

MINISTER'S LETTER

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

Some of you will be aware that we have been campaigning for Fairtrade at Cumbernauld Old over the last year or two. We have now gained Fair Trade Status, which is a marvellous thing to have and reflects very much on the hard work which has been put in by our Fairtrade Group. To become a Fairtrade Church our church has committed to:

1. Use Fairtrade products wherever possible (at least tea, coffee and sugar) and to share this information with those attending Church.
2. Celebrate Fairtrade Fortnight and integrate Fairtrade into the life of the Church through sermons and services.
3. Engage with other Fairtrade campaigns and connect with community groups, such as schools and towns, where possible.

The last week of February and the first week of March is traditionally 'Fairtrade Fortnight' and we will be celebrating it on the 8th March. Fairtrade Fortnight is a time when we can highlight the work done to ensure that disadvantaged producers in developing countries are empowered by tackling injustice in conventional trade. In particular, this is achieved by promoting the Fairtrade Mark, a guarantee that products retailed in the UK have been produced in accordance with internationally agreed Fairtrade standards. This year we will be highlighting the special role women play in achieving living incomes for cocoa-farming households.

Campaigning for Fairtrade impacts on two fundamental Christian principles, the love of neighbour and the right stewardship of Creation. Fair trade is not about charity: it's about giving people the dignity of working their way out of poverty, providing opportunity and hope for the future. It's about developing a different way of buying things, whether we're choosing coffee or tea, chocolate or cards.

We now have fairly-traded goods and goodies on sale on the third Sunday of the month and I very much encourage you to have a look and perhaps buy something. I can personally recommend the chocolate and biscuits!

Elspeth

FOLLOW THE STAR

Christmas is a time when all members of our community are celebrating, yet not necessarily remembering the religious significance of the festival. Cumbernauld Old sees its mission as being very much at the heart of the community, so on Christmas Eve we put on an event designed to bring the church's message to people in a way that was accessible and, dare I say it, entertaining. The Christmas story was told as we walked around the village, picking up characters along the way. My favourite moment was stopping outside Black Bull for the innkeeper to tell us that there was no room, not least because there was a risk that we would all be invited inside!

Fortunately, we had liaised with the Council and the police (although to begin with, the police seemed more interested in the donkey...) An estimated 250 people showed up, far more than expected – next time, we will make sure that we have a better PA system so that those at the back can hear. I'm not sure whether the main attraction was Noddy the Donkey, or the prospect of seeing the Minister in a Tutu!

David Smith

CUMBERNAULD & KILSYTH BABY BANK

We recently received a 'Thank You' certificate from the local Baby Bank in recognition of our donations over the past few months. It's been put onto the notice board in the church vestibule. All clothing, hand-knitted items and toiletries that our congregation and friends donated have been gratefully received.

Recently, I was given cash donations and bought brand new socks, underwear and pyjamas, and I'm sure that the children receiving them were delighted.

Clothing should be freshly laundered and in good condition (no missing buttons or broken zips). Items can be left in the vestibule. Once again, on behalf of the volunteers and family units, a big thank-you.

Anne Murphy

FOODBANK UPDATE

In 2019, the Village Food Bank gave out well over 400 parcels – more than double the number than when we started. Food banks across the country report similar increases in demand. It's certainly not something to celebrate, but it is something to reflect on.

With the continued support of the congregation, community and some local businesses, the Village Food Bank strives to meet a true need in our community. We aim to do our best to meet that need for as long as required.

Thanks to the many, many festive gifts received at our Gift Service in December, we were able to show love, hope and joy to some of those who feel they don't really matter in our society.

By providing some groceries and a welcome throughout the year, we hope to show some of God's love for those attending our food bank.

Thank you again for all your support shown in so many ways. Should you wish to find out more, just ask!

Sandra Graham

CUMBERNAULD CRAFTERS

The Craft Group meets in the Session House on Mondays from 1pm to 3pm, so if you are interested in crafts and want to join us for crafting, a cuppa and lively chat, then why not come along? It doesn't matter whether you are a novice or an experienced crafter – we really enjoy sharing our experiences and learning from others.

We met for the first time this year on 6th January and, as always, there was lots of chat, sharing of ideas, and even learning a new skill. Among the items on knitting needles and crochet hooks were Goldilocks and the Three Bears, cardigans, shawls and a scarf. We plan to knit and crochet fiddle rugs for the nursing home and Easter chicks and bunnies to hide crème eggs at Easter as well as our personal projects.

Dorothy Roberts brought in copies of Fancy Needlework Illustrated magazine from the 1920s for us to see: they were very interesting, though none of us wanted to take on the complex designs.

Drop in any Monday afternoon, for crafts and good company.

MISSION PARTNER UPDATE

Child-headed families in Mamelodi

Here is a wee update below from our mission partner in South Africa, Sandra Duncan. From it you can see how much the money that our little group sends to her, helps so many families, especially those affected by HIV/AIDS.

The Mission Circle is made up of people giving me £1 per month – so little for us, but put together it can make a real difference. If you would like to be part of it, then please speak to me any Sunday.

Elizabeth Snedden

There are many child-headed families in Mamelodi. This situation has arisen because of the HIV/Aids pandemic: often both parents have died of Aids and there have been no further adult family members to take care of the children. Orphanages are full and bursting with such children, and in some cases, there is a sibling of perhaps ten years' old and upwards who has taken on the responsibility of heading up the family and taking care of their younger siblings.

Violet Mashao, who was Graham's session clerk when he was minister at Mamelodi, has taken on the responsibility of trying to assist these child-headed families since her retirement from teaching – or, at least, as many as she can. Some of you may remember her when she visited Scotland a few years ago?

I have been assisting her where I can, mostly with funding received from Mission Circle, Cumbernauld and from a church in Brightons, and what little we can personally add to this. We are proud of the work Violet has done over the years and she has managed to educate some of these children, in one particular case to tertiary level where the lady concerned is now a newspaper journalist and is very involved with this project, in addition to caring for and educating her own siblings.

First of all, Violet's emphasis is feeding the children and she tries to make sure that they are safe. We had one example where a four-year-old girl was on her own while the older kids were at school and she was raped by a local Asian shopkeeper. This is a fairly common occurrence, so it becomes a priority to keep the youngest family members as safe as possible. Once the children are getting at least one decent meal a day, any further funds go towards educating the oldest child with a view that, with some education, this child will be able to get a job and take over the feeding of the rest of the family. This has been quite successful on a small scale, where a few of those who have had a chance of schooling are now employed and looking after their siblings.

Most recently we had very bad flooding in Mamelodi and it was terrible for most of the community, especially the children many of whom live under cardboard for shelter. We managed to put together a thousand pounds, some of which came from Mission Circle, which enabled Violet to buy food and blankets and many essentials which were lost in the flooding. Unfortunately, Violet was unable to help everybody, but at least she was able to help some families. Nevertheless, we are still in a crisis situation. We are very grateful to all in Cumbernauld who have over the years so generously donated to this project and hope that you will continue to do so after becoming aware of the good that your donations do in very often desperate and dire situations. You have probably saved the lives of many children and given some a future when there seemed to be none.

It is also very important to black South Africans to know that there are people in other parts of the world who care about their plight and are willing to do something to make life more bearable for them. From Graham and me personally – we wish to thank you for the continued prayers and for the financial support that enables us to continue to support Violet in this wonderful work that she does.

FUNDRAISING

The Fundraising Team would like to thank everyone who came along to the events and helped us raise money throughout last year. We were absolutely delighted that our last events in November and December of 2019 raised over £1600 between them, and we look forward to your continued support in 2020.

Cumbernauld Old Smart Savers

It is now over a year since we launched Cumbernauld Old Smart Savers. We gave everyone a tube of *Smarties* to enjoy and asked that, once eaten, you use the tube as a 10p and 20p bank which can be popped into the box in the church vestibule when full – you can't miss it since it's covered in *Smarties*-themed paper. If you wish, please help yourself to another tube, enjoy the *Smarties*, and then fill with 10p and 20p coins. This will be an ongoing fundraiser for church funds.

Fundraising in 2020

We have been busy planning a variety of fundraising events for 2020, the first of which is a musical evening on the 21st of February to be given by the Bruadar Duo, which features guitar and flute music. Lynn Strang, one of our organists, is one half of the duo. This event will be held in the church and the suggested donation is £5.

Our second event is a ladies' fashion show by Taylor Fashions to be held in Cumbernauld Bowling Club on Friday 20th March. This promises to be an entertaining evening with lots of opportunities to snap up a bargain to brighten up your spring wardrobe. Tickets for this event are £3.

There are quite a number of other events planned for later in the year, including our annual Summer Fete which will be held in May or early June, so keep an eye on intimations and future magazines for details of this and a variety of other events. We hope that there will be something for everyone to enjoy throughout 2020.

The Fundraising Group

BIBLE STUDY

Care and Compassion

Here are some reflections arising from the Bible Study group which meets on Thursdays at 3 p.m. in the Session House, led by Elspeth. We have been using materials entitled *Jesus the Game-Changer*.

Philippians 2: 5–11

*In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:
Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God
something to be used to his own advantage;
rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death –
even death on a cross!*

*Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue acknowledge
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.*

In ancient Roman and Greek times, humility was regarded as a weak characteristic. People who were elderly, disabled, and vulnerable were left aside, with many dying as a result of being outcast from society. Human value was determined by how useful people were or could be within communities. Women were also not held in high esteem as they were expected to have no thoughts or opinions of their own.

Jesus changed all this. He travelled from one village to another, meeting with all kinds of people and interacting with those who were regarded as outcasts from society. He healed lepers, others who were ill and met with tax collectors, and others who were not regarded as 'suitable'.

Jesus treated women with respect and made friends with those such as Mary Magdalene, the two sisters, Mary and Martha, to name just a few. Jesus came to show God's love to others. He did this by humbling himself, showing God's love for all by serving others, putting them first, meeting their needs and giving them value in a society where they were looked down on.

Jesus' relationships with people touched so many lives and turned the world, as it was then, upside down. He was obedient to his Father's will and purpose and through his death and resurrection, Christianity was born.