



# CARLOPS CHURCH

In the community, for the community

## Newsletter

Volume 16, Number 2; February 2022

### Services, February 2022

Services held in church and available via Zoom  
Request link from [sessionclerk@carlopschurch.org](mailto:sessionclerk@carlopschurch.org)

30 January 10am: Steven Whalley  
6 February 10am: Mary McElroy  
13 February 10am: Rev Dr Tony Foley  
20 February 10am: Prof Murray Campbell  
27 February 10am: Rev Chris Levison  
6 March 10am: Rev Dr Tony Foley

**Join us, in the church, or in other activities**

**We promise you a warm welcome**

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



# Our Minister

## The fleas of Ravensbrück

The Apostle Paul was a person who throughout his life and ministry suffered many personal hardships, professional setbacks, physical sickness, and violent persecutions. But he tells us that throughout all these experiences, he learned that God can, if we let him, use all things, even the painful, the unpleasant and the unexpected, to bring blessings out of burdens.

In her book *The Hiding Place*, Corrie Ten Boom tells of her family's experience of helping Jewish families to escape from Nazi persecution. Sadly, one of their neighbours informed on the Ten Boom family. The Gestapo later arrested Corrie and her family. Corrie and her sister Betsie were sent to Ravensbrück concentration camp. The barrack block that the sisters were placed in was not only overcrowded, but also, flea infested. The overcrowding was difficult but for Corrie and her fellow female prisoners the fleas made life intolerable.

Corrie and Betsie had been able to miraculously smuggle a Bible into the camp. In the Bible, they had read the words *give thanks in all circumstances* (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Betsie decided that this meant thanking God even for the fleas, believing that God can use all things for our good. This kind of response was initially too much for Corrie, who said she could not do such a thing. But Betsie insisted; eventually Corrie conceded and prayed to God, thanking Him even for the fleas! Over the next six months a wonderful and curious thing happened. Corrie and Betsie found that the guards never entered their barracks. This meant that Corrie, Betsie, and the women in their block were spared the humiliating experience of being assaulted by the guards. It also meant that they were able to do the unthinkable, which was to hold Bible studies and prayer meetings in the heart of Ravensbrück concentration camp. Through this small Bible study, countless numbers of women came to faith in Christ. It was only at the end of the war that Corrie discovered why the guards would not enter their barracks: *it was because of the fleas!*

Friends, not everything that happens to us is God's will for us, but God can, if we let Him, make all things work together for our good. The year ahead of us holds its own blessings and burdens. Continuing economic uncertainties mean that people will face difficult financial challenges. There will also undoubtedly be physical, emotional and spiritual challenges this year. For some of us the act of giving thanks in all [those] circumstances might be a step too far. But I want to encourage you that when you face those challenges and when giving thanks is the last thing you want to do, take a moment, and remember the fleas of Ravensbrück.

Peace

Tony Foley

# News



## West Tweeddale linkage working groups

Rev Dr Tony Foley has established three working groups – Communication, Pastoral work and outreach, and Worship – to explore practice across the linkage and propose ways in which we might work together, develop and improve. In approaching their work, the groups will ensure that the individual identities of the six churches are maintained. They will look at both traditional and technology-based modes of activity.

All three groups have at least one member from each linkage congregation. They are starting work at time of writing, and full membership details are not to hand, but probing investigative journalism by this organ's editor has revealed that Mary McElroy is a member of the Worship group and Rennie McElroy of the Communications group. Of course, we cannot reveal our sources of information!

If you have views about any of these areas of our churches' work that you would like considered, please contact Tony Foley or Rennie McElroy in the first instance.

## Carlops Church's charitable donations, 2021

The pandemic's negative impact on charities and their finances has been widespread and well-publicised, so it is heartening to note the following figures, summarising donations made to charities via Carlops Church during 2021.

Big Noise	£138.30
Christian Aid	£310
Food Facts and Friends (Penicuik)	£765
Women's Aid, East & Midlothian	£745.50
Total	£1,958.80

In addition, a zoom meeting about Mary Somerville raised £270 for our own church.

To provide some context which may help readers assess these data ...

- No face-to-face events at which funds could be raised were held during 2021
- Thus, we missed twelve coffee mornings, which normally support some external charity; and nine soup lunches, which traditionally support Carlops Church itself
- This in turn meant reduced opportunity to reach Monday to Saturday supporters and those from outwith Carlops parish
- Requests for money (for charities and for Carlops Church's own funds) were kept to a minimum in 2021, being made on fewer than six occasions
- The Christian Aid figure above is approximately 80% of the Carlops record

- Figures for *Food Facts* and *Women's Aid* are Carlops records by a considerable margin
- The total of £1,958, paid to all charities in 2021, bears comparison with recent "normal" years if one factors in the lack of coffee mornings (2019: £3,096; 2018: £2,622)
- These sums are additional to donations made to Carlops Church itself, levels of which remain adequate to meet immediate financial needs

**Verdict:** no room for complacency; must keep it up; but overall, Carlops has performed commendably in unusual and difficult circumstances.

Grateful thanks to all who contributed to this performance. I hope life may be easier, and performance even better, in 2022!

Mary McElroy *Treasurer*

## A cross-linkage event this Spring?

We hope to re-arrange soon the cross-linkage eco-meeting first advertised for early 2022 but postponed as the omicron variant took hold. The planning group will monitor Scottish virus infection statistics carefully and, if current downward trends are sustained, hope to run the event in early April, before Easter. A decision will be made and publicised late in February.

This will be a face-to-face event in Carlops Church, as a key objective is to enable people from across the linkage to meet and get to know each other; we hope this will assist the development of our new linkage. It is the organisers' present intention to observe the precautions currently in place at Carlops Church's blended services; these do not preclude interaction, but offer participants some additional reassurance about their personal safety.

## New Session Clerk at St Andrew's

Mary Turnbull is now Session Clerk at St Andrew's West Linton, taking over from Tony Hoskins. Mary is well-known in Carlops as a frequent participant in our activities. We wish her satisfaction, success and good fortune in her new role. Pat Graham continues in post as Depute Session Clerk.

# The Column



## Lo within a manger lies, He who built the starry skies

Thinking of God the creator – what does that title mean?

If you look at the Carlops church *WhatsApp* group on your phone or computer, it's fascinating what you'll see. The site shows a great appreciation of nature, of flowers, animals, birds and people. I believe that all of us, not only the Eco group, feel we have a responsibility to look after, nurture and sustain the fragile eco-systems by which all of life survives. In simple terms, if God created (out of love) the world and all that is in it; we respond by caring for nature and the future generations, not only of our species, but all species.

I recently read a book called *Seven Lessons in Physics*, by Carlo Rovelli, an Italian physicist. The bits I understood (partially!) were fascinating. From the size of the universe: our galaxy has over one hundred billion stars, and there are over one hundred billion galaxies; to the tiniest molecules: atoms, neutrons and protons of which everything is made.

The universe is expanding from a probable source known as the Big Bang, which scientific theory says may have happened some 13.8 billion years ago. Stars like the sun will burn out eventually and collapse in on themselves, albeit in a few billion years' time, so it's not an immediate worry. Space and time are curved, not linear. And most of what matter there is, is impossible to see: the so-called dark matter. But it must be the gravity caused by dark matter which holds the galaxies together. Are you following me so far? Never mind, for *Lo within the manger lies, He who built the starry skies*.

My point is, that to call God the creator as we do, is not a scientific theory as to how the world came into being; it is rather a statement that life is meaningful; not so much the how, more the why. And our faith, our hunch, is that the meaning and the reason is love, and relationship and value. To believe in God as creator is to put us into a dynamic relationship with everything and everyone; it is to say that love is both the core and the fruit of creation.

Scientists hold that we only know what exists because of how it behaves and reacts in relation to other bodies and things. I find there to be fascinating parallels with theological belief, and with faith. God is love and is only known through loving activity; in the same way, the church is important for the way it acts and the way its people behave, even more than what we say in our simple creeds, our feelings, and what we say we believe. I often think that science can be deeply spiritual in the way it connects all things. I find that in somewhat similar ways, our faith links us to all things, to all people, to all life. How we react in life is what makes us who we are. All things are a unity. *Lo within a manger lies, He who built the starry skies*.

Chris Levison

# Diary notes



## Forthcoming events

None scheduled definitively yet, but a climate-focussed event with our linkage partners is probable in early April; see *Cross-linkage event this Spring?* on page 4 of this issue.

## Contacts

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Telephone 01968 674 566

Email [marylevison@btinternet.com](mailto:marylevison@btinternet.com)

**Cultural and social events:**

*Position vacant; expressions of interest invited: contact Murray Campbell, Mary McElroy or Rennie McElroy*

**Eco Group: Anna Woolverton**

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Email [annapye@btinternet.com](mailto:annapye@btinternet.com)

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## Material for next issue

To Rennie McElroy by Monday 21 February 2022

**End**