CARLOPS CHURCH

In the community, for the community

Newsletter

Volume 20, Number 2; Feb 2026

Services, February 2026

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

:

1 Feb 10am: Rev Dr Tony Foley
8 Feb 10am: Patsy Campbell
15 Feb 10am: Murray Campbell
22 Feb 10am: Rev Dr Tony Foley
1 Mar 10am: Steven Whalley

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

Art - for the soul

"There is no science without fancy, and no art without facts." ***Vladimir Nabokov.***

Did you know that over one third of the Old Testament is written as poetry? It seems that whenever God wants to say something important to us or wants us to think deeply about a matter, He wraps it up in the rhythms and rhymes of poetry, in metaphors and similes. The father of modern biology Charles Darwin, reflecting in later life on the danger of spending too much time in the pursuit of prosaic information warns us that failing to make time in our lives for poetry, art, and music robs us of something that we cannot obtain by any other means.

"My mind seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts, but …if I had to live my life again, I would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once every week; for perhaps then those parts of my brain now atrophied would thus have been kept active through use. The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness, and may possibly be injurious to the intellect, and more probably to the moral character." **CHARLES DARWIN**

I don't like poems.

I don't like poems,
knotty worded poems
encasing parcels of wisdom

I don't like poems,
poems loaded with hard heavy words,

vein rich with the ore of insight.

I don't like poems with sharp words
that pierce my carefully constructed
Self, defences.

I don't like poems
I need them.

Do yourself some good this week, sit with a poem, a piece of music, or art long enough to hear its voice and to feel its heart. You just might be surprised at how much good it will do you and your brain. Who knows you might even hear the prompting of God.

Peace, Tony.

Meteorological Miscellanea

Meteorological folks are fortunate with the assortment of onomatopoeic words at their disposal. Let's look at those that begin with the letter 'd' alone with regard to the third week of January. Take your pick from dismal, dreary, drab, dreich and good old plain dull with emphasis on the first letter and a bit of a ring to the last two. Dreadful, devastating and destructive are currently reserved for Maltese and Maori folk. When I draw back the curtains in the morning to search for the shrouded Pentland Hills there is another 'stut' and "Dull" is the utterance.

Burns has another 'd'

*From Winter: A **Dirge***
The wintry west extends his blast,
And hail and rain does blaw;
Or, the stormy north sends driving forth
The blinding sleet and snaw:
While tumbling brown, the burn comes down,
And roars frae bank to brae;
And bird and beast in covert rest,
And pass the heartless day.

When the last report was issued, we had just changed month and with it, the weather. After a rare snowless December, we had our second snowfall of the winter on 1st January. It didn't amount to much, but it was powdery and stuck around beautifully for 9 days. There was 'wall to wall' sunshine for 4 days along with 4 'sub-zero' days. Ponds froze. By the 17th the average minimum temperature was -1.8C. The average maximum temperature was 2.2C. There was less than 1 inch of rain and over 50 hours of sunshine. It was colder and much drier than the same period last year and almost as sunny. There were 13 frosty nights.

Stats flat-lined in the 3rd week of the month. The minimum temperatures varied from 34 to 40F. The maximum temperatures varied from 39 all the way to 40.5F. There was a distinct lack of sunshine. The ceaseless run of low cloud from the SW ensured that we had 6 consecutive blanks.

The good news is that the 'days are getting longer' since the Winter Solstice at 3.03 pm on 21st December. The best thing about January and February is that Spring days are on their way and we have already dumped January.

As I type this, Storm Chandra is upon us but it's Devon, with a capital 'd', that bears the brunt. PS In winter 2009-10 I recorded lying snow on 104 days, in 1993-94 100. This winter, so far, just 18 days - we've a bit to go!?

Peter Woolverton, Pyethall, 27th January 2026

Our Village Talks

Monthly talks and a chance to chat

(Raising funds for Carlops Church, suggested £5 donation per event)

Friday 13th February 2026 – Walking From Home to Rome – Geraldine McFaul will share the highs and lows of her 2023 walk from Glasgow to Rome in aid of Mary's Meals and Dementia UK. The kindness she encountered is inspiring.

Friday 13th March 2026 – Juliet Gold – Orthopaedics in Northern Malawi - Physiotherapist Juliet delivered a talk last year about her work in the NHS. Since then, her work has taken her back to Malawi for a spell and we will hear about her experiences there.

Friday 10th April 2026 – Marianne Hazlewood Local botanical artist Marianne will give a talk on her intricate work, accompanied by some of her pieces.

Friday 15th May 2026 – Alex Gray Alex and helpers will give a talk on the different musical influences in Scottish Country Dancing.

Flowers in the Church – thanks to Hilary Watt

Hilary Watt is to stand down as our Flower Convenor after many years.

We thank Hilary for her beautiful displays over the years and dedication to this role. The finished displays spoke of care and time spent in preparation.

Flowers enhance the space we share and bring a smile or prompt an 'ooh' and an 'ahh' when first spied. If you feel you have a talent in this direction, or a willingness to be involved, please contact Julie.

Lent Study – Life Attitudes

Our group studies for Lent this Year will be based on the book *Life Attitudes* by Robert Warren and Sue Mayfield.

This is a 5-part course on the Beatitudes. Link to the book - *Life Attitudes*

Details of the sessions have still to be confirmed but it is likely that the studies will commence week of 23rd February. We expect that there will be a morning 'in person' group in Broughton and an evening group on Zoom. Final plans will be announced in church and the weekly Linkage News.

Preserves – buy, try, buy again!

Jams Jellies Marmalade

All income from sales of jams, jellies and marmalade is donated to Carlops Church to fund our activities in the community.

All **fruit** (except oranges) is donated from **local gardens**.

Sugar, electricity, labels, skills and time are also donated**.**

Jars are recycled and donated by church supporters.

Carlops Church can claim £0.80 in Gift Aid for every jar purchased.

Warm thanks to all who enjoy our produce

Thanks to all who contribute to creating and consuming our product.

Jars for recycling welcome for a new season. Contact Mary McElroy

Obituary for blister pack recycling

Mary McElroy on the end of this popular service and lack of an alternative

The facility for recycling blister-packs at Carlops Church will cease at the end of February 2026. Please do not bring more donations to the church after that; we will be unable to process them. As an Eco-congregation, we would like to prevent these items going to landfill or incinerators, but the costs now involved make withdrawal unavoidable.

Since March 2023, we have provided a blister-pack collection box in the church, sourced from Terracycle, a recycling business www.terracycle.com. Terracycle launched the scheme as a free-to-user service in partnership with a supermarket chain, but demand and costs outstripped the budgets that these sponsors could afford. The supermarket dropped out in mid-2023, and Terracycle continued the scheme as a commercial venture. They sell the collection boxes; the price includes delivery and eventual uplift. They do not accept material submitted by other means.

Demand for the service is strong: it is used by Carlops Church supporters, the community at large, and people from our linkage partner churches. We fill one container (1.75 x 0.67 x 0.67 metres) with blister-packs every two to three months.

The cost was expected to decrease as more organisations participated country-wide but in practice, costs have risen and are now unsustainable. These costs do not fall on Carlops Church; an anonymous donor has organised and financed the service but now feels they must withdraw. We would be delighted if a financially viable scheme for recycling blister-packs were available, but at this time know of no rival operation.

The UK uses an estimated 11 billion blister-packs every year, so there is a clear need for some recycling model. Our Carlops experience confirms that there is healthy demand. But thus far, technology and commerce have not found an affordable solution. Most local authorities advise disposing of blister-packs in general domestic waste, so people must needs revert to that – perhaps with a hope and a prayer.

What do you think? If you have ideas, or need more information, contact Mary McElroy.

E maryhmcelroy@outlook.com M 07899 872 131 T 01968 661 042

The Column

Malawi – The Full Story

As we near the end of our Malawi project I thought that I would write an article giving the whole history to the project and our remarkable achievements of 2025.

To put the project into context, it is worth looking at a few facts and figures pertaining to Malawi.

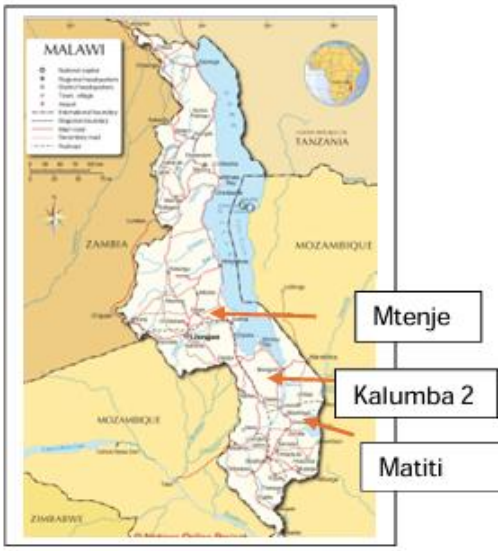
Malawi is a small landlocked country in southeast Africa:

Malawi

- 45,560 square miles *(Scotland 30,414 square miles)*
- 560 x 180 miles *(Scotland 275 x 154 miles max)*
- Population: 22,224,282 (as of July 2025) *(Scotland* 5,463,300)
- People /square mile: 487 *(Scotland 179)*
- Language: Chichewa
- Currency: Kwacha – currently 2,200 to the £
- Main industries - tobacco, tea and sugar processing, sawmill products, cement
- Main agricultural products - tobacco, sugarcane, cotton, tea, corn, potatoes, sorghum, cattle and goats.
- GDP
    - Malawi $580.25 (5th poorest in world)
    - United Kingdom $54,950
- Inflation: Around 30%

Our story with Malawi began in 2015 when we built 2 kitchens at Mtenje and Matiti through Mary's Meals

Mary's Meals tries to encourage parents to send their children to school, by providing a meal (porridge) for the children at school. This proved so successful at Matiti that there weren't enough classrooms or toilets. The youngest children therefore got taught under a tree, and were sent home when it rained (most of our winter). As a Church we therefore decided to fundraise to build a large classroom and toilets. We used Robert Chibisa, who was the Mary's Meals supervisor at the time, to supervise the build and to buy the necessary materials.



Robert was keen to go to University, so I sponsored him through his degree, in the hope that by helping one person, this might cascade into helping many.

The degree helped Robert get a good job, and then in May 21, Robert's home village, Kalumba 2, had a meeting and decided that they would like to try to build a pre school.

The village is very rural, lying 15km walk from the nearest road. Education is almost non existent in the area, with a very long walk to the local school meaning that the younger children weren't going, and then, when they did go, they were too far behind and dropped out. As a consequence, the majority of the village are illiterate with no prospect of ever bettering themselves

The village wanted to build an early learning centre for 4 – 8 year olds, but they also wanted somewhere that could be used as an adult literacy

centre and also vaccination centre/ antenatal clinic, as the nearest nurse (not doctor) is 15km walk away at Pengapenga

To be recognised as an early learning centre by the government the building has to be 8x10m, and there needs to be toilets and a kitchen available. In May 21, it was the wrong time for fundraising. The villagers said that they would provide the bricks and labour and Robert said he would pay half the cost of the main building, so I said I would match this

We got as far as almost completing the main building when Storm Freddy - one of the biggest ever tropical cyclones, hit Malawi in March 23.

This knocked the building down, together with many others, including Robert's mothers, which killed her. His sister also died and he took custody of her 2 children, the eldest of whom is now in the village and the younger boy, who is in his late teens, and is brain injured from a motorbike accident, is with Robert

The rubble left from the building

Things lay dormant for a time, and then in spring 24, I suggested to Robert that we got things moving again. At this time he also had a 4th child, whom he named after me, so there is a little Sheena in Malawi.

In March 24, the choir gave some funds, which got the main building to roof level, and the holes for toilets were dug. By September 24, they had started teaching 32 children in the church, using untrained, volunteer teachers. Money was needed to complete the main building, the toilets and the kitchen. The Church therefore decided that the money from the monthly Friday talks, which we were due to restart in January 25, would go to the project.

Things then started to go horribly wrong for Robert. In the autumn, the good job that he had, came to an end. The best he could find was a very poorly pad job in Blantyre, which took him away from the project area

Shortly after that, his wife suddenly died of cancer, leaving him with a 6 month old baby and 4 other children to support

Worse was to come when at the end of January. He went into work one day (which was a US funded NGO), to be told that Trump had pulled the plug,

and he was on unpaid leave for the next 3 months when things would be reviewed.

The Church immediately rallied round, and in one Sunday raising £520 for Robert, to allow him to continue to supervise the project while continuing to support his family.

At this point the main building was near enough complete and was starting to be used with the 4 volunteer teachers

The jazz band gave funds from a concert, and together with the talk money, gave almost enough to get the toilets built.

However, it was the rainy season, so things slowed down considerably.

They managed to get supplies for the toilets, to the village. However, it all felt a bit stuck, and I didn't feel as though I had a full view of where we were with everything. From what I was hearing, it seemed more important to have a junior primary school in the village than an Early Learning Centre for the younger children, and I was keen to see what the feasibility of this might be. I therefore decided to go out for a visit.

Preparations then began. March became meeting after meeting with people in Malawi, people who had been to Malawi and people who knew about Malawi. I also wanted to take out teaching materials. The village has no water, electricity, internet etc. and they have no access to books, paper or pens. I decided the easiest thing to do was to use laminated paper, for both the children to write on, and also for the alphabet, numbers etc. This resulted in a lamination party when we laminated 400 pieces of paper. I also took out 320 dry makers! I wanted to only take cabin baggage as I was overnighting in Ethiopia. I could fit everything into a large rucksack and another smaller bag. The cabin baggage limit was 7kg. The rucksack weighted 27kg and the smaller bag 10kg. It was interesting trying to get through the gates etc trying to make 37kg look like 7kg. Hopefully they just thought I was a frail old lady!

After 48 hours travelling to get to Malawi, and then a further 8hrs to get to the project area, I arrived at my salubrious accommodation (which was still 1.5hrs walk from the project area).

The yard where I was supposed to be camping. The open door is the kitchen. The screened door is the toilet

The maize we were eating

And the room they offered me, which I shared with Robert's eldest daughter and the ants.

I had 3 days in the project area when I had meetings with:

The District Education Manager

The Primary District Education Manager

The Social Pre School Education Manager

The Health Officer

The Village Chief

The Chair of the Village

A meeting/workshop with the whole village, allowing them to prioritise their needs.

2 meetings with the village committee

2 teacher training sessions

2 afternoons putting this teaching into practise with the children showing them how you can learn through games

A visit to each sub chief of the 5 sub villages, that make up the actual village - including a visit to every house in every village. The village is effectively 5 sub villages quite a distance apart from each other.

An Easter Church Service

A visit to the nearest primary school - this was only achieved by a 5km run each way to fit it into the timescale. There is no transport in the area and the issue with schooling is that this is the nearest school.

Quite a 3 days!

And then it was back to Blantyre and 36 hours this time to get back home.

Showing them how you can learn through play, something they are totally unfamiliar with

Teacher training for the volunteer teachers

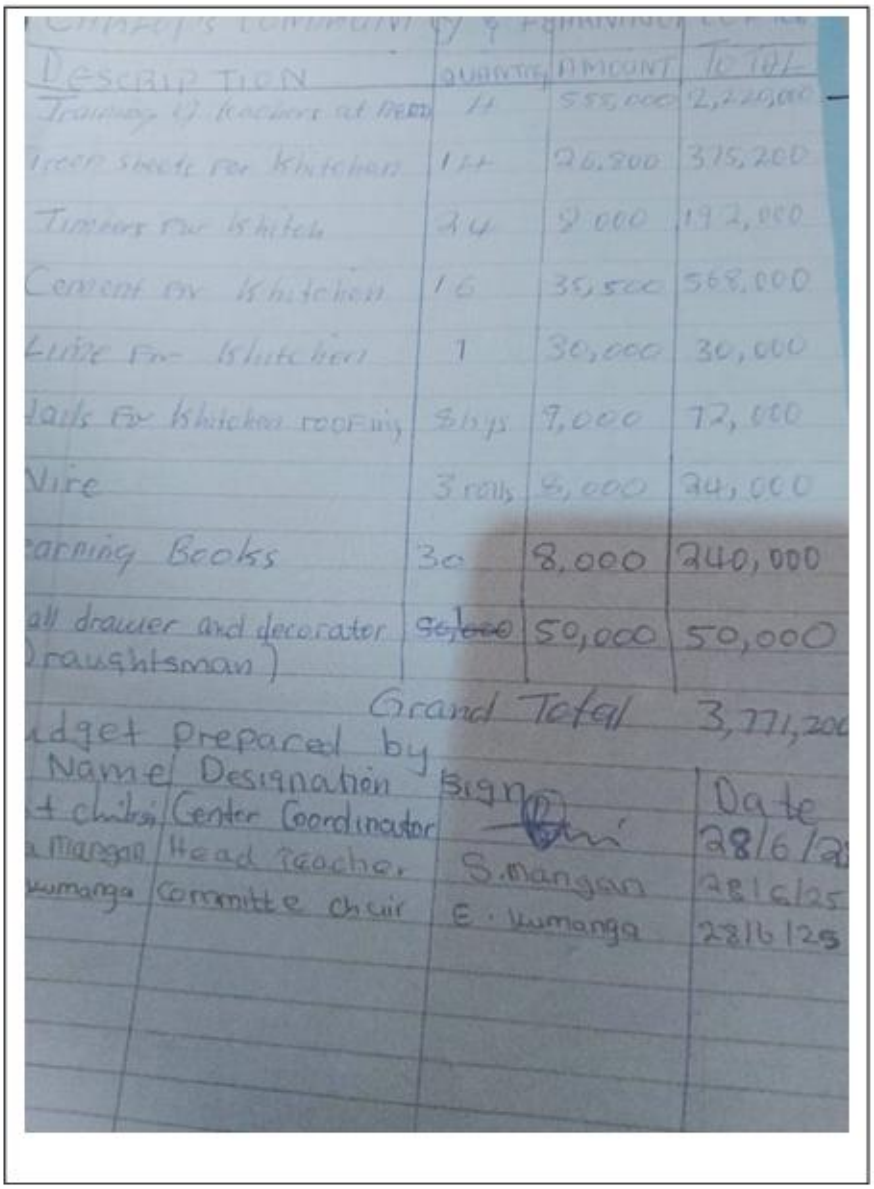
The village workshop came up with the following priorities:

- Good houses – building skills training
- Junior Primary School
- Food security – machines/irrigation
- Food preservation
- Business Skills
- Clinic ie doctor's practise

Interestingly they didn't say running water. The water comes from 2 adjacent wells about 400m from one of the sub villages, and a well with a pump on the opposite side of the road near one of the other sub villages.

One of the wells

I asked the village to prepare a budget based on the assumption that there would be around £1500 - £2000 (KW3,300,000 – KW4,400,000) available, which listed costs in priority order. This is what they prepared:



DESCRIPTION	QUANTITY	AMOUNT	TOTAL
Training of teachers at [illegible]	11	555,000	2,220,000
Iron sheets for kitchen	144	26,200	375,200
Timbers for kitchen	24	8,000	192,000
Cement for kitchen	16	35,500	568,000
Lime for kitchen	1	30,000	30,000
Nails for kitchen roofing	6kgs	9,000	72,000
Wire	3 rolls	8,000	24,000
Learning Books	30	8,000	240,000
Wall drawer and decorator (Draughtsman)	~~50,000~~	50,000	50,000
		Grand Total	3,771,200

Budget prepared by

Name	Designation	Sign	Date
[illegible]	Center Coordinator	[illegible]	28/6/25
[illegible] Mangaa	Head teacher	S. Mangaa	28/6/25
[illegible] Kumanga	Committee chair	E. Kumanga	28/6/25

Teacher training was their first priority, and by far the biggest part of the budget at KW2,220,000 (£1000). This is KW550,000 (£250) for each of the four teachers. The Diploma is a 6 week course, run in three, two week modules during the school holidays. It was assumed by the village, and therefore ourselves, that the money we paid in July (KW2,220,000) was for the full 6 week Diploma course. However, it has turned out that this was only for the first module. In December we paid the college for just the Headteacher's second module, but when she arrived at the college she was told that the course had been cancelled due to lack of numbers. The money has been refunded and Robert is holding this for April when the second module should run. We also have almost sufficient money put aside for the third module for the Headtacher, although the prices have now gone up. The agreement is that the Headteacher will cascade what she has learnt to the other teachers.

I did get the go ahead to build a junior primary school from the District Education Manager, but on returning home we discussed the feasibility of this, and decided it was more of a commitment than we wanted to make. The building that we have built complies with government regulations for a primary school, so its role could be changed in the future, and they are allowing children of primary school age to attend the early learning centre.

However, although everything hasn't gone completely to plan, we have achieved a lot. We have:

Built the main classroom building, with 2 small rooms, one for vaccinations/antenatal clinics and one for storage. And more importantly, got agreement from the Health Officer to provide vaccination and antenatal clinics every month.

Main Building

Built the kitchen

Built the toilets

Kitchen

Toilets

The four volunteer teachers have completed the first part of their pre school teacher training. but see above regarding further training.

Got agreement from the village committee that they would charge a small nominal fee for the children's education, to pay the volunteer teachers, further learning resources and maintenance of the building. This may be become an issue, as in the last month, the new Malawian Government have decided to make schooling free. At the moment children are being charged KW1000 (50p) per month. From this they agreed they would pay the teachers KW10,000 per month ie about £5. However, this doesn't add up as they have about 32 children, which gives an income of KW32,000, out of which they need to pay the teachers KW40,000, and put some away for maintenance and resources. There are potentially more children that may enrol, which could solve the problem.

Got agreement that the building would be used for all primary aged children, who weren't attending the primary school 5km away, not just pre-schoolers.

Agreed with the Village Chair that she will run a minimum of 2 adult literacy classes each week.

All this is now taking place, with 32 children enrolled in the school and good attendance at the adult literacy classes. So well done Carlops and all its supporters.

Budget

Income

Project		Robert	
Choir	£422.50	Church Members	£1,210.00
Jazz Band	£210.00	Man Soup	£210.00
Guild	£500.00	**Total**	**£1,420.00**
Talks	£1,606.00		
Church Members	£175.00	All money sent to Robert	
Man Soup	£127.00		
Guid Blethers	£40.00		
Total	**£3080.50**		

Expenditure - Project

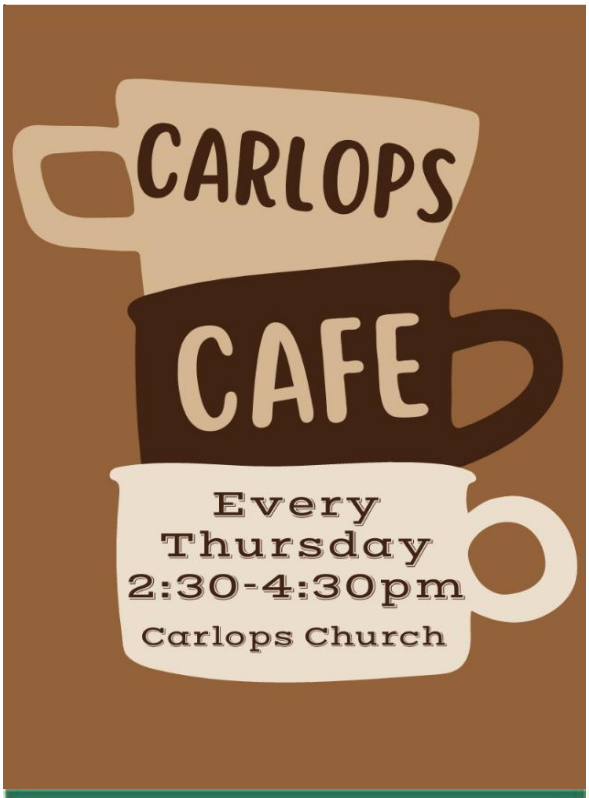
Main building	£622.50
Toilets	£193.00
Kitchen	£634.00
Teacher training	£1,000.00
Books for village	£50.00
Total	**£2,499.50**

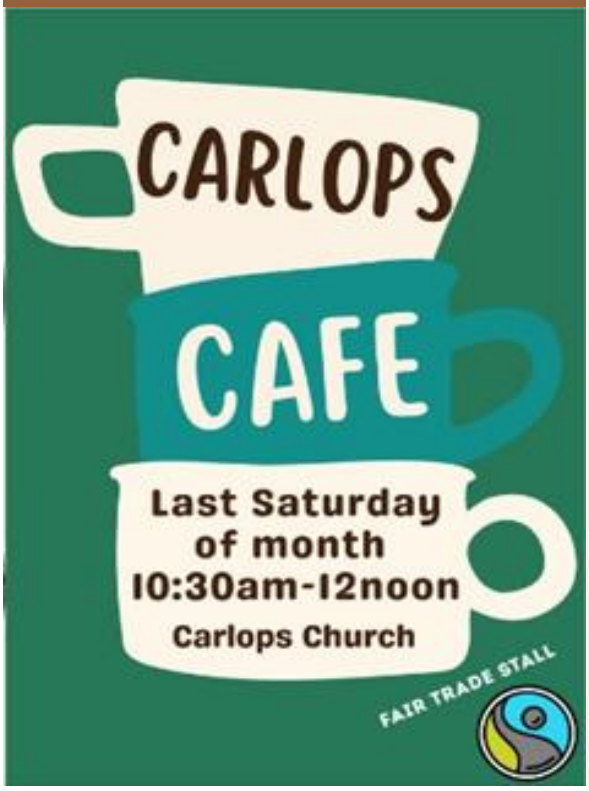
Money Left - Project

With Robert for – for 2nd Diploma module for Headteacher	£243.00
Guid Blethers for Books	£40.00
Remaining in Church Funds as of 10.1.25 – for 3rd Diploma module for Headteacher	£298.00
Total	**£581.00**

Sheena Livingstone, 28th January

Our regular events





Keep up to date with all events across the linkage [West Tweeddale Parishes Diary]

Children's Events

Sunday Club meets on the first Sunday of every month in the Old Church Hall during school term times. We leave from church during the service (start time 11.30am) and walk the children to the hall and for those who wish to meet us at the hall we suggest 11.45am. This is particularly useful for those who attend the earlier service in Carlops Church. After Sunday Club we bring the children back to the church or they can be collected by parents around 12.15pm.

Dates as follows

Sunday 1st February

Sunday 1st March

Thank you,

Ann Lyon and Kate Whalley

The next Messy Church session is on Sunday 8 February

The session starts at 4pm promptly in the New Church Hall at West Linton and finishes at 6pm.

All children from babies to P7 are most welcome to come and join in the fun!

We will start with a Bible Story and a song and then the children will do a range of craft activities, followed by a prayer and finish off with a meal together.

All children MUST be accompanied by an adult.

Please do consider joining us for an afternoon of fun activities and a family meal together.

For more information contact Jean Howat howatjean@gmail.com 07544 785159

Pudding Night at Newlands – 6 Feb 6.30pm

We are holding our annual Pudding Night on Friday 6th February in Newlands Church at 6.30pm. As you may remember from the past, there will be soup to start and everyone brings a pudding to share. Tickets are £5 and there will also be a raffle in aid of Oxfam. Families are most welcome!

It would be brilliant if you could join us as this is always a really fun evening.
Please let me know if you would like a ticket.
With all good wishes

Jean Howat howatjean@gmail.com 07544 785159

If you need help

As well as The Open Gate (advertised below) our linkage of 6 churches has some help available for anyone in need.

Food bank

The minister's benevolent fund offers emergency assistance throughout our linkage areas. If you require assistance, please contact us by email. All emails will be dealt with in the strictest of confidence. People may need other kinds of support and we are also ready to help with that or direct you to others who can
emergencyfoodbank@standrews-westlinton.org

Pastoral Group

We are a small group of people who are there to offer a listening ear in confidence. We are not professional counsellors but rather sympathetic listeners.

If you know anyone who might appreciate a visit, please do contact our minister tfoley@churchofscotland.org or our pastoral group lead Jean Howat howatjean@gmail.com

We are not professional counsellors but rather sympathetic listeners.

Got a problem?

Stressed? Anxious? Depressed?
Parenting difficulties? Relationship issues? Work problems? Trouble at school/college? Etc.

Whatever the problem - large or small, recent or long-standing - Solution Focussed Brief Therapy can help.

Ask for an appointment at

THE OPEN GATE

Fridays 2pm to 5pm.

Anyone who wants help for their problem is welcome, and will be seen locally and in confidence by arrangement.

PHONE OR TEXT 07535 898 244

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.

Contacts

Minister: Rev Dr Tony Foley
Telephone 01968 660 221 Email tfoley@churchofscotland.org.uk
Mobile 07793 294 000

Church Administrator: Kate Whalley Email kate@westlinton.com
Telephone 01968 733 112 Office - Friday 9.30 am – 12.30pm
Old Church Hall - Friday 2.00 – 4.00pm

Christian Aid: Mary Levison
Telephone 01968 674 566 Email marylevison@btinternet.com

Church bookings: Sheena Livingstone
Telephone 01968 661 282 Email sheena@deanfoot.onmicrosoft.com

Coffee drop-in, Carlops Café and Soup Lunch : Mary Levison
Telephone 01968 674 566 Email marylevison@btinternet.com

Treasurer and Eco Group: Anna Woolverton
Telephone 01968 660 382 Email annapye@btinternet.com

Flowers: TBC
Telephone

Newsletter and website: Julie Gamble
Telephone 07980 258 381 Email julieggamble@yahoo.co.uk

Session Clerk and Organist: Murray Campbell
Telephone 01968 660 530 Email d.m.campbell@ed.ac.uk

Request a card for someone: Bridget Wilcox
Text only 07980 836 817

Diary notes

Forthcoming events

Saturday 31 January	10.30-12pm	**Coffee Drop-in (Carlops Café) and Fair Trade Stall**
Tuesday 3 February	7.30-9.30pm	**Gaelic Psalm Singing**
Thursday 5 February	2.30-4.30pm	**Carlops Cafe**
Tuesday 10 February	7.30-9.30pm	**Gaelic Psalm Singing**
Wednesday 11 February	12.30 – 2pm	**Soup Lunch**
Thursday 12 February	2.30-4.30pm	**Carlops Cafe**
Friday 13 February	7.30-8.30pm	**Our Village Talks – From Home to Rome – Geraldine McFaul on her epic 2023 walk from Glasgow to Rome**
Tuesday 17 February	7.30-9.30pm	**Gaelic Psalm Singing**
Thursday 19 February	2.30-4.30pm	**Carlops Cafe**
Tuesday 24 February	7.30-9.30pm	**Gaelic Psalm Singing**
Thursday 26 February	2.30-4.30pm	**Carlops Cafe**
Saturday 28 February	10.30-12pm	**Coffee Drop-in (Carlops Café) and Fair Trade Stall**
Tuesday 3 March	7.30-9.30pm	**Gaelic Psalm Singing**
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Material for next issue

To Julie Gamble by Friday 27th February 2026 please