

# Carlops Parish Church

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



## NEWSLETTER

Volume 14, Number 5 May 2020

### Services, May 2020

*Services suspended until further notice*

To receive Stewart McPherson's weekly *Reflection*  
by email, contact [info@carlopschurch.org](mailto:info@carlopschurch.org)

## From our Minister

People have spoken about the pressure of expectation placed on people during this lockdown. Some say we should use the time to learn a new skill; or develop one which has lain fallow; teach our children at home; ignore the recipe book and get creative with what is in the fridge; read books; do indoor exercises. That leaves many of us merely feeling inadequate, as we have done none of those things. Coping with change, anxiety, news reports, and missing family and friends all seem more than enough.

In ministry it is the same: you scan churches' online resources and find examples of people being creative and reaching beyond themselves, though many have no skills in editing video! I feel the pressure. I am familiar with speaking to congregations and groups of all sizes, but I get anxious in front of a camera. Yet that is one of the ways communication has moved and it is now almost essential. Producing material for people to use at home for prayer and reflection; creating a video; learning how to use Zoom for meetings and worship; have all been a steep learning curve. I have adapted better to some aspects than others. I believe simplicity is best, unless you have a natural talent to be more creative. But this is how we will meet, worship, share messages for the foreseeable future.

And the lessons we learn, apart from how to use Zoom, are many. There is something to rediscover about the simplicity of worship; familiar formats may be reinvented now. We have discovered how few business meetings we require. We have rediscovered the central place of home as the place of prayer and connecting with God. We know we miss our church buildings yet are left wondering what it is about them we miss most, and why.

We have realised the importance of face to face relationship and the natural interactions that matter, but which are lost or get in the way on Zoom. The participation in worship: singing together, meeting each other, listening, speaking, coffee after worship. Online worship can become passive as we merely sit and watch. Participation, human contact and relationships matter, and matter much more than the content or shape of worship.

All our communication must have at its heart relationship. To tell and hear stories, and in church terms that means enabling people to nourish a relationship with God as we discover God in the life and witness of the man from Nazareth. Most of his life was spent outside religious buildings: often in people's homes; at times of bereavement; at dinner parties; at a friend's house for tea; at the bedside of a friend's sick daughter; in fields plucking grain; in the countryside pointing at sheep; on a hill in the afternoon; in a garden at dawn. We will eventually return to our church buildings and be glad of that. But we cannot return without taking with us what we have learned in this lockdown. The central importance of relationships with each other and our relationship with God. The Word became flesh for a reason.

Be safe; be blessed.

Stewart McPherson

## **New Carlops Church website**

The revised Carlops Church website is now live; the address is unchanged; visit it at [www.carlopschurch.org](http://www.carlopschurch.org)

Julie Gamble, Rennie McElroy and Alun Morton-Lloyd, have been working on the revision since autumn 2019: consulting people about the site and changes they would like; revising existing text; writing new material; sourcing images; evaluating website design features; selecting those that fit our needs. Julie and Rennie have focused on text, images, and arranging the information; Alun has done the technical work and built the site; but we stress that we worked as a team; the site is a collaborative effort.

We hope that the new site presents an honest, attractive image of Carlops Church. Our aim is to give users of the site an understanding of our church and how it works comparable to that of regular and established supporters. The site explains why and how we do things, as well as what we do. It gives equal balance to Sunday worship and to what we call Monday to Saturday work. And it stresses that everyone is welcome, all the time, at any event, whatever they believe or don't believe.

We hope you find the new site attractive, interesting and thorough. Comments, suggestions and praise are all welcome! Contact Rennie McElroy, details on back page.

Julie Gamble, Rennie McElroy, Alun Morton-Lloyd

## **Malawi appeal**

Most readers know of our Presbytery's active link with the Presbytery of Zomba, Malawi. For reasons of hygiene to counteract coronavirus, the Malawian government has forbidden churches to hold services unless handwashing facilities are provided for all attending. In addition, few Malawians have the electronic communication facilities available to many of us here. The churches in Zomba want to remain open, but none has running water.

Zomba's proposed solution is to provide a covered bucket with a tap at every church door so that people can wash their hands as they enter. Estimating from the number of churches in Zomba, about sixty buckets, costing some £500, are required urgently. Zomba has appealed for help,

In Carlops, our Easter Breakfast traditionally receives donations for a charity of special interest to our community. This year, the request from Malawi seems particularly appropriate. If you would like to make a donation (despite missing your Easter breakfast this year!), contact me, via [info@carlopschurch.org](mailto:info@carlopschurch.org), I will tell you how to make an online bank transfer; or will record your pledge, to be redeemed next time we can meet.

Mary McElroy

## Supporting people in Carlops

We are learning new ways, perhaps even patience, as we try to cope and fight coronavirus. There is much to miss, but much to warm the heart too. Carlops community spirit is prominent as people find ways to help others. Here are four initiatives that may help Carlops people. If humour is still permitted: they help keep body and soul together!

### *Tending the spirit; helping the body*

Rev Stewart McPherson writes a weekly *Reflection*: bible readings, prayer, hymns, his own thoughts and teaching, news. It goes out by email each weekend, with an occasional mid-week supplement. Many people find it helpful. If you would like to join the circulation list, contact Rennie McElroy, details on back page.

Murray Campbell organises a virtual Carlops service on Sundays at 10am on the software platform *Zoom*. There's a welcome, reading, short reflection and prayer; followed in real Carlops style by informal chat! Contact Murray at [sessionclerk@carlopschurch.org](mailto:sessionclerk@carlopschurch.org) if you'd like to join the group.

### *Tending the body; helping the spirit*

The *Carlops Community Care Group* that Jim Eccleston set up in March is working hard and working well (this writer benefits from their work). If you can't or shouldn't go out, they will shop for you, collect prescriptions, deliver stuff, or just phone for a friendly chat. To get help and/or to volunteer to join the Group, call Jim Eccleston on 07447 031 396.

The Allan Ramsay Hotel provides hot meals on Thursday, Friday and Saturday; takeaway or delivered. Order online at [www.allanramsayhotel.com](http://www.allanramsayhotel.com) or by phone 01968 660 258. They will email confirmation of order, and phone later to take payment by credit or debit card. The hotel also runs a community shop: fresh vegetables, fruit and meat; milk, bread; store cupboard dry goods; core toiletries. Order these like the meals. *Editor's opinion?* Good quality and value; growing range of products.

In addition, the Allan Ramsay Hotel is providing some forty packaged and re-heatable hot meals every week for distribution to needy people via St Mungo's Church, Penicuik. They aim to increase this to 120 meals per week with the community's help. You can donate towards this effort by credit or debit card by telephoning the Hotel (tel 01968 660 258), and/or you can donate produce and food products by adding them to what you order from the Hotel's community shop (see previous paragraph).

## Emergency foodbank

An emergency foodbank operates through the church in Carlops, Kirkurd & Newlands, and St Andrew's West Linton. If you need help, email [emergencyfoodbank@standrews-westlinton.org](mailto:emergencyfoodbank@standrews-westlinton.org); all contacts will be treated in the strictest confidence. People may also need other kinds of help at this time; we will try to help with that too, or we will redirect you to those who can.

## **Fresh Start update**

Fresh Start has taken the difficult decision to stop accepting donations of goods and stand down volunteers, but staff have been developing contingency plans and emergency services to support our vulnerable clients.

Fresh Start helps people who are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless; many are unemployed; survive on low incomes or benefits; have mental and/or physical health conditions; and have limited support networks. Vulnerable people will be hit hardest at this time.

In recent weeks, Fresh Start has sent out over 500 emergency packs of food, cleaning items and toiletries, using our staff team and observing strict social distancing measures. We are working with partner organisations to deliver hot meals and packed lunches, and have set up a phone helpline to support clients in need.

Fresh Start aims to continue this work during this crisis. Thank you for your support. Take care and best wishes.

Jen McQuistan *Partnership Co-ordinator, Fresh Start*

## **The Column Nonagenarian reflections**

*A recent mention of nonagenarians in our congregation prompted this from one well known to Carlops regulars.*

Ninety-year-olds! What do you make of them? Just before I retired from parish ministry, I visited a ninety-year-old Newhaven woman in the Eastern General Hospital; she greeted me with “Oh! It's yersel' ya bugger” (and gave me the title for my autobiographical musings)! Now, to my amazement, I am ninety myself. What's it like?

Well, it makes you think. Maybe my Newhaven fishwife had been like that all her days. Or maybe in her later years she had joined that international movement of redoubtable ladies who have decided that the time has come to abandon the self-restraint that society drilled into them “so as not to offend anyone”, and start rattling their sticks along the railings and wearing the colour purple!

Quite certainly, realising you have reached the very great age of ninety does not make you feel any wiser. But it does mean that you have a lot of stupidity to recall from the past! We should remember, however, that the New Testament warns us against the temptation of falling for the so-called wisdom of the world; calls us, indeed, to do things that “clever” people think are daft, like loving the unlovable, sharing their burdens, seeing an enemy's point of view, and giving away our money.

You begin to doubt yourself at times. You are involved in a car crash and wonder if you were at fault – even though a witness and the police say you were not. Or you query the worth of going on. I once drove the then 94-year-old Very Reverend George MacLeod, Lord MacLeod of Fuinary home from a Presbytery meeting: at his door, he turned to me and said “If you live to ninety, that's okay; after that, it's not worth it”. I feel that was not true for me, but then realise I am fortunate in being one of a couple, each cherishing the other. So "Thanks be to God", as ever.

Jack Kellet

### **Forthcoming events**

All events cancelled or postponed until further notice owing to coronavirus outbreak

### **Material for next issue**

To [info@carlopschurch.org](mailto:info@carlopschurch.org) by Monday 25 May 2020 please

**End**