

Welcome to Annan United Reformed Church. In this document we tell our story and describe ourselves (together with a few of our hopes and aspirations).

Our Vision:

Our purpose as a congregation is to communicate God's purposes and this we do through worship, preaching the Gospel and serving others. Our mission statement is:

'Moving forward in Faith and Service'

In living this statement, we wish to continue being outward-looking, sharing our resources with others and being a positive, active partner with the communities in which we serve. We are known for our hospitality, for responding to pastoral needs and for organising festivals / events etc., and we feel that it is through these mediums that we have scope to develop how we live out the Gospel in Annan.

Our Mission:

What follows is a very brief overview of our 'Mission Hopes'.

TELL Use opportunities to have church-led events / worship, some of them away from the church building, encouraging ecumenical friends to participate.

TEACH Make open invitations and explore new ideas for young people.

TEND How we undertake Pastoral Care could be improved and we have thought the forming of Pastoral Teams may be a way forward.

TRANSFORM We are active with Commitment for Life, Christian Aid, etc. We have supported the development of Kate's Kitchen into an independent charity and acquiring their own premises. Kate's Kitchen is a local initiative catering / serving over 1000 meals per year to those in need. Closer links with Annandale Churches Together (ACT) would also help people in Annan and the spread of the gospel. Annan United Reformed Church is an active Church within this.

TREASURE We recently refurbished the Church, maintaining the character of a building of some age and we continue to look at improving our facilities.

Local Mission and Ministry

1. Refurbishment of the church & kitchen is now complete and the congregation, church groups and the Girls' Brigade all find the extra space that has been created beneficial. It also gives the church premises much more flexibility. We hope to increase further community and church use, particularly by children and young people, but also those others from the wider community requiring useful space and/or Christian help.
2. We are pleased to report that our congregation continue to volunteer their services; we now have 17 Bible Readers & 10 Prayer Leaders assisting in our worship sessions. Regarding communications and IT - the church website & Facebook page and our monthly newsletter - we now have two members of the congregation undertaking the supervision, preparation & publication of these.

3. We at Annan URC continue to explore ways in which the church could become a member of a cluster. Our geographical position suggests that becoming a member of a cluster within the North West Synod is a more feasible proposition than trying to maintain a connection within the South Link of the Synod of Scotland, where our nearest neighbour is some 60 plus miles away up the M74.
4. Although we are currently without a minister, our representatives on Annandale Churches Together (the ecumenical group in the town) are still continuing to develop Ecumenical Relationships both locally and worldwide. We continue to hold joint services & social events under the banner of Annandale Churches Together.

Our Community:

Annan is situated on the Solway coast, midway between Dumfries and Carlisle. Both the Galloway coast and hills and the Lake District are within easy reach and the scenery is second to none. It is on the A75 and only seven miles from the M6.

The town of Annan has just under 9,000 residents, (2011 census), of which approximately 30% are over 65 years of age. In terms of employment there are 3,000 jobs in the town. Manufacturing and construction are the dominant sectors, and health and social work services are also particularly active. 69% of people work full time and the rest are in part time roles. However, there is a higher level of unemployment compared with other similar size towns in Scotland. As a result many of the high achievers leave Annan to study and work, rarely returning.

Annan has a large proportion of social housing estates, some residences have been purchased by occupants. A number of estates of private housing units have been built, the manse being located on one, and these are mainly occupied by retired people.

Annan town centre has a selection of retail shops. Three bakers, two butchers, three chemists, Ladies fashion shop, gents outfitters, a number of charity shops and a 'factory' outlet store, together with a number of shops where low priced items are sold. For its size Annan has an unusually high number of restaurants, tea shops, cafes, hotels, public houses and betting shops. There are two supermarkets in the town and a large number of hairdressers.

The football team, 'Annan Athletic' is successful in its league and provides activities most evenings and weekends. They work hard as a community facility with the young and the old in the town. They also support the volunteer football coaches who give of their time on a weekly basis. There is also a well organised athletics club and many

people of all ages take part in local and national athletic events. There is a public gym and swimming pool.

The doctor's surgery complex, with some dozen doctors and nursing staff, three dental surgeries and a private podiatrist provide high quality care to the community. Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary, (DGRI) and maternity hospital are approximately half an hour journey. Annan has two residential care homes and most surrounding towns also provide such facilities. We also have a non-A & E hospital in Annan providing for patients who require time to recuperate after surgery, patients requiring terminal and respite care.

There are several play groups and nursery schools for pre-school children and four state-funded primary schools within the town. The Academy for secondary education transports pupils from a large catchment area. Dumfries and Carlisle both have Universities allowing students in higher education to study from home. University students do not pay tuition fees in Scotland.

Annan hosts an annual Riding of the Marches to which large crowds are drawn and many Annan born people return for the fortnight long festivities. There is an active project sponsoring regeneration of buildings and the harbour in Annan, aided by local authority and lottery funding.

Our Premises:

Our premises consist of 2 buildings – our Church with integral Hall is located in **Station Road, Annan** and our Manse is at **35 Northfield Park, Annan.**

The Church is a tall sandstone construction of two stories under a pitched slate roof opened after completion in June 1903 with a flat roof hall extension to its side.

The main church has a central entrance to the front with one side door providing disabled access. Inside there are stairs to either side giving access to a gallery running on three sides of the church sanctuary.

The Church ground floor has recently been refurbished with the pews being removed and comfortable individual seating now used. This has created a large flexible space which we hope will encourage more community use. New toilet accommodation has also been provided along with a meeting room, new vestry and small kitchen at the main entrance. Behind and on level with the pulpit is the organ console.

The hall is single storey with a newly refurbished integral kitchen and storage cupboards. The hall has two entrance doors which are independent of the church. The church is heated by a gas boiler giving hot water radiator heating and the hall is heated by a separate gas boiler.

The manse is a four bed-roomed bungalow built in 2002 and situated on a modern development on the fringe of the town

The maintenance of both church and manse are organised by the elders.

How we are organised:

The church has 7 serving elders who historically have been 'serving' for indefinite periods, but this is changing with elders now feeling able to take 'sabbaticals'. A church administrator and a treasurer are both drawn from the Church membership. The church officers all have a good working relationship with each other.

The elders' meeting is usually held monthly and is chaired by the elders on a rota basis, with the agenda being compiled by the administrator in consultation with the elders. Additional meetings are called should they be required to deal with urgent matters.

All elders, with the exception of the administrator & treasurer, have a geographical area of the town for which they provide pastoral care, concentrating on the sick and housebound. We are currently discussing a 'team' approach to pastoral visiting.

Some elders have special responsibilities within the church, i.e. treasurer and an elder with responsibility for liaison with youth leaders.

The Church meeting is held 3 times a year with the AGM in June. These meetings are held on a Sunday after a shortened worship service, the agenda being set by elders' meeting taking notice of any items received from church members. It is during the AGM that delegates to Synod meetings and other bodies are appointed for a period of two years.

Church Statistics:

Our congregation comprises people of all ages, with its share of elderly and frail people, some of whom are house bound requiring pastoral care home visits from our small but very willing band of visitors.

Our Church Numbers:

The total number of people on the church roll claiming association with the Church is 203, of which 31 are under 18.

Actual number of church members is 90.

Our average attendance on a Sunday is 44 including 4 children.

Number of housebound members is 15.

Those living within one mile of the church is 140 or 68.97%.

Number of Elders = 7 serving & 3 non-serving

Number of Baptisms in the past 5 years = 18 (15 infants & 3 believers)

Average number of funerals each year = 7

Number of weddings each year = 1

Equal Marriage

Annan United Reformed Church welcomed the decision of General Assembly 2016 allowing each church to make their own decision on equal marriage thereby expressing their own theological position.

Annan United Reformed Church thereby agreed the following

- To permit services of equal marriage to take place in this church.
- That, as with heterosexual marriage, the minister and elders, at the elders meeting, will make the final decision on a marriage taking place ensuring that at least one person in the relationship is a committed Christian and involved in some way in the life of this Church.
- That the elders and minister will have the authority to allow a marriage, heterosexual or equal, due to medical situations which may preclude the above.
- If Annan United Reformed Church at any time calls a minister who is opposed to equal marriage it will be the responsibility of the elders to find a suitable replacement to lead the marriage service.

Church Activities:

The church buildings are used by:

The church family, for worship on Sunday mornings and other festivals, which draw an average attendance of approx. 44. These numbers increase for social events to between 85-100 people.

Sunday Seekers (our Sunday School) meet throughout the year with a small group of young children. All our leaders are subject to enhanced disclosure.

Floral Art Group meet on the first Monday of each month from 6.30pm until 9.00pm. The group involves people from the community with the tutor (a dual silver medalist at the Chelsea Flower Show) coming from within our congregation.

A Knit and Natter group meet on a Tuesday morning from 10:00am until noon.

An All Age All Ability games afternoon is held from 2:00pm – 4:00pm, also on a Tuesday afternoon, with the main games being dominoes and indoor kurling, this involves people from within the church & the community.

Rainbow Tribe is an ecumenical children's and youth choir that meet each Tuesday 6.00-8.30 pm during school term time. There are about 25 children aged from 4 to late teens. There are two meetings following on from each other to deal with the age range. The choir is led and organised by the church organist and a local music teacher who each hold enhanced disclosure.

Spectrum is an ecumenical youth ceilidh band numbering 8-10 and is operated under the same leadership as Rainbow Tribe.

The Girls' Brigade meet on a Thursday 6-7.30 pm (in school term time) ecumenical group of about 32 girls of mixed age. All leaders are subject to enhanced disclosure.

Friday Fellowship meet on the last Friday of each month from 2.00pm until 3.30pm and is open to all members of the congregation (male & female) as well as those within the community. Each meeting has a speaker covering various aspects of topical interest.

Members of the eldership visit all the above from time to time.

Members of our congregation also take a full part in local non-church voluntary work such as: Food Train, a charity that shops and delivers groceries to frail and housebound in the area extending throughout Annandale and Eskdale, Kate's Kitchen, Ecumenical choirs, Fridays in Faith, ecumenical help at the children's school holiday club.

The church has an active Fund Raising and Social Group with events organised for most months. Summer Teas, monthly soup and sweet lunches, concerts are held each year, and in December 2016 as part of our Christmas celebrations we held a very successful Christmas Tree Festival entitled 'Walk in the Light' when almost £2000.00 was raised for church funds.

Worship:

During the time of vacancy, the congregation are experiencing and accepting a variety of worship styles. The congregation is predominantly liberal in outlook.

The congregation meets at 10:30 am each Sunday for morning worship with Sunday Seeker's meeting in the hall at the same time. The Sacrament of Holy Communion is celebrated on the first Sunday of the month as well as at times of significance in the Christian calendar. The elders serve the congregation at Communion.

Services are led by both ordained and lay persons, and we have a rota of seventeen who undertake readings during the service and ten who lead prayers. We have a drama group (Genesis) who perform at selected services.

Music for worship is mainly provided by organ. When no organist is available music is provided using 'No Organist, No Problem' by Kevin Mayhew played through the sound system, CD's or iPod. We use Rejoice and Sing and other suitable sources for hymns. Whenever possible words of the hymns are projected on the screen. The church holds a CCL licence for words, video and music.

During the year we celebrate Christmas Watch Night service, Holy Week and Easter Sunday, Remembrance Sunday and Harvest Thanksgiving. We also hold Girls' Brigade enrolment services, the induction of church members, ordination of elders, Baptisms, Blessings and funerals.

Caring for each other:

Pastoral Visiting is undertaken by the eldership. Each elder, with the exception of the administrator & treasurer, has a geographical area of the town for which they are responsible for pastoral visits.

The church newsletter contains information on what is going on, and reports of meetings both local and Synod.

The elders and youth leaders have undertaken training in 'Safe Church'.

The elders take Health and Safety requirements very seriously, and plans/guidelines are displayed in the buildings. Elders are specified as Fire Marshalls.

Youth & Children:

The youth work of this church can be broadly split into work with our Sunday Seekers and the ecumenical work.

Sunday Seekers

This is a group of four to six young children. There are two leaders so groups are small. They are currently using the Scripture Union booklet Splash for Children as their teaching aid. Any expenses incurred are met by the church finances.

The church has a Girls' Brigade Company, where approximately 32 girls enjoy weekly meetings with a lively menu of games, teaching and community awareness.

We have a total of 54 young people involved in our youth groups of Rainbow Tribe, Spectrum and Girls' Brigade.

There is a good working relationship with Hecklegirth Primary School where the minister has taken assembly. The school occasionally holds its end of term and special occasion services in the church.

Resources available to meet our needs and the needs of others

The church uses 'free will' offering envelopes and direct debit facilities for regular giving and claims gift aid when possible. We also fund-raise for foreseen expenditure. As well as generous financial support, members of the congregation give freely of their time for DIY projects, such as decorating the interior of the church and hall, as well as minor repairs internally and externally.

Finances are managed by the treasurer and elders.

The church has a good supply of technological equipment. There is a laptop, iPod, external disk drive, digital projector, screen, flat panel TV, CD/DVD player - all available in the church for use. A high-speed copier is also freely available.

The church has a very basic sound system and at present no loop system. The church AV system needs updating.

The church has involvement in the world church through Commitment For Life, where our partner is Bangladesh, and £8,516.00 has been donated by our members in thirteen years. Together with the other churches in Annan through ACT we also support Christian Aid at a local level with various events throughout the year.