

## MINISTER'S LETTER

As I am writing this, at the beginning of February, we are coming up to Lent.

Lent is the season of 40 days (not including Sundays) before Easter Day. It starts on Ash Wednesday which is on February 14th and runs to Easter Day on April 1st.

Lent is traditionally a time when people give something up to remind themselves of the sacrifice which Christ made for us.

People tend to give up things such as chocolate, wine, coffee or late-night snacks. I would like to offer an alternative – to take something up for Lent. This doesn't mean that you must forgo your chocolate abstinence, but rather, give something up to make room to take something up. The prophet Isaiah gave us some hints as to how to do this:

This is the kind of fast day I'm after:

- to break the chains of injustice, get rid of exploitation in the workplace,
- free the oppressed, cancel debts.

What I'm interested in seeing you do is:

- sharing your food with the hungry,
- inviting the homeless poor into your homes,
- putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad,
- being available to your own families.

Do this and the lights will turn on, and your lives will turn around at once.

- Your righteousness will pave your way.
- The GOD of glory will secure your passage.
- Then when you pray, GOD will answer.
- You'll call out for help and I'll say, 'Here I am.'

(Isaiah 58: 6-7, The Message Translation)

Well, for example, if you want to give up chocolate for Lent, then give up chocolate that is not fairly traded. It is now fairly easy to buy fair-trade chocolate in the supermarkets. You could give up Facebook (this would be a very hard one for me!). You could exchange your usual brand of tea and coffee and buy fairly traded ones or swap your usual brand of bananas for ethically traded ones.

Perhaps instead you could think about writing letters to someone who is ill, a friend, a loved one or someone who is lonely. You could, as the prophet Isaiah suggests, give up oppression, and take up justice by ensuring that the things such as the clothes you buy are not from far-away sweatshops, or you could give to the local food bank (you can drop off items at Church on a Sunday morning or on a Friday morning).

These are just suggestions and I am sure that you can think of other ways in which you can be 'taking something up' for Lent.

We have some extra services over Holy Week, on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday (as well as the combined Cumbernauld Churches Walk of Witness). Everyone is welcome to come along.

I would like to wish you all a very Happy Easter when it comes!

Rev Elspeth McKay

## PAUSE FOR REFLECTION

Scripture says our heavenly bodies will be exactly like the one Jesus had following His resurrection. We know He resembled Himself, because His disciples could recognise Him. He could be touched... He could miraculously pass through walls – He could appear in various places to a variety of people without travelling by any recognised means. His transformed body no longer aged, nor was it subject to sickness and death. And... we are given the promise that our new bodies will be like His.

*“Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when He comes back. After that the end will come”.* (1 Corinthians 15: 23-24)

In 1684, Scottish Presbyterian Robert Baillie learned that he would be hanged for his alleged involvement in a plot to assassinate King Charles II, then drawn and quartered, and his head and hands nailed to a local bridge. How did he respond?

By first quoting this Scripture: “Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour... who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body”. (Philippians 3: 20-21) Then he declared: “They may hack and hew my body as they please, but I know assuredly that nothing will be lost, that all these members shall be wonderfully gathered and made like Christ’s glorious body”. The truth is that whether we get buried or cremated, makes no difference eternally – God has prepared for us a glorious body just like Christ’s.

It could be argued, however, that the greatest proof of Christ’s resurrection isn’t in transformed bodies... but is found in the transformed lives of people all over the world. The songwriter put it like this: “You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my HEART”.

So... what does that involve for those of us who claim to be His followers? It could be said that some Christians would rather debate doctrine than do what Jesus says, but our ability to recite the Ten Commandments is considerably less impressive to Him than our ability to keep them. So, this Easter, as evidence of our transformed hearts and lives, perhaps we could practise... loving a difficult person; forgiving someone, giving some money away, remembering to stop and say the simple but powerful words, “Thank you”, worshipping God, encouraging a friend, blessing an enemy, when we’re in the wrong, saying “sorry”... the list is endless.

In one of His final appearances recorded in the book of Revelation, Jesus announced: *“I am He that liveth, and was dead: and behold, I am alive for evermore.... Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die”*. (Revelation 1:18; John 11:26).

Today Christ stands knocking at the door of our hearts, saying, “If any man hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come in.” (Revelation 3:20).

Unless we know Christ personally as our Saviour, we live without real hope in this world and in the world to come. So today, let’s place our complete trust in the One who died and rose again for us... in the One who said, *“Those who do not forget self, take up their cross, and follow in my steps are not fit to be My disciples.”*

## **MEN'S GROUP**

The 2017/2018 speaker programme has continued with more diverse speaker subjects e.g. The Appin Murder and After the Mutiny, both of which were very informative and entertaining.

Our visit to the Kelvin Hall was extremely interesting, especially seeing the new roof and the building modernisation. However, the best part was the film library that contains over a million old films of Scottish places and people. The Christmas meal at the Railway Inn completed the session to the end of the year.

We've had yet another brilliant and successful Burns' Supper with the maximum number of tickets sold again. This gave a much needed boost to our funds. Many thanks to all involved. We finalised this session with a very impressive visit to Callendar House in Falkirk

The next part of the 2017/18 programme is as follows:

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|------|----------|--|
| Tue. | Feb 20th | Guest Speaker: Ian Watt – Yellowstone National Park        |
| Wed. | Mar 7th  | Visit: Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum               |
| Tue. | Mar 20th | Guest Speaker: Andrew Pearson with an Audio/Visual Display |
| Tue. | Apr 3rd  | Guest Speaker: John Peter – Stock Photography              |
| Wed. | Apr 18th | Visit: Clydebank Museum                                    |
| Wed. | May 2nd  | Visit: Cumbernauld Airport                                 |
| Tue. | May 15th | End of Session Meal  |

Do come along and join us – we meet in the Church Session House on Tuesday evenings at 7.30pm for the speaker evenings. We start with a cup of tea/coffee.

Timings for the outings etc. will be in the Church News Sheet or you can find them on the website or contact Bruce Finlayson (01324 813665).

Please consider this as your personal invitation. We sincerely hope to see you at one or more, or all of these meetings – you will be made very welcome.

PS: Members feel free to bring a friend.

## NEWS FROM SOUTH AFRICA

December 2017

Dear Friends,

It has been an eventful year in many ways here in South Africa. Just last night Cyril Ramaphosa was elected President of the African National congress (ANC) but we are not expecting any sudden change in ANC policy. We will wait and see if any action is taken against those whose corruption has ruined the South African economy. The State President announced free tertiary education in his outgoing speech to regain his dwindled popularity against the advice of his Finance Ministry. The bill is over 12 billion rand (7 billion pounds sterling) for one year and no budgetary provision has been made for this. Apart from stemming corruption, only tax increases will begin to cover this cost. If he remains as State President, he will have the onerous task of implementing this piece of economic folly. At least the students will rejoice as their parents have to dig deeper into their pockets to pay for this 'free' bonus through their tax bills. We earnestly pray Father Trevor Huddleston's prayer:

God bless Africa;  
Guard her children;  
Guide her leaders  
And give her peace, for Jesus Christ's sake.  
Amen.

July was the high point of the Faculty of Theology centenary celebrations and we hosted Prof Patrick Hornbeck (Dean of Theology at Fordham University, NY, USA) and Rev Patrick Bergquist, also from New York. After a day long colloquium, we were treated to a gala concert and dinner, hosted by the vice-Chancellor, Prof Cheryl de la Rey. The guest speaker was Prof David Ford of Cambridge University. The following morning Patrick Bergquist preached at St Andrew's church here in Pretoria.

We had another frenzied trip to the UK in September, catching up and seeing Sandra's aunt Nan who is now in a care home in Stonehaven very much against her will. We feel helpless living at such a distance. We were accompanied by friends Maleesh and Boss Tlhoale (good Lutherans) who were hosted by friends in Cumbernauld and Alva on their first trip to the UK.

This enabled us to catch up with friends and not bore them to death. We all spent a few days in Aberdeen with Sandra's cousin and her husband, also seeing old friends who Graham had missed earlier during his trip in March.

On our return, we once more hosted Joyce Bell and Caroline Izzat from Alva Parish church on what was their last trip to South Africa. They continue to support programmes in South Africa, particularly our orphans' project at Mamelodi.

This past fortnight, we have had a great visit from our friend Dave Ross from Aberdeen whose wife's sudden death cause Graham to go to the UK in March.

Graham continues to be busy with his work at the NRF and CHE as well as preaching regularly at St Andrews and teaching at St Augustine's College. His contract at Pretoria University has been renewed for another year so that will keep him busy with research and teaching. He is in charge at St Andrew's over the Christmas period as our minister, Zwai Mtyhobile, is on long leave, beginning after his and his wife, Thandi's birthday celebrations tomorrow.

As always, Sandra continues to provide the stability at home which allows for all these things to happen. She is constantly offering hospitality as well as continuing with her language editing work for students. Then there is her work with Violet Mashao at Mamelodi helping with the orphaned children's' feeding project.

Wishing you all a joyous Christmas and every blessing in the New Year!

Sandra & Graham

**FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT 2018**  
**26 FEBRUARY – 11 MARCH**



This year, Cumbernauld Old Parish Church will be supporting **Fairtrade Fortnight** when we will be inviting you to 'Come On In' and see what Fairtrade is all about.

Put simply, Fairtrade is about ensuring producers and workers in the developing world get better prices and decent working conditions; it therefore supports local sustainability and fair terms of trade.

Unlike conventional trade, which benefits the largest and strongest companies, Fairtrade enables the poorest, weakest producers to improve their position and have more control over their lives. Just think about that for a minute: the people who produce Fairtrade goods, unlike many other products, actually get a fair price for their goods – surely that can only be a good thing?

And that's where we come in – because we have a choice when we buy some products, such as banana, coffee, tea, chocolate, sugar, and so on. By looking out for the Fairtrade mark and choosing to buy Fairtrade products we become part of the solution: part of the solution to poverty and exploitation, part of the solution to injustice and discrimination.

By making a choice when we shop, we can ensure farmers in the developing world get a better deal. And that means they can make their own decisions, control their futures and lead the dignified life everyone deserves. Yes, Fairtrade goods may be slightly dearer than the 'big brand' discounted products on sale, but that's because you know where the money is going – to the producers themselves.

Cumbernauld Old Parish Church is supporting **Fairtrade Fortnight**, because it's the right thing to do. It is right thing to do for a church that teaches that we should love our neighbour as we love ourselves and it is the right thing to do for the people who grow the food we eat.

Why don't you 'Come On In' and join us in being part of the Fairtrade solution?

**DON'T FEED EXPLOITATION.**  
**CHOOSE FAIRTRADE.**



## CHRISTIAN AID WEEK

Christian Aid Week 2018 runs from 13-19 May

Cumbernauld Old Parish Church has been organising door-to-door collections for Christian Aid for over 30 years and many of our collectors have been there from the start. Liz Dalling and I are relative new comers – about five years.

During Christian Aid Week, the collectors post the red envelopes through their neighbours' doors and return later to collect them. We have consistently raised over £2000, making it very worthwhile. Christian Aid supports some of the poorest communities in the world, and is there for people in crisis, such as refugees.

I'd like to share my experiences of Christian Aid Week, to encourage you to become part of our team.

In my envelopes, on the first day of Christian Aid Week, I include a note that has: my name and address; the total collected the previous year; when I'll return to collect the envelope and my thanks. The note encourages trust and makes it more likely to inspire a donation. Going back for the envelopes is more time consuming as neighbours may be out, or not particularly welcoming.

It must be awful for someone, if the only way to survive is to ask others for help. Compared to their humiliation and despair, unfriendly neighbours is nothing.

Many of my neighbours stop to chat, and envelopes filled, Christian Aid Week is discussed and this is encouraging. I keep these positive thoughts in mind when collecting – 'rejections' make it too easy to give up. Giving to charity is a very personal thing and I thank people even if they do not donate.

Here are some of the memorable things from my 10 years as a collector.

- An elderly gentleman answered his door and looked at me rather sceptically. He put some coppers in the envelope and gave it back to me a little ungraciously. I thanked him and carried on: I was a few houses away when I heard footsteps behind me. It was the same man with a ten pound note, apologising and asking for another envelope.
- Someone once gave me back the envelope with a piece of kitchen towel in it. Were they too embarrassed to say 'No'? Did someone in the household take the money and substituted the towel to make it feel like the envelope still contained the original bank note? What's your theory?
- Some people send children to the door rather than talk to me and I have had some very odd conversations with tiny tots.
- Some men appear to be under their wife's thumb and then say 'no' to the donation, by saying, 'My wife's not in'.
- People even swear they did not receive an envelope and this surprises me. This is mostly a way of saying 'No' but it's worthwhile offering a replacement.
- Last, seems the number of expensive cars in the driveway is inversely proportional to the likelihood of the occupants answering their door.

My intention is to encourage and so I hope I have not put you off by sharing these anecdotes and please give some serious consideration to becoming a collector this Christian Aid Week (13-19 May). Even if you only visit a few of your immediate neighbours it would make a difference.

We're stronger together.

Lesley Littlejohn.

More information on Christian Aid can be found on [www.christianaid.org.uk](http://www.christianaid.org.uk).

If you would like to find out more about what we do at Cumbernauld Old or offer suggestions please contact Liz Dalling (01236) 727000 or Lesley Littlejohn (01236) 729083.