



CARLOPS CHURCH

In the community, for the community

Newsletter

Volume 17, Number 3; March 2023

Services, March 2023

Services held in church and available via Zoom
Request link from sessionclerk@carlopschurch.org

- :
- 26 February 10am: Rev Chris Levison
 - 5 March 10am: Prof Murray Campbell
 - 12 March 10am: Rev Dr Tony Foley
 - 19 March 10am: Steven Whalley
 - 26 March 10am: Fiona Burnett
 - 2 April 10am: Rev Dr Tony Foley

Join us, in the church, and in other activities

We promise you a warm welcome

www.carlopschurch.org

Carlops is one of the West Tweeddale linkage of churches

www.westtweeddale.org.uk



Our Minister

Why read a book when a blog post will do? *In defence of the morality of book reading*

The Web is changing the way we read. It seems that more and more people of all ages, genders and backgrounds have little time for books. It is a striking irony that an era of ubiquitous screens which saturate our lives with words is characterised by an incapacity to engage in the habit of deep reading. Book publishers report that there is a marked decline in the public's appetite for the demanding rigours of book reading, as more and more people prefer the frictionless activities of scanning, skimming, scrolling, swiping. We are by all accounts losing our appetite as a species for blocks of text that demand a certain quality of attention, preferring instead bite-size collections of words – usually interspersed with images, pull-quotes, adverts and other distractions – designed to break up the apparent tedium of reading. In other words, we prefer words we simply need to look at, rather than read. One of the most disturbing characteristics of such a culture is that it sees utility as the ultimate end for anything from TVs to human relationships. A world enthralled by ends will ultimately become a world emptied of all that makes us human.

I would never read a book ... I'm very sceptical of books. I don't want to say no book is ever worth reading, but I actually do believe something pretty close to that. I think, if you wrote a book, you messed up. It should have been a six-paragraph blog post.

That telling comment was made by one of the most successful crypto-currency pioneers of the modern era. One who despite reaching the dizzying financial heights of being a billionaire several times over by the time they were thirty years old, is now facing charges of egregious financial fraud. I offer the quote not as a judgement call on a particular individual, but merely as an observation that begs the question(s).

Why read a book when a blog post will do? Why labour through a narrative when other media permit us to skip straight to the point?

While exploring the processes involved in *reading-with-understanding*, the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, writing long before the Internet, said: *When I read a poem or narrative with feeling, surely something goes on in me which does not go on when I merely skim the lines for information.* That “something”, Wittgenstein argues, is a moral process which involves opening oneself up to difference, surprise, and even personal transformation. Is this “opening up” what is being lost in our screen-saturated culture? Because for all of the considerable advantages that we have gained through the use of modern technology, we have yet to truly reckon with what we stand to lose. Are we in danger of losing the moral faculties of imagination, empathy, and insight – faculties that are actively cultivated through the habit of the *attentive reading of other people's stories*? To quote the writer Kevin Kelly: *More and more our society is centred on pictures and images, which is a beautiful thing. But some of the most important parts of life are not visible in pictures.*

Perhaps the Apostle John, in the opening line of his gospel, was aiming for something more than a mere metaphor, perhaps he was intimating something far more vital to our moral well-being, when he wrote “In the beginning was the Word.”

Peace

Tony

News



Easter breakfast, 2023

We plan to organise Carlops Church's Easter breakfast again this year. We expect to adopt the customary pattern but are open to suggested amendments.

***Easter Sunday, 9 April 2023, from 9am, in Carlops Village Centre
Followed by an Easter family service in the church at 10am***

We extend a warm welcome to everyone to either event, or to both! Breakfast is free, but we will invite donations for some charitable cause, still to be determined at time of writing.

It's free, friendly and fun; it's also quite a lot of work. Please consider whether you could assist in setting up the hall, preparing the food, serving and/or clearing up. Contact Rennie McElroy if you can help: E rennie.mcelroy@btinternet.com; T 01968 661 042.

From the General Kirk Session Tuesday 7 February 2023, 7pm

The General Kirk Session met via Zoom and was chaired by Rev Dr Tony Foley.

Presbytery plan update

Murray Campbell and Isobel Hunter reported. The Church of Scotland General Trustees have not approved the *Mission plan* proposed by the Presbytery of Melrose and Peebles. Discussions will be held to explore amendments which may secure approval; these discussions will take place under the aegis of the new Presbytery of Lothian and Borders, which replaced Melrose and Peebles on 1 January 2023. It is hoped to resolve the issue during this year.

The principal matter at issue is the number and pattern of buildings throughout the Presbytery. Broadly speaking, General Trustees seek an overall reduction in buildings owned and maintained by the Church, while individual churches and presbyteries see reason to retain their current portfolio.

The issues leading to approval being withheld do not relate directly to our West Tweeddale linkage. However, General Trustees have requested a review this year of the several St Andrew's West Linton buildings: church, manse, old and new church halls.

Union of Upper Tweeddale churches

Isobel Hunter reported that the three linked churches of Upper Tweeddale, Broughton, Skirling and Tweedsmuir, have formed a union – the Church of Scotland Parish of Upper Tweeddale. The union was marked by a special service in Broughton Church on 1 February 2023. The newly united churches remain part of our West Tweeddale linkage: a union within a linkage.

Messy Church & Winter warmers

This range of activities are attracting good numbers of appreciative supporters.

Easter 2023

The worship group has discussed arrangements for marking Easter. Details are provided in the report ***From Carlops Kirk Session***, immediately below.

From Carlops Kirk Session

Tuesday 21 February 2023, 7pm

Carlops Kirk Session met in the Church and was chaired by Rev Dr Tony Foley.

Attestation of records

Session attested to the accuracy of the Communion Roll, Safeguarding Register and Property Register.

Property

Gill Gold reported. Session noted with satisfaction enhancements made to Carlops Church in 2022, particularly improved lighting and new window blinds; these complement the audiovisual and information technology improvements made in 2021. Session thanked Douglas Gold for the advice and labour he puts forth to keep our church building in good condition.

Annual Report and Accounts, 2022

Session approved the annual report and accounts for 2022. These will be posted on Carlops Church website in due course.

Finances and budget, 2023

Mary McElroy reported. The immediate financial status is acceptable, but we need to increase levels of giving in the near future. Donated income is just sufficient to meet standing costs but comes from a narrow base; currently, 45% of donated income derives from five donors (individuals, not families); the remaining 65% is provided by all other donors. This position is inherently vulnerable.

Session discussed these issues and agreed that the Treasurer should promote consideration of financial issues amongst our supporters. Financial matters will be given a higher profile and as a first step, the pre-pandemic practice of receiving a congregational offering during services will be reinstated. The Treasurer will explore additional means of attracting and collecting income.

In that context, the Treasurer presented a budget for 2023, which is realistic and will avoid a deficit if achieved. Session approved the budget, agreed to work towards its achievement, and thanked the Treasurer for her work.

Eco Group

Anna Woolverton reported. The Eco Group continues to operate, though still at a lower intensity than pre-pandemic. There are working links with Sustainable West Linton, and with bee-keeping and planting work in the Rock field. The 2022 Eco service was delivered in both Carlops and St Andrew's West Linton. Carlops Church hosted a recent meeting with the linkage Guild; Judith Macleod, Eco-congregation Scotland was guest speaker.

Session noted with regret that Traidcraft has entered administration and wished Anna Woolverton success as she seeks a replacement supplier of fair-trade goods.

Church services

Carlops' blended services, with people attending in church and via Zoom remain successful.

Session agreed to stop publishing a full-text order of service; this was decided, partly to reduce a heavy labour that falls upon one person, and partly as an eco-measure. Carlops Church hymnaries will be used in church, and hymnaries provided to supporters who normally participate via Zoom.

Holy week and Easter arrangements

Upper Tweeddale Churches

Holy Week service in each church in turn on Monday 3, Tuesday 4, and Wednesday 5 April, all at 7.30pm

Kirkurd & Newlands Church

Maundy Thursday communion on Thursday 6 April at 7.30pm

Carlops Church

Tenebrae service on Good Friday 7 April at 8.30pm; note later start time

Easter breakfast at 9am, Carlops Village Centre; family Easter service follows at 10am

Everyone is warmly invited to all and any of these events.

Forward planning

In the new linkage, General Kirk Session has a higher profile than formerly. Carlops people speaking on issues there wish to understand any "Carlops viewpoint" that may obtain. Session agreed to invite members to confer informally after morning service on Sundays before a GKS meeting. This will also allow all congregation members to be involved, furthering our policy of opening Session business to all supporters.

Rennie McElroy drew attention to a proposal before GKS (but not yet discussed) that a cross-linkage group be formed to draft a linkage development plan. Details remain imprecise because the proposer, Steven Whalley, has not yet been able to speak to his proposal. Session noted that Carlops has operated with explicit development plans since 2007, and that they have proved successful. Session confirmed its continuing support for the current edition of 2016, and agreed that Rennie McElroy should consult informally amongst supporters in order to update it. This could then inform a Carlops contribution to any cross-linkage discussions.

Membership

Session discussed its own present and possible future membership, in confidence. Rev Dr Foley will hold further discussions to advance this business. Information will be provided once that can be done without embarrassment to any individual.

Lent studies

Rev Dr Tony Foley will lead two series of Lent studies this year ...

Thursday evenings, 7.30-8.30pm

Studying *The things he carried*, by Stephen Cotrell

The book is available from Amazon (c£7 paperback) using the link – [The Things He Carried: A Journey to the Cross: Meditations for Lent and Holy Week: Amazon.co.uk: Cottrell, Stephen: 9780281060801: Books](https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/9780281060801)

Monday evenings, 7.30-8.30pm

Studying *Lent in plain sight*, by Jill Duffield

The book is available from Amazon (c£11 paperback) using the link - [Lent in Plain Sight: A Devotion through Ten Objects: Amazon.co.uk: Duffield, Jill J.: 9780664265465: Books](https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/9780664265465)

Both groups will meet weekly from late February until Easter. For more information and to join either or both groups, contact Dr Foley in the first instance: E tfoley@churchofscotland.org.uk; T 01968 660 221.

World Day of Prayer

World Day of Prayer is Friday 3 March 2023. The Guild is organising a service in St Andrew's Church West Linton, at 2.30pm. The service will be led by Fiona Burnett and will be based on a service designed by the hosts of this year's events, the World Day of Prayer Committee of Taiwan.

In addition, Rev Dr Tony Foley will speak about the time he spent in Taiwan as a missionary.

Refreshments will be provided after the service. All are welcome to this international prayer gathering.

Messy Church goes wild!

Please come and join us for our Messy Church session on Sunday 12 March 2023, at 4pm in the New Church Hall, West Linton. All children from babies to P7 are welcome to come and join in the fun, provided they are accompanied by an adult.

On this occasion, our theme is **feeding the 5,000** and we hope to **go wild** and spend some of the time outside (weather permitting!), so please wear warm clothes.

For more information contact Jean Howat, E howatjean@gmail.com

The Column



The “Rights” and “Wrongs” of Robins

I have good reason to know that robins are not always the lovable characters they are usually depicted as being. To see their image in the snow, on Christmas cards, you could imagine that they are always good-natured, friendly little birds, but I am afraid that is not always the case. It is commonly known that they are very territorial, but I was quite upset one day when I was witness to the “wrong” side of a robin’s character.

Mid-morning, as I looked out of the window, I saw two robins on the ground under my bird feeders engaged in a running battle. Fifteen minutes later I noticed that the fight was still in progress and shortly after that I was sorry to see that one bird had suffered fatal injuries and the corpse was being pecked viciously by the victor. That would have been bad enough, but it got worse! An hour later, the pecking was still going on and, what I found really upsetting, was that in the middle of that afternoon the body was still being attacked and dragged around the patio by that aggressive little robin.

That said, I have also experienced the “right” side of these little red-breasts. Two summers ago, a bright little robin greeted me whenever I stepped out the back door. Many times, I marvelled at how it knew I would be out at that particular moment. My friend accompanied me wherever I went in the garden, often hopping a mere two feet away from the toes of my boots. I started to make a habit of carrying little bags of seed in my pockets and scattering some just in front of him/her. However, I soon realised that he was not interested in the seed and only occasionally took a few grains. It seemed that it was just the company he enjoyed. Needless to say, that enjoyment was reciprocated and all that summer I appreciated the friendship that I was so generously offered.

Erithacus rubecula – commonly known as robin redbreast – is a small insectivorous bird with a wingspan of 20-22cm. It lays a clutch of about five or six eggs and has a life span of approximately 14 months.

Robins migrate through much of Europe and those from Russia and Scandinavia often end up in Britain, while those from Eastern Europe can end up as far south as Mediterranean countries.

Their conservation status is “Least Concern”, and in fact numbers are increasing – which for once is good news for wildlife!

Nan Buchan

Diary



Forthcoming events

Coffee drop-in and Fair Trade stall Saturday 25 February 2023; 10.30am-12noon

Cuppa and company Thursday 2 March 2023, 2-4pm

Cuppa and company Thursday 9 March 2023, 2-4pm

Cuppa and company Thursday 16 March 2023, 2-4pm

Man(!) Soup lunch Wednesday 22 March 2023; 12noon-1.30pm

Coffee drop-in and Fair Trade stall Saturday 25 March 2023; 10.30am-12noon

Cuppa and company Thursday 30 March 2023, 2-4pm

Cuppa and company Thursday 6 April 2023, 2-4pm

Easter breakfast Sunday 9 April 2023, 9am, in Carlops Village Centre

Cuppa and company Thursday 13 April 2023, 2-4pm

Cuppa and company Thursday 20 April 2023, 2-4pm

Soup lunch Wednesday 26 April 2023; 12noon-1.30pm

Coffee drop-in and Fair Trade stall Saturday 29 April 2023, 10.30am-12noon

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Material for next issue

To Rennie McElroy by Monday 20 March 2023