

MINISTER'S LETTER

Easter Day is very late this year. The actual day itself is on Sunday 21st April, which means that Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, will be on March 6th (40 days, not including Sundays, before Easter).

In many traditions, people give things up for Lent. Common things to give up are chocolate and alcohol; others give up sweets or fizzy drinks. Other more unusual things people give up are procrastination or complaining! Social media can take a hit too when people give up communicating through websites such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.

Giving things up, whether it is food, the way we behave or using social networking, is counter to our present culture. Our present culture is built around consumerism, and that consumption of things is good – in fact, very good. The more we eat, the more we buy, the more we spend, the more that we are entertained, the better. And we want it now. The ethos of previous generations of saving up to buy something is in the past. The majority of us put expensive purchases on a credit card. In the third quarter of 2018, there were 528 credit and debit card purchase transactions made every second with a total value of £1.90billion. Per household, there was an average consumer credit debt of £7,629 in 2018, and it carries on growing on an annual basis. Generally, we don't like waiting for things any more.

And where does the Church and Lent fit in with this? One of the things that we can do as a Church is to show a different way of living. A great deal of Jesus' ministry concerned social justice, bringing good news to the poor, those who were suffering and the broken-hearted. The 40 days of Lent gives us all a chance to look at our priorities and to challenge the status quo. It could be that giving something up will concentrate our minds on this challenge. Perhaps it will enable us to find out what is really important to us and, once we have found this, it may possibly be seen by others, and they might change as a consequence. It could be that you find that happiness in accumulating things around you is not as important as it was.

It really doesn't matter if you give something up or not for Lent. What does matter is that, through what we do and say, we can become an example of not needing to consume to be content.

Have a happy Easter when it comes!

Elspeth

FAIRTRADE

Last April, a Fairtrade group was established in Cumbernauld Old Parish Church to take forward a project to meet the criteria for status as a Fairtrade Church. These criteria are:

1. Use Fairtrade tea and coffee after services and for all meetings for which you have responsibility.
2. Move forward on using other Fairtrade products (such as sugar, biscuits and fruit).
3. Promote Fairtrade during Fairtrade Fortnight and during the year through events, worship and other activities whenever possible.

We decided to meet the first two criteria by placing a basket of Fairtrade tea, coffee, sugar and biscuits in the Session House to allow these products to be available for tea / coffee after Church services. They are also used to provide refreshments at any Church social event / committee meeting which takes place within the Church calendar. Elspeth Mackay-Smith and David Smith have kindly offered to fund the purchase of Fairtrade biscuits as necessary. Tea, coffee and sugar are purchased from donations made by members of the congregation who enjoy some time of fellowship with a tea or coffee after our worship on Sundays.

Since last April, we have run a stall selling Fairtrade food products on the last Sunday of the month. This has enjoyed a growing success with 'customers', who now look forward to purchasing their favourite brands on a regular basis. We also offered 'stocking filler' gifts at Christmas. All food products and gifts are procured from Gavin's Mill, a Fairtrade shop and café in Milngavie that has given much-appreciated support and advice throughout this time. Many of you have given your change from your purchases to Fairtrade and these kind additional donations of money which, by December, amounted to £40, allowed us to buy the following four gifts at Christmas from Gavin's Mill's catalogue, *Gifts that Change Lives*.

- 1 concrete ring used in well-building to help farmers in Malawi
- Life-saving medicines for up to 5 people in Burkina Faso
- A clean accessible water supply for one person in Burkina Faso
- 200 metal water ladles for Water Harvest in North-West India

We received certificates from Gavin's Mill, now on display in the Session House, thanking you all for your kind generosity. Your donations have helped some of the poorest communities in the world at Christmas – a real example of "Faith in Action".

In May 2018, we raffled gifts of Fairtrade goods at the annual Boys' Brigade display to raise money for Christian Aid and, in June 2018, we had a Fairtrade stall at the (rather damp) Summer Fete. Monday 25th February – Sunday 10th March 2019 is Fairtrade Fortnight and we look forward to raising awareness further, through our worship, of ethical trade and to promoting a better understanding of the work of the Fairtrade Foundation. Many Churches organise hundreds of Fairtrade events throughout the year in a bid to support trade justice and help alleviate poverty. Fairtrade is making a real difference to the lives of more than 1.65 million farmers and workers in 74 developing countries.

*What does the Lord require of us: to act justly, love mercy,
and walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8)*

Fairtrade (continued)

It is our intention to apply, very soon, for recognition as a Fairtrade Church from the Fairtrade Foundation. We hope to enjoy your continued support in meeting the criteria above that will allow us to achieve this recognition. We look forward also to organizing many future Fairtrade events which will allow us to come together as a Christian family and share "Faith in Action".

Caroline, Anne, Ivar and Sandra – The Fairtrade Group

FOODBANK AT CHRISTMAS

Christmas may seem a distant memory already, but before we go any further into 2019, allow me to rewind a little.

Our congregation and community have been rightly described as being very giving. Whenever a request for help has been made, it has been met with outstanding generosity, never more so than our Christmas Gift Service held during Advent, which saw a van-load of gifts collected and distributed via our food banks to those in need in our midst.

We are told that Advent is a time of **hope, love, joy** and **peace**.

- Your kind donations to the food bank bring **hope** to everyone attending.
- Your support shows God's **love** which sustains us all.
- Volunteers and visitors alike share in the **joy** God's love and our witness can bring.
- With your help we can help others to find comfort in His **peace**.

So, you see, the food bank is about so much more than food alone. It's a place where people can be valued, where they matter – where they are helped and not judged.

On behalf of all those at the food bank a huge thank you for **all** your support without which we simply could not function.

Sandra Graham

BABY-BANK NEWS

Once again, the congregation is continuing to support our local Baby Bank. The donated items will help local families during times of hardship, unexpected costs or reduced wages.

Sometimes, I have three or four carrier bags to hand over, and on occasions, they contain a lot of brand new items and many hand knits.

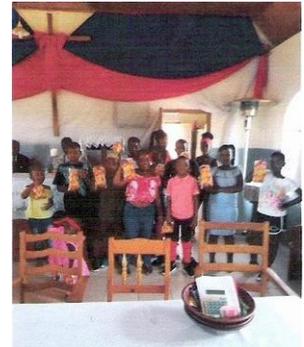
The volunteers have asked me to pass on their thanks.

Anne Murphy

MISSION CIRCLE

The Mission Circle is made up of members and friends of the congregation who donate one pound a month to help our mission partners, Rev. Graham and Sandra Duncan, in their work in South Africa. One pound is so little for us, but in South Africa it can still be the difference between starving and living a decent life with some hope for the future. Over the years, our money has helped support many, many children, students, families and projects.

Sandra recently sent me a wee update along with a photograph about their recent work and asked me to pass it on. The children in the photo have had to take responsibility for their brothers and sisters as both parents have died of AIDS. Fortunately, the group is getting smaller due to the ones who have managed to complete some training, are now in jobs and therefore able to support their own siblings.



The Duncans and colleagues are still trying to forge ahead and educate one member of the family so that they can become self-sufficient. They are aware that this is just a drop in the ocean but at least, together with help from the Mission Circle, they are doing something positive to help.

In the photograph, the children are all well turned out for church. This is thanks to the money from the Mission Circle. They have so much pride in themselves and really appreciate that they are not alone in their struggle for survival. They know that people in Scotland are not only rooting for them, but also helping them be the best they can be.

If you would like to help by donating one pound per month, please speak to Elizabeth. (726451)

SMALL CHANGE – BIG DIFFERENCE

A HUGE thank-you to everyone who collected their small change in coffee jars (or whatever receptacle you chose) and brought them along to church a few weeks ago. We are delighted to announce that the fantastic sum of £431.99 was raised for this year's project, which was 'Toilet Twinning'.

Our Session House toilet will be 'twinned' with one in the developing world and we should get a certificate to display on the door with the details. Watch this space!

The people behind the project don't just build toilets, though: they work with local communities on health and education issues. For example, they bring villagers together in workshops and encourage them to join action groups focused on issues that concern the community, such as farming. Slowly and sensitively, their partners encourage men to allow women to have a say in household decisions, often for the first time. Women carry the heavier burden in terms of collecting water and caring for the family, yet often have no voice.

Toilet Twinning (continued)

Before latrine-building starts, there's hygiene education on practices such as hand-washing. This is key to behaviour change in the long term. They also involve local people in deciding on the design and materials to be used in latrine building. This means latrines are both appropriate and affordable. People generally build their own latrine, and this means they are much more likely to continue to use it, and maintain it – ensuring the project is sustainable.

We strongly believe that the best way to bring transformation in poor communities is to work with people, rather than doing things for them. It's all about dignity and self-respect. Find out more at www.toilettwinning.org

Ivar Struthers

THE KIRKYARD PROJECT

Just a quick update about the Kirk yard project.

Work continues to record the gravestones in the Kirkyard. A small but dedicated team is gradually photographing every stone and will soon learn how to undertake a survey of their condition. Working with archaeologist Fiona Watson from Scotland's Urban Past, all this information will be uploaded to the National Records of Scotland, making it available to anyone researching their family tree or who is interested in the history of the area.

If anyone would like to join the group, then please speak to Elizabeth Snedden. Also, watch out for news about the main cemetery where we hope to work with North Lanarkshire Council to improve paths, planting etc.

Elizabeth Snedden

NEEDLES AND NATTER

Are you interested in knitting, sewing, crochet, card-making or other crafts? Why not come along to the Session House at Cumbernauld Old Parish Church on Monday afternoons from 1pm to 3pm and join like-minded people, share your skills, help us make items to sell at Easter, the Summer Fete and Christmas, or knit and crochet for the Baby Bank while enjoying a cuppa and a natter.

Anne Morrison

FUND-RAISING

The Fundraising Team met early this year and drew up a varied programme of events for the year. We are sure that we have something for everyone and we hope to see you at some of our events.

Quiz Night

Our first event this year on February 22nd is our ever-popular Quiz Night with our Question Master Calum, who always has varied – and at times challenging – questions; there is always lots of laughter at the Quiz Night. As usual, a buffet supper will be included in the £5 price of the ticket.

Musical Evening

We are delighted to be able to bring you another Musical Evening. led by our talented organist, on March 29th. David's performance at last year's Favourite Hymns evening could only be described as a great hit, so I am sure this will be equally as popular.

Summer Fete

The Summer Fete has been brought forward this year from June to May 11th in hope of getting a lovely warm sunny day, as June has been a bit of a washout the last few years. Please put the date in your diary and keep a look out for more details in the coming weeks.

Cumbernauld Old Smart Savers

Last December we launched Cumbernauld Old Smart Savers. We gave everyone a tube of *Smarties* to enjoy and asked that once you have eaten them that you use the tube as a 20p bank. Once you have filled it pop it into the basket in the church vestibule and, if you wish, help yourself to another tube to enjoy then fill with 20p coins. This will be an ongoing fundraiser for church funds.

Broken Jewellery

Have you ever lost a gold ear ring, a gold cufflink, broken a gold chain?

I bet the remains are lying in a jewellery box in your house and have been for years.

Are they of any use? YES!

Would you consider donating these bits and pieces to the church?

They could be sold, become of value again and be put to very good use. If you can help in this way, then just bring your lonely little treasures to church any Sunday or, if you are unable to come, give them to a friend to deliver. They will make such a difference.

Thank you,
The Fundraising Group