

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.