

St John's News

The Newsletter of St John's Church of Scotland: Carluke

St John's Church of Scotland: Carluke, is a registered Scottish Charity, No SC004066



December 2019

Dear Members

I write to you on this Advent season when we reflect on the themes of hope, love, joy and peace. Advent begins with the urgent Gospel call to “stay awake” and “stand ready” to meet Jesus Christ. We are to live not only in the radiant light of Christ’s first coming, but in the sure hope of his glorious return at the end of time. Scriptures leave us in no doubt that every day is leading to Christ’s glorious return and our final meeting with Christ. In this light, we can recognise the urgency of the church’s mission, as well as our expectation of Christ’s return.

We are very much aware of the darkness and the absence of light at this time of the year. This rather gloomy scene is reflected in the latest news headlines on rising global violence and unemployment, the struggle of many families to find sufficient money to pay for food and other necessities and a growing global economic and climate crises. During his earthly ministry, Christ taught his disciples to pray for the coming of God’s kingdom. As God’s people, we cannot simply sing about love at Advent and Christmas and expect it to happen, we are given a task to work towards a world where love prevails alongside hope, joy and peace.

May I commend our resilience and deep commitments to the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ within our community and beyond. I am thankful for the success of our last Friends and Family service and for our just concluded 2019 Carluke and District Praise the Lord. I hope that we can remain an invitational and a welcoming congregation. A congregation, where

God’s people are praising knowing they’re wanted and loved by their Lord.

In these seasons of Advent and Christmas, may we commit ourselves to sharing with others the hope, love, joy and peace we have received from our Lord Jesus Christ.

With my thoughts and prayers,

Rev Dr Elijah Obinna
Minister

Vestry Times - Wednesdays and Fridays 9:30 am - 12:30 pm

Regular Worship Times

Sunday Morning Prayers - 10:20 - 10:50 am, before morning service.

Normal Sunday Services are held at 11:00 am.

Evening Services are held on the **SECOND** Sunday of the month (*Healing*) and the **LAST** Sunday of the month (*Praise*) at 7:00 pm

A **short Mid-Week Service** is held on Thursdays at 10:30 am.

Forthcoming Special Events and Services

December

- Sun 8** 12:00 Souper Sunday Soup Lunch, *in aid of* Church of Scotland HIV/AIDS Programme
- Sun 15** 11:00 All-Age Service *followed by* Youth Church Outing
- Sun 22** 09:30 Christmas Breakfast
- Tue 24** 23:00 Watchnight Service
- Wed 27** 12:00 Short Service for Christmas Day
12:30 Christmas Lunch

January

- Sun 5** 11:00 Joint New Year Service *in St Andrew's Church*
- Mon 13** 19:00 Kirk Session Meeting
- Sat 25** 19:00 Youth Praise
- Sun 26** 11:00 Youth Service

February

- Sun 16** 12:00 Soup Lunch *after morning worship*

Please watch Sunday bulletins, local press or visit the church website for and changes and more information as it becomes available.

Next Edition of St John's News

Material for the next edition should be in the hands of the editor, George Reid, **NO LATER THAN Sunday 19 January 2020.**

editor@carluke-stjohns.org.uk

Jar of Grace

You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God

(2 Corinthians 9:11)

When an emergency arises, whether that emergency is caused by a natural disaster, by war or by displacement, children always suffer so much. So we are asking you once again to raise funds through the Jar of Grace appeal to help UNICEF support some of the world's most vulnerable children. The money we raise this coming year will once again assist UNICEF in responding rapidly to deliver life-saving assistance and protection, so that children in danger get the help they need as soon as possible.

These are just a few of the ways in which the money you raise could be used by UNICEF:

£5 could provide a snug blanket to keep a baby warm in a hospital or refugee camp;

£14 could protect 21 children from deadly measles;

£19.50 could provide mosquito nets to protect 7 families from malaria;

£136 could provide a *school-in-a-box* which contains school equipment for 40 children to continue with their education during an emergency or natural disaster.

For anyone who doesn't know about the Jar of Grace, please let us explain:

In the New Year you can collect a sheet giving information about the appeal; this sheet has a label which you can detach and stick onto an empty jar; before you eat each meal, in thanks for the food you are about to eat, you are asked to put money into your Jar of Grace; after Easter the money you have put into your jar will be collected, counted for you and sent to UNICEF.

If you would like to help UNICEF support some of the world's most vulnerable children, please consider taking part in this year's Jar of Grace appeal and thank you again for your generosity over the years.

CS

Lockerbie Experience

In October, Finlay Obinna took part in a visit to Lockerbie Manor Activity Centre with his class from Crawforddyke Primary School. He wrote a report on the visit:

When I was told I was going to the Lockerbie Manor Activity Centre, I was excited, because last year's P7s said it was a great fun. We left Carlisle for Lockerbie on 1 October; it was a three-hour journey, but we stopped half-way to have our lunch. When we got there, we were shown our rooms and got straight on into our activities.

First, I had low ropes; it was fun. Later, I did high ropes, but this time, I was quite frightened, because it was too dark, so I couldn't do it.

The next day, I did the zip lining, which was fun, then I did high ropes again, but this time I wasn't scared and so I completed the course. Later I did kayaking, which I thoroughly enjoyed, then we played a little game and then later we did canoeing, it was all fun.

The next day we did fencing; this was my favourite activity and I was good at it. After the fencing, was archery, I was good at it but my friend was great. The only activity I did not participate in was abseiling, because I felt like I might fall.

I enjoyed the company of my school friends and made new friends too. My teachers, activity helpers, and staff at the centre were amazing. On the whole, it was a worthwhile experience, one that I would highly recommend to others.

FO

**How did Mary and Joseph know that
Jesus weighed 4.2 kg?
Cause they had a weigh in the manger.**

Malawi 2019

In the summer of 2014, a number of young people from Carluke, together with their leaders spent two weeks in Malawi. While there, they worked on building projects, visited Harrogate House a children's home run by the charity Open Arms Malawi.

In June 2019, five years almost to the day, **Megan Hoey**, one of these young people, returned with her brother **Cameron**. They would both like to say a huge thank you to all of the congregation for their kind thoughts and prayers and for the amazing support they all gave in helping them fund raise. They managed to send over £1,900 in cash, so with Gift Aid that means that Open Arms received £2,375 and this money will go a very long way to help with the running of Open Arms.

Megan writes:

After becoming aware of Open Arms in 2014 when a small group from St John's, led by Karen Gillon, was going over to work there and the Sunday school deciding to sponsor a child there, I headed out to Malawi. All I can say is it was amazing and a life changing experience that I would recommend to anyone. On returning and having organised a child for Cameron to sponsor I promised him that when he was old enough I would take him over. So this summer the two of us headed back to Malawi and back into the amazing world of Open Arms Malawi. This time we were working with the babies, which was a breath of fresh air. The staff give every ounce of themselves to the children and the love and security that they share shines on the face of every child you meet.

Cameron writes:

When Megan came home in 2014, she had so many pictures but one in particular was of a little boy who on her 1st day there had run up to her, taken her by the hand and pulled her over to the swings so that she could push him and another little girl. After coming back home Neville emailed Megan with the information on the little boy (Boyce) that I was to sponsor and to our astonishment there was the little boy who had grabbed Megan's hand on her first day, as Mum likes to say "God moves in mysterious ways".

Megan promised that when I was old enough that we would go over so that I could work with Open Arms and hopefully meet Boyce, so to have the opportunity this summer to go and work with Open Arms and finally meet Boyce was amazing and something that will live with me forever. So on the 29th June this year, almost 5 years to the day after Megan's 1st visit, we headed out to Malawi.

Our time passed so quickly and was filled with so many wonderful memories and we got the opportunity to meet Boyce, which was beyond words. We are both Scout leaders and took some small presents out for Boyce and our 1st Carluke (St John's) Scout Group neckerchief. Boyce was delighted to be made our honorary satellite scout.

I hope to join the army next year and as life changes and moves on I may never have the opportunity to go back over to Malawi but it is a decision that I will always be thankful that I made. I will continue to sponsor Boyce and would commend anyone to do this, the difference you can make to a small child is mind blowing and all for less than you would spend on a night at the cinema. And to see Boyce growing and thriving every time we get an update is wonderful. I cannot recommend it highly enough and if I could do it at only 13 years of age anyone can.

Megan and Cameron would both like to thank Open Arms Malawi for the wonderful work they do and for giving them life long memories from *The Warm Heart Of Africa*. And their thanks will always be with their St John's Church family, who helped make this work trip possible.

On Sunday 17 November 2019, Megan gave an enthusiastic report of their experiences. This can be heard at

www.carluke-stjohns.org.uk/rec/2019/11/17/Open.mp3

A few photos from their trip can be viewed at

www.carluke-stjohns.org.uk/galleries/Malawi19/01.shtm

MH/CH

Healing for the Wounded

A Reflection on the Life and Mission of Dr Ann Jackson

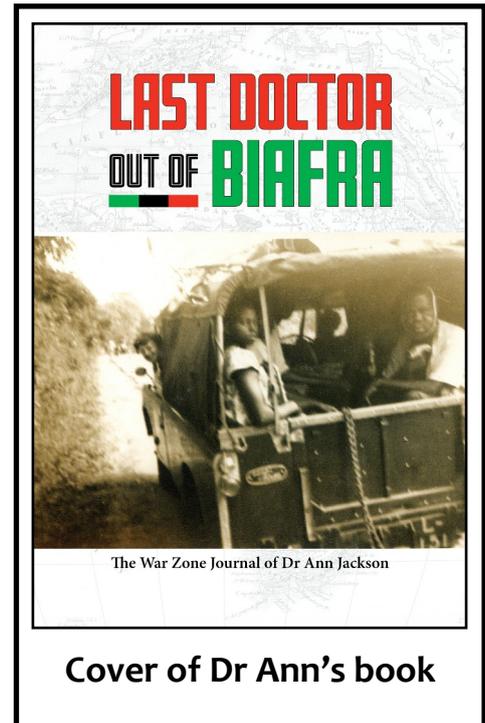
Our minister, Rev Dr Elijah Obinna, wrote an article for Church of Scotland's World Mission bulletin (Oct/Nov 2019, pp6-7). It is reproduced here, with permission:

Dr Ann Jackson was born, 82 years ago, in the town of Carluke. After her training as a medical doctor at the University of Glasgow, young Ann applied to the Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Board and was accepted to serve as a medical missionary. She had grown up inspired by stories of legendary Victorian missionary, Mary Slessor who tirelessly shared the love of Christ among communities round Calabar, Nigeria. By following in the footsteps of Mary Slessor, she hoped that her work as a doctor in caring for the sick would also be a witness for Christ.

In March 1965, Ann's dedication service as a medical missionary took place in her home congregation, the Original Secession Church Carluke. This congregation later closed and most of its members including Ann and her family joined St John's Church, Carluke. In April 1966, Ann sailed from Liverpool to Lagos, Nigeria, and started work at The Mary Slessor Hospital, Itu, in the present Akwa Ibom State.

Over the next 4 years she worked in various hospitals and ended up serving at the Presbyterian Joint Hospital, Uburu, Eboyi state – the same hospital that my mother, Margaret Obinna, later worked as a nurse from 1980 to 2008. During Ann's four years in Nigeria, she was surrounded not only by her Nigerian friends, but also her friends and family in St John's and the wider community of Carluke who stood by her, praying, fundraising and sending aid to support her work.

While many missionaries and their families left Nigeria at the outbreak of the Civil War in 1967, a few others chose to stay, including Ann, who



stayed back to serve at the risk of her life, and the testing of her faith. The war, which continued until 1970, was characterised by mass starvation, lack of medicines and food supplies for those caught up in it. Ann used money sent by Carluke churches to pay medical bills for sick children at the hospital in which she was serving. One of those children, now in her 50s, visited Carluke and shared memories and stories of Ann earlier this year. She testified of how she was inspired by Ann's love and care to train as a medical doctor herself many years later, and now practises as a doctor in England.

After her years in Nigeria, Ann worked in Malawi and then Glasgow before returning to Carluke in 1978, where she was a much-loved GP and a deeply respected Elder in St John's. Alongside her work as a GP, Ann prayed with those needing healing, and by the mid-80s she ran a monthly healing service which is still continuing today. Ann also now regularly attends and serves on the Board of Trustees of the Christian Healing Centre, Braehead House, Crossford.



Dr Ann and Elijah at book launch in St John's on 23 June 2019

During her time in Nigeria, Ann kept a personal journal, now edited by Joanna and William Storrar (former minister of St John's) and published by the Handsel Press in June of this year as *Last Doctor Out of Biafra: The War Zone Journal of Dr Ann Jackson*. I give thanks for the life of Ann and for the opportunity to serve as the minister of St John's, the congregation within which Ann is an Elder. God works in mysterious ways, his wonders to perform.

*Copies of Dr Ann's book are still available from **Time for Fellowship** on Sundays or **Kettle's On!** On Thursdays.*

Youth Church Report

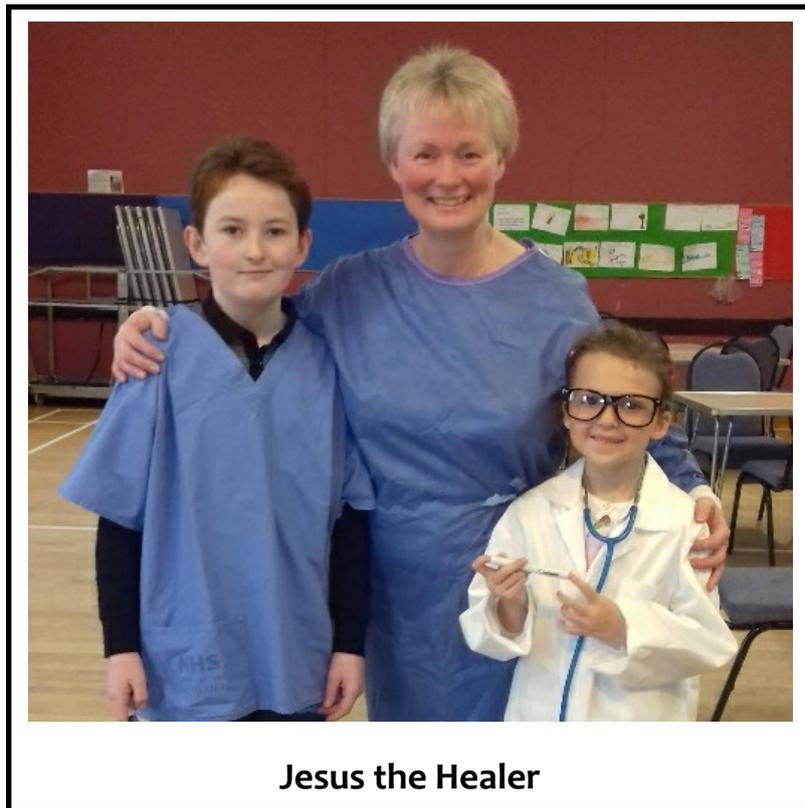
Since starting back after the summer break our theme in Youth Church has been *What Jesus did and said*.

We have been studying some of the miracles of Jesus, just a few of the 37 recorded in the Bible. The kids have engaged with this topic enthusiastically re-enacting events. Once such lesson was on the **Wedding at Cana** where Jesus performed his first miracle of changing water into wine.



The Wedding at Cana

We also talked about **Jesus the Healer**, how He heals hearts and hurts. Another miraculous deed was the **Calming of the Storm** which was a noisy boisterous session with the large hall becoming the Sea of Galilee upon which our boat rocked in the squall until Jesus rebuked the wind and the waves. Our take home message from the lessons has been that Jesus performed these miracles so that we might believe in Him.



Jesus the Healer



Calming the Storm

We will move on towards Christmas learning from the Parables, including the Prodigal Son, and Workers in the Vineyard. Together we will enter the Advent Season discussing with the kids how Jesus said we are the Light of the World, appropriate for these now darker winter days.

HJ

Love, Actually

Every Boxing Day people across the land resolve that next Christmas will be different. In January, when the bills arrive, they promise that next Christmas will be simpler, less indulgent and cheaper. According to Money Supermarket, almost 10% of people will still be paying for Christmas well into next year. Perhaps next year, by refusing to conform to every tradition and everyone's expectations, we will recapture the wonder, the magic and the awe of Christmas and *remember what it's all about.*

November magazines include articles on how to approach Christmas – *Twenty Six Ways to Simplify Christmas*; or *Five Reasons Why I'm Not Simplifying Christmas*. There are some radical work-saving, stress-busting, money-saving strategies out there. One woman recommends leaving the Christmas tree fully decorated all year. Hers has been in the corner of the sitting room, festooned in tinsel, baubles, lights and all, for *sixteen* years. It's true. For most of the year it is wrapped in sheets with the reminder, ***Do not open until December.***

Perhaps, after all, even on Christmas Day, reflecting on how simple or how lavish it has been is to miss the point. Maybe, as we approach Christmas, we do not need a to-do-list and a credit card so much as a Grinch-like revelation:

*Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before!
What if Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store?
What if Christmas ... perhaps ... means a little bit more!
(Dr Seuss, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!*)*

A German proverb goes:

The main thing is that the main thing remains the main thing.

That seems a pretty good definition of simplicity to me: recognising the extraneous and superfluous for what it is and focusing on *the main thing*. Authentic simplicity has to be an inward reality before it bears the fruit of an outward lifestyle. Attempts to create the outer beauty without the inner actuality are doomed to legalism and frustration.

The main thing is to recognise the significance of that first Christmas, the Nativity. The birth of Jesus Christ was marked by astonishing simplicity.

The highpoint of history, the climax of eternity, was not marked with grandeur, pomp and pageant. Rather, a pregnant teenager had no option but to deliver her child in the stark and smelly surroundings of a stable, the only warmth provided by the body heat of sheltering animals. The first visitors were shepherds, who were considered the lowest of the low. Jesus, the Bible tells us, did not come with majesty and opulence, but ‘full of grace and truth’, to reveal God – a God who is love – and to bridge the gap between us and that lavishly loving God.

Christmas is ultimately about love ... actually. As Christina Rossetti’s carol puts it:

*Love came down at Christmas,
Love all lovely, Love divine;
Love was born at Christmas.*

Perhaps, as we make our plans, we should be less concerned with how simple or extravagant our Christmas will be. Perhaps the touchstone of all that we do should be love: and how we respond to the extravagant love of God and how we love those around us.

Mission & Discipleship Church Without Walls Team

Let's Go Blacksmithing!

Perhaps not the first thing that most people think about as a school holiday pastime. However, that was exactly the experience that Fraser and I had lined up for the recent school October week.

We made the very long road trip down to Herefordshire to spend two days at the Old Field Forge Academy in Garway. Our anticipation of the event was exceedingly high – but would it match up in reality? We need not have worried, as the whole experience proved to be worth every single motorway mile it took us to get there.

If you see blacksmithing as something of a dying art, then please do think again. It is still popular, with many talented smiths making their name, and sometimes their fortune, through social media outlets through which they can clearly demonstrate their considerable craftsmen's abilities and talents, and by doing so also inspire youngsters to follow. Fraser has been lucky enough in the past to spend two days on two occasions with just such a smith in Andy Mackenzie working from his Feather Forge in Govan.

The first impression I had was how young the team of blacksmiths were. These people were early in their career, already talented, and already in demand. The trajectory for them would seem to be upwards. And yet, they were investing their time in teaching. Perhaps they sense that this skill will only survive if it is shared, discussed and also taught.

We sat through the briefest and most direct of health and safety talks I have ever had: Very hot things are very hot so don't touch. Make no attempt to catch heavy things when dropped. Wear your safety glasses. Short and sweet – a simple and easy guide that everyone could relate to, and common sense was being allowed to rule.

Blacksmithing was not going to be learned by watching. It was going to be learned by diving right in, never recklessly, only ever with minds firmly switched on. We had to be prepared to get our hands *really* dirty, and muscles would have to be ready to be flexed, as problems would surely come, and just as surely need to be solved.

Blacksmithing makes useful objects and tools, often to a pattern, but each carefully handmade item is unique, a genuine one of a kind thing, and in

its own way is a little masterpiece (assuming that it hasn't been consumed as a 'blacksmith's firework' of sparking molten steel from an overlong heat of course!).



Fraser and Moira in action at the forge

What is the attraction of blacksmithing? It is hard work – make no mistake – but it is satisfying. There will be hours of toil, sometimes having to rework where it has gone wrong. Perhaps things will have dramatically changed from the starting plan and you will have had to make the best of a new direction. Sometimes you will be working alone, but not in every moment, but through all of this, it is deeply satisfying to know that at the end that you *made* an object. No one else handed it to you – you worked hard for it, and you wholeheartedly participated. There are no passengers in a blacksmith's shop!

ME

Lupus Coffee Morning

On 26th October my family and I held a coffee morning to raise funds for Lupus UK. The support we received from our church family was overwhelming.

We had an extremely busy day serving hot filled rolls, tea, coffee and lots of home baking. We also had a stall selling home made items (everything from jams to knitted chocolate orange toppers). Everything was donated with all the money made from the sales going to Lupus UK.

The team of helpers on the day did not stop working all morning. We were busier that we've ever been and everyone had to work very hard. I am extremely grateful to all those who helped on the day and donated home baking and goods for the stall.

We were also supported by a number of local businesses. Ramsays donated the square sausage. Tesco donated the rolls and the bacon. Prego donated a gift voucher. Boots pharmacy donated £500. First direct bank donated £1000. The support given by these companies makes a huge difference to the total money raised.

Prior to the coffee morning we sold over 500 beautiful felt poppies which were all made by my Mum. The poppies raised around £2000. £200 of this total was donated to Poppy Scotland.

I'd like to thank everyone who came along on the day and supported us. Your generosity means a lot to us. I am very proud to say in total this year we raised £6942.23 This is the most we have ever raised.

Thank you, Thank you, Thank you.

GF

If you would like more information about Lupus please visit

www.lupusuk.org.uk



Christian Aid

Sandra Peat and I are retiring at the end of this year as St John's representatives on the Carluke Churches' Christian Aid Group. We have been blessed with your amazing prayerful, financial and active support over the past 18 years.

Without your ready willingness to provide, serve and support St John's day in the Christian Aid Cafe and act as door-to-door collectors, we could never have raised the thousands upon thousands of pounds for the work of Christian Aid. So a sincere thank you, you know who you are, from both of us.

We are delighted that **Margaret Dougan** and **Shona Keay**, recently ordained as elders, will take over as your representatives on the Christian Aid Group. We are confident you will give them encouragement and your full support.

In addition, Sandra has also held the position of Chairperson of the Group and I have acted as Organiser. **Reverend Iain Cunningham** will take over as Chairperson, but the position of Organiser remains vacant. I shall be happy to have a chat with anyone who might be interested in the job.

It goes without saying that we will continue to support the work of Christian Aid in Carluke.

IN and SP



