

Carlops Parish Church

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NEWSLETTER

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Services, April 2020

Services cancelled until further notice

From our Minister

The number of times we have heard the word “unprecedented” in recent weeks must be unprecedented! There are other words which are now in common use, such as quarantine, lockdown, self-isolation, social distancing, all of which have a rather negative meaning. Despite having an anxiety-inducing tone, they have a health and wellbeing purpose. Coronavirus and Covid19 are new additions to our language, quite undesired; but now that they have entered our vocabulary, they are here to stay.

The phrase “panic-buying” is not new but has perhaps never been used with such regularity, nor with such anger. Although panic-buying is not the same as greedy buying. When told we must stay at home for weeks and you have a family, there is an instinctive anxiety which may cause a bit of panic in getting enough food in to survive and remain “safe at home” for as long as possible. But the greed and selfishness of some is evident. Meanwhile the foodbanks (too familiar in recent years run short. By the time you receive this, the tone of language may have changed again. “Stay at home” may be used in a far more commanding tone and the thought of the army or police rationing the trolleys at Tesco does not seem so far-fetched.

We may need to rediscover and resurrect some traditional words which have helped people in and through difficult times down the generations: hope, compassion, neighbourliness and faith. Words of encouragement and kindness are more difficult when we have to keep a distance and so have fewer conversations; and we do not even want to bump into anyone during a necessary but quick trip to the shops. So the old-fashioned telephone comes into its own, as do the recent innovations in social media which can help us keep in touch, exchange greetings, continue to do necessary work and tasks from home while still in your pyjamas.

Another word to hold on to and which we can action is “prayer”. Whatever our personal form and pattern, this is an enforced but opportune time to pray for our world, for leaders, for our community, our family and ourselves. It is something we can rediscover and as we do it in isolation we are aware that we do not pray alone. We are in the company of God, of each other, and what is beautifully called ‘The Communion of Saints’. And it is a time to remember the most common phrase in the whole of scripture: “Do not be afraid!” Words spoken to prophets, to shepherds, and to two women early on an Easter morning are words for us to hear, to hold, and to share as we travel through these unprecedented times.

Stewart McPherson

Coronavirus: events in Carlops church

Church services have been cancelled until further notice, as have all cultural and social events in Carlops Church.

Communication with Carlops Church

We will continue to publish a *Newsletter* and email it to all known addresses, with post for

those who do not use computers. This will help people stay at home and reduce risk of cross-contamination. I will update the website monthly; new material is likely to appear at *What's on* and at *News > Other news*.

Stewart has begun a weekly email to congregation and friends. It will include a short reflection, bible readings, prayers, intimations and hopefully some humour. It does not replace gathering together for worship, but offers you help in your personal devotional life, knowing that others are sharing it with you. If you received the reflection around Sunday 22 March, you are already on the list! To join the list, contact info@carlopschurch.org

Weddings, baptisms and funerals

Many are postponing weddings, or going ahead with only a few people present. Baptisms won't take place in church either. With great sadness, funerals are being reshaped too: currently, they are restricted to 25 people, sometimes fewer; this may be reduced further. An undertaker or minister visiting someone's home is not good practice now; much is done by telephone or a few people visiting the Funeral Director's office under stringent hygiene precautions. If the situation deteriorates, it may be that only immediate family can attend the crematorium or graveside.

This will be one of the most difficult impacts of restrictions, even though it is understandable. It will affect traditional rites of mourning and ways of coping with bereavement. If you have a concern, please contact the Minister, Rev Stewart McPherson.

The Open Gate

The Open Gate will not operate in Newlands Centre until further notice but will provide counselling support at any time by phone on 07535 898 244. Please use this resource if you need help.

Carlops community care group

Jim Eccleston has set up a Carlops community care group to support Carlops people during the coronavirus outbreak. The group is a network of volunteers who will try to support anyone who needs help in any way: urgent shopping, post mail, collect prescriptions, or just give a friendly phone call.

To get help, call Jim Eccleston on 07447 031 396; he will contact one of the volunteers to assist you directly.

If you could assist Jim in this commendable effort, call him on the same number to volunteer your services.

Food supply help in Carlops

Another Carlops support mechanism is that the Allan Ramsay Hotel is offering takeaway and/or home delivery meal service every Thursday to Sunday inclusive, from 5pm. It is also providing a vegetable box and fresh meat box service, collect or home delivery; order as much or as little as you want. Details at www.allanramsayhotel.com . Order online or by telephone 01968 660 258 between 12noon and 8pm. Pay in advance by credit or debit card by telephone. This service operates *order today, get tomorrow* in conjunction with Carlops Community Care Group, mentioned immediately above. Get some help yourself and support a local business at the same time.

Safer email addressing

Emails often go to groups of people and I've been asked to urge adoption of an addressing practice that helps protect individuals' identity and security. Many use it already, so apologies to those grannies I'm teaching to suck eggs!

If emailing to a group, don't put everyone's name in the "To" box, because it allows all recipients to see everyone's address. Send it to yourself and blind copy (BCC) it to each recipient; that way, each person receives your message; but other people's identity is hidden.

This needn't apply if writing to one person and two or three more "need to know"; then, use To and CC. But be aware a judgment is there to be made.

Carlops' Stated Annual Meeting Sunday 15 March 2020

Treasurer Mary McElroy reported our church finances to be stable and healthy; her analysis suggests they should continue thus in 2020, despite upsets caused by the coronavirus outbreak. She does not expect our planned extended linkage with the Parishes of Upper Tweeddale to generate a financial downturn.

Eco Group chair Anna Woolverton recorded a busy year in Carlops Church. Events included: eco-service on climate change; Earth hour marked with poems and prose by candlelight; attendance at Eco-congregation Scotland annual gathering; steady business levels at the Fair Trade stall; many social and cultural events – talks, lunches etc.

Session Clerk Murray Campbell spoke of the success of our Interim Ministry and thanked Stewart McPherson for his outstanding contribution. He reported that former minister Linda Dunbar is in good health again and relishing new areas of work. He thanked retiring elder Janet Burke for her significant contribution to Carlops Church over many years. He looked forward with confidence to the new, extended linkage with the Parishes of Upper Tweeddale. The congregation wholeheartedly supported Murray's report and his expectations for the future.

Closing the meeting, Stewart McPherson also spoke positively about the process of Interim Ministry and thanked congregation members for their participation in its activities. He too looked forward confidently to Carlops' congregational life in a larger linkage. and he expressed personal thanks to all who have tried to follow his lead and support him in Carlops.

Interim ministry

The March meeting of Melrose & Peebles Presbytery affirmed the report of the Transition Support Group and drew this period of Interim Ministry to a close in these words:

Presbytery notes that a final report of the Transitional Support Group has been received [about] the Interim Ministry of Rev Stewart McPherson in Carlops l/w Kirkurd & Newlands l/w West Linton: St Andrews. The report commends the work of Mr McPherson and the congregations and it concludes that the objectives of Interim Ministry have been achieved, although the situation has now altered with the planned linking with the Churches of Upper Tweeddale. Presbytery agrees that Mr McPherson remains in the charge until June 2020, to assist the congregations with the move towards the new linking.

For this we are all delighted. We are aware that does not mean everything is neat and tidy, but a significant journey has been made to a healthier place. There were plans to have a few meetings, such as our Lenten series *Discovering the way*, exploring how we journey forward in our life and faith together in Christian community. That necessarily ceased after two well-attended, much-appreciated weeks. We also intended to hold small group meetings and a General Kirk Session, but the situation means these too, cannot take place in the near future.

But it is pleasing that we reached the stage we did when we did, meaning we can focus on being church in such a drastically different climate. Our call to live out our faith individually and in community is important as we negotiate our way through this period of our life together which affects people across the world.

I want to say a huge, sincere *thank you* to all who participated in the Interim Ministry process. This made it possible to do this together with some trickiness but also in hope and trust.

Although the intention is for me to leave in June and move elsewhere, this is unpredictable at present. However, I am here with you during this time when our main desire is the restoration of a healthy and hope-filled world when supporting each other is vital as we discover different ways to "love one another"!

Stewart McPherson

Presbytery Plan

The new Presbytery Plan formally came into force at the March meeting of Presbytery. Much of the early progress has been delayed, but representatives from our linkage and Upper

Tweeddale met to shape a process before gatherings were discouraged. One group is beginning to consider what a *Basis of Linking* might look like; a group is exploring how a future General Kirk Session model might work; an administrator is coming to help us address how best to administer a new group of six congregations. Some of our work can continue via email, phone, and also, if we can figure out how to use it, video conferencing. Many of us may be learning how to do this. So, while there are more important things to cope with and think about at present, we will take a few small steps forward.

Stewart MacPherson

YouTube and Facebook

On Mothering Sunday, 22 March 2020, the first day churches were closed for worship, Stewart posted a short reflection online while standing in the manse garden with St Andrew's Church in the background. Although not promising this to be frequent or highly polished, the intention is that it will be offered as another means of keeping in touch and enabling our faith to be encouraged during this time. It was viewed by many people beyond the congregations. There is a link on the St Andrew's Website or if you are on Facebook you can view it. Or ask Stewart smcpherson@churchofscotland.org.uk for the link.

Christian Aid update

CA Week 2019 raised £7.5m. This money was spent to improve maternal and neonatal infant mortality rates in Sierra Leone, the most dangerous country in the world to give birth in.

- 58,000 people given access to new health clinics where nurses could save lives
- 64,000 people trained in hygiene practices, helping mums and children fight off illness and live healthier
- 13,000 women helped to pay for transport to their nearest clinic through community savings groups

Precise arrangements for the 2020 campaign are now uncertain, but it will focus on Rose, who is 67 and lives in eastern Kenya. When she was a child, Rose remembers how the rain would fall, giving fruit to the trees and providing plenty of nutritious food to eat. Now, drought is robbing her of the chance to farm. She and her family are hungry. Sadly, millions like her in Kenya are struggling to survive the severe drought; it's now a national emergency. Every day, without no breakfast, she sets out on a long, dangerous journey to collect water for her family. When she returns, exhausted, she has no energy to do anything else. This is Rose's climate crisis.

Your gifts could help Rose's community build a dam to provide a long-lasting reliable water supply to reliably grow fresh vegetables for her family and let her see her grandchildren grow up and live life to the full. No more exhausting treks for water.

Robert Higgins (*amended by Editor for current circumstances*)

The Column Lockdown

Yes there is fear. Yes there is isolation.
Yes there is panic buying. Yes there is sickness.
Yes there is even death.

But, they say that in Wuhan after so many years of noise
You can hear the birds again.
They say that after just a few weeks of quiet
The sky is no longer thick with fumes
But blue and grey and clear.

They say that in the streets of Assisi
People are singing to each other
across the empty squares,
keeping their windows open
so that those who are alone
may hear the sounds of family around them.

They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland
Is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.
Today a young woman is busy spreading fliers with her number through the neighbourhood so
that the elders have someone to call on.
Today churches, synagogues, mosques and temples
are preparing to welcome
and shelter the homeless, the sick, the weary.

All over the world people are slowing down and reflecting.
All over the world people are looking at their neighbours in a new way.
All over the world people are waking up to a new reality.

To how big we really are.
To how little control we really have.
To what really matters. To Love.

So we pray and we remember that
Yes there is fear. But there does not have to be hate.
Yes there is isolation. But there does not have to be loneliness.
Yes there is panic buying. But there does not have to be meanness.
Yes there is sickness. But there does not have to be disease of the soul.
Yes there is even death. But there can be a rebirth of love.
Wake to the choices you make as to how to live now.

Today, breathe.

Listen; behind the factory noises of your panic,
The birds are singing again. The sky is clearing,
Spring is coming, And we are always encompassed by Love.

Open the windows of your soul
And though you may not be able
to touch across the empty square,
Sing.

Fr Richard Hendrick OFM (*a friar in Ireland*), March 2020
Submitted by Chris Levison

Forthcoming events

All events cancelled or postponed until further notice

Material for next issue

To info@carlopschurch.org by Monday 20 April 2020 please

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