



# CARLOPS CHURCH

In the community, for the community

## Newsletter

Volume 17, Number 12; December 2023

### Services, December 2023

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

26 November 10am: Dr Patsy Campbell

3 December 10am: Dr Fiona Burnett

10 December 10am: Rev Dr Tony Foley  
*Communion*

17 December 10am: Prof Murray Campbell

24 December 10am: Rev Chris Levison

24 December 7pm: tba *Carol service*

31 December 10am: Rev Dr Tony Foley

7 January 10am: Sheena Livingstone

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

**We promise you a warm welcome**

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

***Carlops is one of the West Tweeddale linkage of churches***

**[www.westtweeddale.org.uk](http://www.westtweeddale.org.uk)**



# Our Minister

## The Ethics of Christmas

I recently came across a sermon by St Isaac the Syrian, who lived in the 7th century and was bishop of Nineveh. In his sermon he offers the following reflection on the ethics of Christmas. I offer them to you for your reflection this Christmas.

Christmas night offers Peace to the whole world.

*Let no one threaten.*

Christmas night is the night of the Most Gentle One.

*Let no one be cruel.*

Christmas night is the night of the Humble One.

*Let no one be proud.*

Christmas day is the day of Joy.

*Let no one despair.*

Christmas day is the day of Good Will.

*Let us not be mean spirited.*

Christmas day is a day of Peace.

*Let us not be conquered by the anger of violence.*

On Christmas day the Bountiful impoverished Himself for our sake.

*Let the rich, share their plenty with the poor.*

On Christmas day we received a Gift for which we did not ask.

*Let us give to those who in their need implore us.*

I do sincerely hope and pray that you and yours have a very peaceful, very happy, and in St Issac's sense, ethical Christmas.

Peace

Tony

# News



## Happy Christmas

We extend our warmest wishes for a happy, peaceful Christmas, and a successful New Year. May Christmas 2023 and all of 2024 bring you joy and all that you seek for you and your closest.

We look forward to seeing you at any or all of the events we are organising to help celebrate Christmas, be it a service, carol singing, or meeting for tea, mince pies and a friendly chat. Details of all events are in this issue of the *Newsletter* and at [www.carlopschurch.org](http://www.carlopschurch.org).

Rennie McElroy *Editor*

## Christmas wreath-making workshop

Wednesday 29 November 2023, 10am – 12.30pm

There will be a Christmas wreath-making workshop in Carlops Church on Wednesday 29 November 2023, 10am-12.30pm; a suitable tea-break will be included!

The evergreen plant material and other materials required will be provided, but if you have any interesting pieces in your garden, do bring them along. Also, please bring a pair of scissors or secateurs if possible.

Please let me know by Sunday 26 November 2023 if you want to join in; contact details below.

Gill Gold

E [gill.gold@outlook.com](mailto:gill.gold@outlook.com)

T 07775 875 929

## Advent study sessions

Rev Dr Tony Foley will conduct four Advent study sessions on Fridays, starting at 10.30am, on 1, 8, 15, and 22 December 2023. These will be in-person meetings, held in the reading room at Skirling village hall. Each session will run for about one hour, and coffee will be available! Though the four sessions are linked, each can be taken on its own; it is not necessary to attend all four for the programme to “make sense”!

A broadly parallel series will run on Zoom, on Wednesday evenings at 7pm, 29 November to 20 December inclusive. We understand these will be led by Kevin Scott and Steven Whalley. The relevant Zoom link follows ...

*Illuminating Christmas* Advent Studies; Wednesdays at 7.00 pm, from 29 November  
Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85199856727?pwd=pO6DvT2PXsR9ZySTeoG5arbTQwE3xD.I>

Meeting ID: 851 9985 6727

Passcode: 886073

The study will focus around a short book entitled *Illuminating Christmas*, written by Robin Hill, minister at Longniddry Church. It can be downloaded free of charge from this link [Illuminating Christmas – Longniddry Church](#) (or visit [www.longniddrychurch.org.uk](http://www.longniddrychurch.org.uk) and look for *Illuminating Christmas*). Those interested, just turn up, or contact Rev Dr Foley for more information.

## Advent Garden ceremony

You are invited to come and enjoy Carlops' traditional Advent Garden ceremony on Sunday 3 December 2023; gather in the church at 3.45pm for a 4pm start. Technically, this is a children's event, but adults are welcome, and don't need to be accompanied by a child!

Gerda Stevenson will lead the ceremony and everyone is welcome – all ages; all stages. Be aware that candles feature in the ceremony and dress with safety in mind; it will be a good idea to avoid flouncy, flowing clothes!

More information from Gerda Stevenson, T 01968 661 058, or Hannah Walters, T 01968 660 470.

## “Shoebox” reminder

A reminder that Carlops Church will run a variation on the shoebox project, in support of Scottish Women's Aid. After consultation, we choose to donate cash, rather than many small gifts in boxes. This will enable Scottish Women's Aid to target what they know to be their principal needs.

**Donations, by Sunday 3rd December 2023 latest please, in any of these three ways ...**

### **BACS**

Identify your gift as WA (for *Women's Aid*, the beneficiary charity) and transfer to ...

Account name	Carlops Church
Account number	00246459
Sort code	80-09-39

### **Cash**

Place your donation in the Shoebox collection box that will sit on one of the window sills at the back of the church from the start of November

### **Cheque**

Payable to Carlops Church; send to Mary McElroy, Marfield View, Kitleyknowe, Carlops EH26 9NJ. Mary will do the transfer accounting for you.

Thank you in advance for your participation and generosity.

## Ethical Christmas presents

### Buy a bed: Bethany Christian Trust

Looking for an ethical Christmas present this year? Still searching and confused? Why not support Bethany's **Buy a bed** campaign?

By buying a gift card, you will be helping to provide access to Bethany's Rapid Re-accommodation Welcome Centre at the Haymarket Hub Hotel in Edinburgh for those who would otherwise be sleeping rough on the streets this winter.

Your gift provides ...

- A warm, safe, private room with en-suite facilities
- 24 hour care and support from professional, supportive and loving staff
- Three meals a day including a freshly prepared, hot two course dinner
- A wide range of on-site support services
- Assistance to move rapidly out of the crisis of homelessness

There is no upper or lower limit on donations, which can be made online at the Bethany website [www.bethanychristiantrust.com](http://www.bethanychristiantrust.com).

Robert Higgins  
Chair, Linkage Christian Aid Group

## Messy Church reminder



Messy Church will meet at the New Church Hall, West Linton, at 4pm on these dates ...

Sunday 10 December 2023  
Sunday 14 January 2024  
Sunday 18 February 2024  
Sunday 10 March 2024

Christmas  
Daniel and the Lions' Den  
Joseph  
Moses and the Burning Bush

Children from babies to P7 are welcome to come and join in the fun! There will be a Bible Story, then a range of craft activities, followed by a song and a prayer. We finish with a meal together. All children **MUST** be accompanied by an adult.

For more information, contact Jean Howat: T 01968 660677; E [howatjean@gmail.com](mailto:howatjean@gmail.com)

# From the General Kirk Session

## Thursday 9 November 2023

Rev Dr Tony Foley convened the General Kirk Session in Carlops Church and over Zoom.

### **Style and pattern of future meetings**

Rev Dr Foley set out his vision for a GKS that should meet more regularly and might engage members in occasional social events, as well as business meetings. This could help members get to know each other better. Rev Dr Foley announced the dates for four GKS meetings in 2024: 22 February, 23 May, 5 September, 14 November. These dates are on the website at [Business meetings - Carlops church](#). He spoke too, about how the individual Kirk Sessions might work, wondering if it might help to separate operational business from pastoral and spiritual matters.

### **Linkage strategic plan?**

Steven Whalley proposed a cross-linkage working group to develop a plan to “grow the church” throughout the linkage: increase community-wide awareness of church activities; identify new activities that might be offered; consider how services might evolve to attract more, younger people. Discussion favoured the proposal: at least one linkage church has worked with a forward plan since 2007 and finds it valuable; any new plan will need to sit comfortably with such existing plans; the proposed working group should consult widely across the linkage communities and not restrict itself to input from “Sunday congregations”. GKS approved the proposal and asked Steven to invite people from across the linkage to form the working group. GKS looks forward to receiving the group’s proposals in due course.

### **Presbytery**

Murray Campbell and Isobel Hunter reported on Presbytery business. The Presbytery plan has been formally approved at last; implementation is progressing. The approval process had been “difficult” and unsatisfactory; it should be improved before the next edition of the plan is due. Presbytery needs more people to serve as interim moderators and invites volunteers; people who are not ordained ministers are eligible for this role; training will be provided. Anyone interested, talk to Murray Campbell in the first instance.

### **Communication; good practice**

Neil Robinson introduced proposals from the linkage Communication group outlining good practice for adoption across the linkage. It was well received and it is hoped that everyone, and particularly office-bearers, will put its recommendations into practice. Read the paper at [Communications Strategy.pdf \(westtweeddale.org.uk\)](#).

### **Safeguarding and whistle-blowing**

Pat Graham introduced draft policies on safeguarding and whistle-blowing, noting that the Church of Scotland advises all Kirk Sessions to adopt these (or similar policies). GKS noted these and asked individual Kirk Sessions to consider them and make decisions.

### **Local Church Review**

Murray Campbell reminded GKS of the Local Church Review that Presbytery will undertake soon. A detailed timetable should be available later, but it is expected that the review team’s meeting(s) with congregation members will take place on 27 January 2024, in Skirling.

Rennie McElroy

## Newsletter editor

A reminder that from the next issue – January 2024 – this *Newsletter* will be edited by Julie Gamble. Please amend your address book and mailing lists to send all *Newsletter*-related messages and material for publication to Julie, instead of to Rennie McElroy. Julie’s contact details are provided below and will appear in future issues.

Email            [julieggamble@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:julieggamble@yahoo.co.uk) (that double “g” is not a typo!)  
Telephone      07980 258 381

We wish Julie well as she takes up the post and we look forward to reading her!

Rennie McElroy

## Still want to receive this *Newsletter*?

**Just checking – to observe procedural niceties!**

I send you this *Newsletter* every month because you have agreed to receive it and have also agreed that I may keep your email address on my computer so that I can email the publication to you.

From 1 January 2024, the *Newsletter* will be edited and distributed by Julie Gamble, and your personal data will be transferred to her computer.

Julie will keep your information safe and use it in a proper manner. The *Newsletter* email addresses will be used only for Carlops Church business. She will protect the file with a password; if any third party were to access her computer, s/he would be unable to open the file containing your address. Julie will restrict email messages sent to you to the *Newsletter* itself and occasional announcements deemed urgent by office-bearers of Carlops Church; there have been fewer than five “extra” messages since 2021. I hope this reassures you that your information will continue to be adequately protected and used only for the purposes for which you provided it.

**To continue receiving the *Newsletter*, do nothing; Julie will continue to email it to you.**

If you would prefer Julie not to hold your email address on file, send email saying *Delete my address* to [info@carlopschurch.org](mailto:info@carlopschurch.org).

If you do this, you will no longer receive the *Newsletter*; nor will you receive Carlops Church’s occasional notifications about important issues. You should be able to access recent issues of the *Newsletter* at [www.carlopschurch.org/newsletter/](http://www.carlopschurch.org/newsletter/) but you will not be alerted to each new issue.

If you take this step, then change your mind later, you can re-subscribe by emailing *Newsletter please* to [info@carlopschurch.org](mailto:info@carlopschurch.org).

End of complexities!

Rennie McElroy *Exiting editor!*

# The Column



## Swansong

December 2023: my last issue as editor of this *Newsletter*. Volume 17, Number 12 – that means *Column 204*; and the 204th set of all the other articles. That's a lot of writing, inviting, nudging, appealing, imagining, composing, hair-pulling, and finally selecting.

Sometimes, it's been easy – a fair group of articles waiting to be published – just a matter of deciding the order in which to release them. Is item A more important than B? Where does C fit best? Is D still relevant, or too dated? Will author X be miffed if I hold this piece over till next month? At other times, the drawer has been empty, and I've sought help. Please write something, anything – but do it now! You've all seen these pleas; many of you have answered them – thank you. Sometimes, frantic head-scratching as copy date approaches. What should I write about? What do I say about issue Y? Inspiration needed, Rennie!

The *Column* is always both a test and a bit of fun. Thank you everyone who has helped make it so by writing over the years, with a special nod to regular columnists. Many *Columns* stand the test of time and still make enjoyable and thought-provoking reading long after publication.

*Minister's think-piece*: thank you, Bob, Calum, Finlay, Linda, Malcolm, Nancy, Rachel, Stewart, Tom, Tony. Readers expect you to be on page two and you've kept faith with them.

Then the *news items* themselves. More complexity to decisions here. *What to say?* The gamut from boom to bust; from a surfeit of material, to little or none. Some issues full of meat; others slim pickings. But being a *Carlops* newsletter has helped: there's always something going on. *How to say it?* That's a harder question. Find the balance between the facts, and one's own instinctive reaction, and the other shades of opinion one might expect to exist out there. Then there's confidentiality. May one say X? Can Y be reported? I've found that openness, sticking to fact, reporting controversy but not encouraging it, and explaining what is *not* included in a report, offer a collective solution.

I've been a fortunate editor. Freedom to choose and to publish has always been extended to me. No one has ever said "Write this" or "Don't mention that". There have been no turf wars and I've never had to play a "freedom of the press" card. It's the readers' church; they have a right to know: tell them, but tell them straight; don't speculate; don't sensationalise. No permissions or approvals sought or needed. With that, of course, comes the obligation to act responsibly, with scrupulous regard for both the readers' right to know, and Carlops Church's right to a fair accounting.

In seventeen years, only one conflict. I in self-focussed wisdom decided that information which it caused to be announced *at public worship* should not be relayed to other supporters. This editor disagreed and published the plainest account of the facts as announced, specifying also what was not and could not be known accurately. Minor uproar in some quarters, but the upshot was that Carlops community alone did not become a hot-bed of rumour.



I tender my grateful thanks to those who have extended such scope and trust to me.

The *Newsletter* and the *Column* have played many roles: inform, describe, reflect, opine, provoke, poke gentle fun. It couldn't happen without those readers who also wrote, and the organisers and decision-makers who made things happen – apparently just for me to report upon! And it couldn't happen without all those people (You!) who made the whole thing worthwhile by reading the product.

It is sad, and a relief, and a pleasure to pass the editorial pen (keyboard?) to Julie Gamble. I know she will handle it well and I look forward to reading her work. I know you will support her, but I leave you with this plea. When Julie asks for comment and opinion, don't hold back, but write, or phone, or speak to her. She really does want to hear from you. Editors need to know what readers think. Help her to keep you informed.

My very welcome last task as editor is to express special thanks to Mary. She has proof-read all 204 issues, commented on umpteen drafts, and advised countless times about what an editor wiser than me might publish – and how he might phrase what he publishes!

Thank you everyone, for your support, loyalty and forbearance. My last issue as editor. My last issue as author? Don't know. Not my decision!

Rennie McElroy

# Diary



## Forthcoming events

**Advent garden ceremony** Sunday 3 December 2023, 3.45pm for 4pm

**Cuppa and company** Thursday 7 December 2023, 2-4pm

**Cuppa and company** Thursday 14 December 2023, 2-4pm

**Soup lunch** Wednesday 10 January 2024, 12.00-1.30pm

**Cuppa and company** Thursday 11 January 2024, 2-4pm

**Cuppa and company** Thursday 18 January 2024, 2-4pm

**Cuppa and company** Thursday 25 January 2024, 2-4pm

**Coffee drop-in** Saturday 27 January 2024, 10.30am-12noon

**Cuppa and company** Thursday 1 February 2024, 2-4pm

**Cuppa and company** Thursday 8 February 2024, 2-4pm

**Soup lunch** Wednesday 14 February 2024, 12.00-1.30pm

**Cuppa and company** Thursday 15 February 2024, 2-4pm

**Cuppa and company** Thursday 22 February 2024, 2-4pm

**Coffee drop-in** Saturday 25 February 2024, 10.30am-12noon

**Cuppa and company** Thursday 29 February 2024, 2-4pm

**Cuppa and company** Thursday 7 March 2024, 2-4pm

**Soup lunch** Wednesday 13 March 2024, 12noon-1.30pm

**Cuppa and company** Thursday 14 March 2024, 2-4pm

**Cuppa and company** Thursday 21 March 2024, 2-4pm

**Cuppa and company** Thursday 28 March 2024, 2-4pm

**Coffee drop-in** Saturday 30 March 2024, 10.30am-12noon

## Contacts

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## Material for next issue

To Julie Gamble by Monday 20 December 2023