we would only take the burden appointed for us each day, but we choose to increase our troubles by carrying yesterday's stick over again today and adding tomorrow's burden to our load before we are required to bear it. John Newton

Peace, Tony Foley

“Shoebox & Gift service” reminders

Carlops Church will support Women’s Aid, East and Midlothian again this Christmas. Having consulted them, we plan to donate cash to let them purchase such toys and personal items as suit their needs best.

Donate by BACS to Carlops Church: sort code 80-09-39, account 00246459; or send a cheque payable to Carlops Church to Mary McElroy, Marfield View, Carlops EH26 9 NJ. I will forward the total sum to the charity. Extended closing date for donations: 7 December 2021. Later gifts may not reach the charity in time for Christmas.

Mary McElroy *Treasurer*

From our former Interim Moderator

Janet and I want to express our most grateful thanks to the congregations and Kirk Sessions for your overwhelming generosity to us both, in the presentations made following Dr Tony Foley's induction service.

It has been a very great privilege to work with the office bearers and members of the six congregations, as we have moved to the creation of the new linking and the appointment of Tony as minister. It has been such a joy; thank you, all of you.

I could scarcely believe my eyes when I got home and opened the envelope and I struggle to find words, adequate to express my gratitude. Please be assured that your gift is most sincerely appreciated and will be used in such a way as to provide a constant reminder of your kindness.

Janet is thrilled with the beautiful bouquet which now occupies a prominent spot in our home in Broughton.

God bless you all as we move forward together.

With love, Calum Macdougall

From our former Locum Minister

Dear Friends

The past years serving as Locum in the churches of Carlops, Kirkurd & Newlands and St Andrew's West Linton have been, for me, a wonderful experience, a source of so many blessings and friendships.

The gratitude with which I write this to you is heart-felt:

- for the immense kindness and generosity of the presentation made to me on Monday evening – Jean Howat's words, a most generous cheque and lovely flowers and cards;
- for the privilege of sharing worship with you, Sunday by Sunday, in each of the parishes – overcoming the obstacles of covid restrictions – and for the opportunity to work with an

excellent team of worship leaders, readers, prayer leaders, musicians, and those who have mastered the art of Zoom;

- for the guidance always given so helpfully and willingly by the Clerks, the Treasurers, Elders and office-bearers;
- for the ways in which the church presence is so important a part of the communities in which they happen to be placed;
- and gratitude for every opportunity given to me to share, with so many of you, life's sorrows and joys, its good humour and concern.

I thought Tony's service of induction went splendid – a fine beginning to a ministry so long awaited, and for that I wish you and your new minister well! We are all immensely privileged to serve in these churches.

Thank you again, and with love and best wishes

Nancy Norman

A Zoom study for Advent

Advent is upon us friends, and Christmas will soon follow. If you would like to join us on a “*walk through Advent towards Christmas*” we are planning to run a Zoom study centred around Walter Brueggemann's book *The Names of the Messiah*. The book explores the meaning and implications behind the names of Jesus as described by the prophet Isaiah: *Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*. The Zoom sessions will have a loosely structured format where you can explore your faith and questions about Jesus in the company of others in an uncensored, unfiltered environment.

No matter where you place yourself on the faith spectrum, whether among the convinced, or the confused, or the just plain curious, you are more than welcome to join us and share your thoughts and ask your questions. Although the group will meet every week for 50 minutes for four weeks, that does not mean you have to commit to being there every week; each chapter lends itself to you coming when you can without having to have been there the week before.

Check out the book and see if this is something you would like to be part of. Here is a link for Amazon <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Names-Messiah-Advent-Walter-Brueggemann-ebook/dp/B01KTZH3PU/ref>. Please let me know if you would like to participate and we can work out a time that works for all.

Peace, Tony Foley

Eco Group restart plans

The Eco Group held its first face-to-face meeting since the pandemic began on 26 October 2021. Those present agreed a short programme of events that we hope to offer between now and summer 2022. All agreed that the safety and health of all who might attend these events would be key to their planning.

The first event is an informal coffee and catch-up session on Saturday 11 December, in the church. See also at *Forthcoming events* in this issue. All invited; we hope you may join in.

The Eco Group hopes that some events may involve our new linkage partners and thus contribute to strengthening the linkage by enabling people to get to know each other; details soon.

Meeting during COP26, and looking to the longer term, the Group agreed to outline a draft strategy for how Carlops Church might approach net zero emissions for consideration by the Kirk Session. In this context, Gill Gold's research work on upgrading and protecting the windows was welcomed.

More news about Eco Group plans and activities as it becomes available.

Revamped Newsletter next year

This issue of the *Newsletter* is likely to be the last designed for the established, paper-focused, print-and-fold format. I wrote in October that I proposed to shift to a single, electronic version in 2022 and invited comment; that received does not suggest I should change my proposal. Of course, it will be possible for any reader to print the electronically received *Newsletter* at home, using his or her own printer.

The revamped *Newsletter* will still be published every month and will still aim to cover the whole gamut of Carlops Church activity. I will still edit it. It will be circulated by email to a wider circle of people and will have a new design. For more details, wait until January!

Rennie McElroy *Editor*

Linton Singers' Christmas Concert

Covid permitting, the Linton Singers will give a Christmas concert on Saturday 18 December 2021 at 7.30pm in Carlops Village Centre. The concert may also be available via Zoom. Numbers will be limited to observe covid precautions and regulations, but if demand warrants it, the concert may be repeated on Friday 17 December: same time, same place.

Measures will be in place to observe audience safety and covid regulations: seats will be well-spaced; masks should be worn when moving around the hall; no catering, but audience members may bring their own drinks and snacks.

This will be a Christmas concert with joyous, uplifting music to brighten the spirit after the challenging times of the last few months. It will be a charity concert in aid of Mary's Meals. Tickets are £5 for adults, £2.50 for children. Tickets and seat reservations may be made via Gill Gold and/or at info@lintonsingers.co.uk.

Gill Gold

Show Your Heart for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK

The Faith Action Forum of the Church of Scotland in its most recent update of 10 November 2021, has drawn attention to the urgent need for church members to be aware of some new legislation currently being put before the UK Parliament, in The Nationality and Borders Bill.

This had its first reading on 6 July 2021 and will be having its second reading quite soon. We are being urged to show our support in sharing our concerns about the new proposals. The main points are:

- It will be a criminal offence to knowingly arrive in the UK without permission.
- There will be 'regular' and 'irregular' routes. Those arriving by an irregular route will either be sent back to the nearest 'safe' country through which they passed, or allowed to stay only temporarily with limited family reunion rights and with limited access to benefits.
- Reception Centres will be set up for asylum-seekers who have been rejected and for those awaiting processing.

Various churches, including our Church of Scotland, are urging us to show support in opposing these changes, in particular, by contacting our local MPs. Personal letters are seen to be the most effective way of contact, and it is important that your name and address is on the letter.

Margaret Habeshaw will be happy to send you a copy of the Faith Action Forum update if you have difficulty finding it on the Church of Scotland website. It gives guidance on writing an effective letter and details of the Orange Heart campaign.

Our Guild members are currently looking at ways in which we could support some local churches in their support of families being relocated into Midlothian from Afghanistan.

Margaret Habeshaw

The Column The blue marble

I saw this prose poem in The Times; it is an advertisement from Sky, the media organization, to publicise Sky go zero, its project supporting the environment. Googling Sky go zero will take you to an interesting website: advertising of course, so naturally concerned to show Sky in the best light; but with sound environmental content for all that. All else apart, I think the poem is beautiful.

Sky go zero campaign poem

When you look at that tiny blue marble,
What do you see?
We see lakes, forests, deserts and oceans.
We see flocks, herds, prides and packs.
We see creatures big and small.
We see seven billion birthdays.
We see autumn leaves and summer nights.
We see old friends and new beginnings.
We see every first day at school,
Every wedding anniversary,
Every piece of art painted,
Every song and story written,
Every dreamer and believer ever.
We see hope.
We see change.
We see home.
And we've all got the opportunity to save it.
Let's look after what we have.
Let's go Zero.

Submitted by Rennie McElroy Editor

Forthcoming events

Tales and Fables from round about Carlops, Friday 3 December 2021, 7pm ***Event postponed***

This event won't go ahead as planned, but we hope to bring it to an audience in 2022. We feel that the atmosphere we wish to create for the event won't be possible while restrictions are in place. This delay allows plenty of preparation time for anyone who wishes to present a tale!
Julie Gamble and Sophie Pilgrim

Coffee and catch-up chat in Carlops Church Saturday 11 December 2021, 10.30am-12noon

Our first attempt at revisiting (almost) old-style events: come and say hello, have a coffee, and meet friends.

Material for next issue

To info@carlopschurch.org by Monday 27 December 2021

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