

The Lochside Kirks'

LANTERN



The Parish Magazine of
Luss and Arrochar

— *Spring 2020* —

“Shining a light on our communities”

The Presbytery of Dumbarton

LUSS AND ARROCHAR PARISH CHURCHES

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My favourite passage from the Bible

Rhona Dick

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” Matthew 11:28 (King James Version)

These were the words spoken by the minister at my mother’s funeral. It may seem an odd choice of scripture to define as ‘my favourite’ and I think it safer to say ‘one of my favourites’, but it was pivotal for me.

My children were just 4 and 2 and my mother was only in her 50s when she died. I was angry. Angry with my mother for leaving us when my children and I still needed her. Angry with the hospital doctors for not saving her life just one more time and, most of all, angry with God.

When the minister spoke those words, I realised how selfish I was, and that my mother had endured enough and needed the rest offered by Jesus. I stopped being angry, not instantly, and came to thank God (and the doctors) for the extra years we had had together.

That passage will always remind me of my mother, and sometimes still brings a tear to my eye.

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It is with much sadness that we must report the death of Dr David Pollard, formerly Session Clerk at Arrochar, who passed away suddenly on 29 February 2020.

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From the Editor

Life for us all changes daily

We are living in very difficult times. Nothing is as it was last year, last week or even yesterday. I'm sure that none of us, on hearing the first news of this new virus in China, could have imagined what would lie ahead.

For most of us this is the first time we have been faced with such a crisis. The older members of our communities endured the exigencies of war, and as in wartime, sadly, there are those who put themselves first and, thankfully, those who put others first.

Disturbingly, according to Neighbourhood Watch, some fraudsters are offering to do shopping for residents, taking the money and then not returning with the goods. Others have offered to take a shopping list along with a bank card, which is never returned. Only entrust your cash to those you know.

We are fortunate to live in communities that care, where younger folk will shop for their older neighbours, pick up prescriptions, or just phone to make sure that others are all right. At a time when family visits may have to be curtailed and social activities have ceased there is a real danger that some people will feel isolated and lonely. If you know of people who fall into this category make the effort to contact them regularly, it will make all the difference. This contact is even more important now that we have been instructed to STAY AT HOME. None of us is invulnerable; we must do what is prudent, no matter how personally inconvenient, for the wellbeing of all.



It is particularly sad that, as Easter approaches, we shall be deprived of celebrating the most important festival of the Christian year together as a congregation in our churches. It is also sad that the Easter weekend which is very much a time for families to get together, will for many people, be spent alone. Spare a thought, a prayer, and a kind deed for someone else, while still social-distancing, of course.

As our response to the virus evolves, I am reminded of the story of Eyam a village in Derbyshire, during the plague of 1665-1666. As a remote community, the villagers did not imagine that the plague would reach them, but it did. After some months and many deaths, the villagers, led by the two clergymen, adopted a policy of 'self-isolation' to prevent the disease from spreading more widely. In theory no one was allowed in or out of the village. Necessary provisions were left at agreed places on the parish boundary, and payment was left in a drilled-out in a rock, steeped in vinegar.

The people stayed in Eyam and awaited their fate, in the knowledge that their self-sacrifice would save others just as their Saviour, Jesus Christ, had died to save the world.

Our churches are, perforce, shut but we can still live the Christian message to love one another as ourselves.

Stay safe, stay at home.

Khona

In the wilderness

Rev Louis Bezuidenhout



TThe image of a wilderness is important during the time of Lent. The season of Lent lasts for 40 days, leading up to Good Friday and the celebration of Easter. The 40 days of Lent remind us of the 40 days Jesus

spent in the wilderness after his baptism, it also reminds us of the 40 years the Israelites spent in the wilderness during the Exodus. It reminds us of Elijah who wanted to die in the wilderness, but who received strength to run for 40 days to meet God on his mountain.

We often use the word 'wilderness' in a figurative way: When we feel uncertain, when we are heavy-hearted, when we suffer from a lack of clarity, when we feel lost or abandoned, we say that we are 'in a wilderness'. The journey through life inevitably leads through the wilderness.

There is a time when we realise we are no longer able to do what we used to do. There is a time when we do not have the function we had in the past: the children can look after themselves, the job that I used to do can be done better by someone else. There is a time when a husband, wife, parent, friend who used to give meaning to our lives, is not there anymore.

At this time, we are caught in the grip of the coronavirus pandemic. It is changing our daily life, it is inhibiting our movements, it is causing severe health problems to such an extent that thousands of people are dying all over the world.

How do we cope in such a wilderness? Is it possible to use the time in the wilderness constructively? What will life be like at the end of this chapter in our lives? Can the time in the wilderness be the beginning of something new, something meaningful, perhaps even something beautiful?

Through history we have seen how great floods can wash trees and even buildings away. At the end of such a disaster people had to start rebuilding their communities again. However, you would necessarily replant trees where they have been planted before, you would not rebuild houses in the same way as they have been before – the world has changed and it will require new ideas. After the time of the coronavirus, our communities, our world will be a different place. Let us start to consider how we would like to rebuild it.

Lent is a time which invites us to spiritual discipline, to reconsidering priorities. The time in the wilderness gives us the opportunity to focus without distraction on the meaning of life and our purpose in life.

The wilderness is sometimes regarded as a godforsaken place. It is not. The wilderness is often the place where we reconnect with our Heavenly Father, where we receive the power and the inspiration to re-align our lives with his will. In the wilderness we learn that we are called not only to find meaning in life, but also to give meaning to life.



*... when we feel lost or abandoned, we say
that we are 'in a wilderness'*

The Dating of Easter

Rhona Dick



As we approach Easter it might be timely to consider how its date is determined. It is a complicated calculation, related to the lunar cycle and the Vernal Equinox*. Originally it was linked to the date of the Jewish Passover,

since Christ was crucified after Pesach. However, as the Passover could fall on any day of the week so also could the Easter celebrations. To Christians it is important to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus on a Sunday, so, a means had to be found to ensure that Easter Day was always celebrated on a Sunday.

The Christian church is still not united on dates of festivals; Eastern Orthodox church celebrations are based on the old

Julian calendar, rather than the 'modern' Gregorian calendar adopted in Britain in the 18th Century.

In the last edition of *The Lantern* we read about the Celtic monk, St Kessog, so closely associated with Luss. In St Kessog's time Celtic Christianity, and Roman Christianity followed different paths in some aspects of their worship. Most noticeable, literally, was the tonsure – the part of a monk's head that was shaved. Roman monks shaved the top of their heads, leaving a ring of hair that represented Christ's crown of thorns. Their Celtic brethren, on the other hand shaved a band from ear to ear.

More contentious, however, was the churches' different interpretations of the dating of Easter. As you can imagine in most places this was no big deal, but it so happened that in 7th Century Northumbria the king, Oswiu, like most people remote from the south east of England, followed the Celtic practices, however his wife, Eanflæd who had been brought up in Kent, was a Roman Christian. Most of the year this caused no great marital friction, but imagine your Lenten fast coming to an end and you look forward to celebrating Easter with a feast, but not with your spouse as his/her Easter Day could still be four weeks away!

In 664 Oswiu made the decision to normalise the situation, and he called upon Abbess Hilda of Whitby to organise a Synod where the relative merits of both factions could be debated and a binding decision made. The two protagonists were Bishop Colman of Lindisfarne, who argued in favour of Celtic Christianity saying it was based upon the practice of



**if you really want to know, it falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon occurring on or after the vernal equinox (21 March). So the earliest possible date of Easter is 22 March (this will next happen in 2285 if you are still around) and the latest date is 25 April, which will next happen in 2038 (last time was in 1943)*

St Columba who followed the tradition of St John the evangelist and apostle, and Bishop Wilfrid of York, whose argument was that it was the practice in Rome, where the apostles Saints Peter and Paul had “lived, taught, suffered, and are buried” and that it was the universal practice of the Church, even as far as Egypt. He concluded by saying that the customs of the apostle John were particular to the needs of his community and his age and, since then, the Council of Nicaea had established a different practice – in other words keep up with current thinking! Oswiu eventually found in favour of the Roman Christian practices.

The differences in the traditions of John and the other apostles, mentioned in the paragraph above, relate to the fact that, in the Gospel of John, the chronology of the crucifixion is not the same as in the other Gospels. In John’s Gospel, Jesus is crucified on the Day of Preparation, that is the day before the Passover Meal. In the other Gospels Jesus is crucified after the Passover Meal had been celebrated.

The Synod of Whitby was pivotal in the practice of Christianity in Britain and at a time when women were not generally thought of as influential Abbess Hilda, perhaps, proved to be an exception.

Recipe Corner

Millionaire’s Shortbread

This recipe is taken from the Carnation Milk website, and is quite simply THE BEST!

You will need:

- 250g** shortbread biscuits, crushed
- 55g** melted butter
- 150g** butter
- 150g** soft dark brown sugar
- 397g** Carnation condensed milk (not the evaporated one)
- 200g** dark chocolate
- 55g** white chocolate

-and-

a 20cm brownie tin, lined with baking parchment

- Mix the crushed biscuits in a bowl with the melted butter. Press the mixture in the base of the tin and chill for 10 minutes.
- Heat the sugar and the butter in heavy non-stick pan, stirring until melted. Add the condensed milk and bring to a rapid boil, stirring continuously. Cook for around a minute or until the filling has thickened. Pour the caramel over the base, then allow to cool. Once cooled, chill in the fridge or freeze until set.
- Melt the chocolate in separate bowls. Pour the dark chocolate over the caramel and then add spoonfuls of the melted white chocolate. Swirl together with a spoon for a marbled effect.
- Chill until set. Then remove from the tin and cut into squares using a sharp knife dipped into hot water (makes it much easier).