



CARLOPS CHURCH

In the community, for the community

Newsletter

Volume 17, Number 9; September 2023

Services, September 2023

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

27 August 10am: Rev Dr Tony Foley
3 September 10am: Prof Murray Campbell
10 September 10am: Rev Dr Tony Foley
Communion
17 September 10am: Dr Fiona Burnett
24 September 10am: Dr Peter Worthington
1 October 10am: Dr Patsy Campbell

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

Do not despise the day of small things

All harvests, no matter how large, begin with the small. Those small, seemingly insignificant, sometimes ugly-looking things we call seeds hold the key to all harvests. All seeds are sown in faith and covered with hope. All large harvests are reaped because someone chose to sow a small seed. They sowed their seed in faith, and they covered it in hope. Perhaps that is why Jesus compared the rule of God to a seed sown. A seed filled with a God-empowered potential to produce the longed-for harvest of a better world, a world characterised by among other things, *kindness*.

Nothing enlarges human hearts more than the touch of kindness, the heart of those who give and those who receive. In the same way, nothing wilts our hearts more than the wince of unkindness, given or received. Everyone loves the practice of kindness – loves thinking of themselves as a kind person – but somehow, the practice of it has taken a back seat in a culture driven by *selfing*.

We seem to be living in the midst of a pandemic of *selfing* – a rampant self-celebration that mistakes applause for connection, and “likes” for love. Sociologists tells us that we are irrevocably enmeshed in a world where the self has become a commodity to promote and sell in the pursuit of being seen for who we imagine people want us to be. Where social media companies have designed algorithms that prioritise selfies over sunflowers, algorithms that amplify the word *I*, algorithms that are doping us with the dopamine of *being noticed*. The writer Nathaniel Hawthorne in his novel, *The Scarlet Letter*, puts it best: *No man for any considerable period can wear one face to himself, and another to the multitude, without finally getting bewildered as to which may be the true.*

There must be a better way of doing life – a way to *unself* ourselves just long enough to notice the person standing in front of us more than the one we are so desperately trying to be on Facebook. Whatever that better way is, it will not come about because of a new kind of technology, but rather through the much-admired habit of kindness.

I like the way the poet Rae Armantrout puts it in her poem *Life's work* ...

Did I say I was a creature of habit?
I meant the opposite.
I meant behaviour is like a pile of clothes
I might or might not wear.

Here is what I suggest to you as a personal experiment: every day for the next month, make the focus of your day the intentional sowing of one seed of deliberate kindness in the real world, whether in word or deed. Try it for a month – try it on as the poet says, like you would a piece of clothing, and see how it feels. And if you don't reap a harvest of the warm glow of kindness given and received, that good glad feeling of making another's day, then you can always go back to the world of *selfing*.

Peace, Tony

News



New editor for Newsletter and website

Over the first part of this year, I came to know that I wished to step down from editing Carlops Church's *Newsletter* and website, after seventeen years. I am very pleased that Julie Gamble has agreed to replace me as editor. We have agreed that Julie and I will work together on the remaining 2023 issues, and that she will take over completely from January 2024. Alun Morton-Lloyd will assist Julie with our church website www.carlopschurch.org, continuing the invaluable design and technical support that he has given me for many years.

There may be time and column space for further explanation and reflection later; for now, suffice to say that seventeen years is a long time to work as editor – and perhaps too long for readers! I have enjoyed producing the *Newsletter*, and I hope readers have enjoyed (most of!) the result. But now, I want to make way for a fresh mind, and I believe that it is time to do so.

Thank you for the interest and support you have shown during my time as editor.

Rennie McElroy

Soup lunches re-start in September

Organisers have agreed arrangements for the social events that Carlops Church will host in autumn and winter 2023-24. I know – it's only August as this goes to press – but needs must get organised!

All the customary events will be offered again this autumn and winter season, but there is one scheduling change, which will make dates easier to remember for customers, and spread the workload more evenly for organisers.

Soup lunch moves to the easy-to-remember "second Wednesday of the month", in place of the complicated "Wednesday before the last Saturday of the month. This alteration also means that we will no longer have to cram three events into four days in the last week of the month – a great relief for organisers! Soup lunch will run from September to November, and again from January to April inclusive, with the first of the season being on Wednesday 13 September 2023, 12noon-1.30pm.

Arrangements for **Cuppa and company** and **Coffee drop-in** are unchanged, although there are likely to be special arrangements in December to help everyone get around Christmas and New Year festivities!

See the **Diary** section at the end of this issue for details of dates and times through to the end of 2023. Information is also on our website at www.carlopschurch.org/cultural/social/events/. As always, everyone is welcome at all events.

Be “Well prepared”

A six-session course entitled *Well Prepared* will be held in the New Church Hall in West Linton, starting on Thursday 7 September 2023 at 7.30 pm. The course originated in the Diocese of Oxford and will be facilitated by Rev Nick Bowry (Rector of St Mungo’s West Linton) and Rev Dr Tony Foley.

The course will be accompanied by a set of notes and will cover the following topics ...

- Making a will and power of attorney document
- Exploring the story of our life
- Planning my funeral
- The last days
- Departing in peace
- What comes next?

The course is intended to help us have conversations about death and to plan for our own death. It is not primarily aimed at supporting someone who is grieving. Of course, talking about death may lead to thoughts of those we love and whose absence we still feel; in that sense, we shall all be sensitive to each other’s experiences of bereavement and loss.

If you are interested in attending, please help course organisers gain some indication of likely numbers by informing Mark Hepworth at the church office in the Old Church Hall, West Linton (email cos1560.tweed@outlook.com), or contact Murray Campbell, as Session Clerk.

New Carlops Church plan: last call for ideas

We are preparing a draft of the revised Carlops Church *Forward plan* that we expect to present to the Kirk Session for discussion and (hopefully!) approval later this calendar year. There is still time to make your views known and have your suggestions included – but only just! Contact either of us if you would like to comment.

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Christian Aid changes banks over fossil fuel policies

International development agency Christian Aid recently approved plans to change its banking provider from Barclays to Lloyds, largely because Barclay’s approach to fossil fuel financing are increasingly incompatible with Christian Aid’s own policies. CA had an income of £78.4 million last year. The following press release explains the decision.

“Following a review of banking arrangements last year and a competitive tender process, the

Board of Trustees have approved plans to move from Barclays to Lloyds.

“With Lloyds, we will continue to be able to transfer funds to high-risk countries such as Syria, Myanmar and Afghanistan as we currently do with Barclays. This global banking network is essential for CA to continue to support those people who are the hardest to reach.

“Whilst Barclays was able to provide banking services to fragile contexts, their record on fossil fuel finance and their weak commitment to future improvements in this area meant we had to seek a more suitable provider.

“CA has ambitious environmental commitments over the next few years, as set out in our recently launched Environmental Policy. The transition to Lloyds will take place over the next few months.”

The move was welcomed by former chairman of CA, Dr Rowan Williams, as well as other charity leaders, experts and campaigners, who called on other charities to follow suit. Tony Burdon, executive director of Make My Money Matter, added “we hope all organisations follow CA’s lead and make sure their money is complimenting their values, not contradicting them”.

Further details can be found on CA’s website.

Robert Higgins, Linkage Christian Aid Chair

The Open Gate

Got a problem? Stressed? Anxious? Depressed? Parenting difficulties? Relationship issues? Work problems? Weight problem? Trouble at school, college? Or something else?

The Open Gate can help you. Anyone who wants help is welcome. Everyone will be seen by appointment. There is no “drop-in” facility.

Phone or text 07535 898 244 to ask for an appointment at Newlands Centre, Romanno Bridge on Fridays 2pm to 5pm.

The Open Gate uses a counselling approach which is brief, effective and future-orientated, building on your own solutions. All sessions are free and confidential, with no long waiting-list.

Contact **The Open Gate** now if you would like help. Phone or text 07535 898 244.

The Column



A “wiliness” of weasels

About twenty years ago, I watched two young weasels playing on the slope in my garden. They rolled over and over down the hill, twisted together like a football, leapt in the air and chased each other up and down the hill at great speed. They paid me no attention as I stood, fascinated, watching them. Then an adult weasel appeared out of the long grass and in a flash, the slope was deserted. The memory of that encounter has remained very clear in my mind. In the intervening years I have been delighted many times to see stoats in the garden, but I have never had even a glimpse of a weasel.

On pleasant mornings, I take my breakfast into the conservatory and during May this year, I have enjoyed watching a pair of blue tits rearing two broods in the nest box very near my back door. By the end of the month, I knew that the second brood was due to fledge, so was not surprised one morning to see the adults popping in and out of the branches above the nest box. The leaves were too thick to see through, but I judged that the young had fledged into the tree and were still being fed by the parents.

It is difficult to describe what happened next! I became aware of something slithering round the trunk of the tree just below the nest box and for a fraction of a second, I stupidly thought I was seeing a snake about the thickness of my wrist. Of course, that was utterly ridiculous, and the “snake” transformed itself into a weasel, which inched its way up into the branches and re-emerged with a fledgling in its mouth. I watched as, with great agility, it scampered down the trunk of the tree and disappeared into the bushes. During the next half-hour it returned twice more, shot up the tree, poked its head into the hole in the now empty nest box, and continued up into the branches. I do not think that it managed to predate any other nestlings, but it gave me ample opportunity to observe that it was smaller than a stoat and had no black tip to its tail – which conformed my identification of it as a weasel. It is good to know that weasels still live in my garden, and I wonder if I will ever be lucky enough to have a third encounter with one of these fierce little creatures.

Breakfasts are now back to being much less interesting meals!

Weasels are mammals of the genus *Mustela*, which includes stoats, ferrets, polecats and mink. They are small, active predators and are the UK’s smallest carnivore. They eat such prey as birds, voles, mice and rabbits and they live for up to three years.

Nan Buchan

Diary



Forthcoming events

- Coffee drop-in** Saturday 26 August 2023, 10.30am-12noon
- Cuppa and company** Thursday 31 August 2023, 2-4pm
- Cuppa and company** Thursday 7 September 2023, 2-4pm
- Soup lunch** Wednesday 13 September 2023, 12.00-1.30pm
- Cuppa and company** Thursday 14 September 2023, 2-4pm
- Cuppa and company** Thursday 21 September 2023, 2-4pm
- Cuppa and company** Thursday 28 September 2023, 2-4pm
- Coffee drop-in** Saturday 30 September 2023, 10.30am-12noon
- Cuppa and company** Thursday 5 October 2023, 2-4pm
- Soup lunch** Wednesday 11 October 2023, 12.00-1.30pm
- Cuppa and company** Thursday 12 October 2023, 2-4pm
- Cuppa and company** Thursday 19 October 2023, 2-4pm
- Cuppa and company** Thursday 26 October 2023, 2-4pm
- Coffee drop-in** Saturday 28 October 2023, 10.30am-12noon
- Cuppa and company** Thursday 2 November 2023, 2-4pm
- Soup lunch** Wednesday 8 November 2023, 12.00-1.30pm
- Cuppa and company** Thursday 9 November 2023, 2-4pm
- Cuppa and company** Thursday 16 November 2023, 2-4pm
- Cuppa and company** Thursday 23 November 2023, 2-4pm
- Coffee drop-in** Saturday 25 November 2023, 10.30am-12noon

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

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

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

Cuppa and company Thursday 21 December 2023, 2-4pm

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Material for next issue

To Rennie McElroy by Monday 25 September 2023