

CONTACT

APRIL 2023



The monthly magazine of
Annan United Reformed Church



Services April 2023

Date	Event	Leader
02/04/2023	Communion	Revd. Hayden Highton
04/04/2023	Evening Service 7pm	Joint Service
09/04/2023	Easter Sunday – Motte	Revd. Nick Mark
09/04/2023	Easter Sunday	TBA
16/04/2023	Service	Mr Alan Dodds
23/04/2023	Service	Mr Alan Dodds
30/4/2023	Communion	Revd. Nick Mark

CONTACT INFORMATION

Church Email	annanurc@gmail.com
Church Website	https://annanurc.chessck.co.uk
Church Facebook	Annan URC
Church Administrator	Doug Maxwell 01387 249300
Magazine Editor	judith-stannard@hotmail.com 01461 203328

Items for the May Magazine should reach Judith by 23rd April 2023

Thought for the Month

Jesus said, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me”.

Self-sacrifice is the way to finding your true self.

CHURCHES TOGETHER

As part of our joining with fellow Christians locally the Services arranged for Holy Week leading up to Easter are:-

Monday April 3 rd	St John Episcopal Church
Tuesday April 4 th	United Reformed Church
Wednesday April 5 th	St. Columbus Roman Catholic Church
Thursday April 6 th	Annan Old Parish Church of Scotland
Friday April 7 th	St. Andrews Church of Scotland

All Services start at 7pm

On Easter Sunday 9th April there will be a Service at the Motte at 8.00am led by our Interim Moderator, Revd Nick Mark, followed by Breakfast in our Hall, and our usual service will follow at 11.00am.

NEXT CHURCH MEETING

Please note this will now be on Sunday 4th June and it would be appreciated if each club or group could have their written reports to Mr Douglas Maxwell by 7th May.

APRIL 2023 INTERIM MINISTER'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

We come to that month of the year when we remember the traumatic events of Holy Week in Jerusalem. It begins with Jesus riding triumphantly into Jerusalem on what we know as Palm Sunday. Then it is apparently downhill all the way as Jesus crashes from favour, is condemned, crucified and buried. This is a pattern of events we see repeated in the modern world all too often with leaders in other parts of the world although it doesn't happen normally in just seven days.

There is though with Jesus a very great difference and that is the simple fact that Holy week finishes in a very different way to the death of an earthly leader. It ends with the unimaginable power of the resurrection. Death is conquered. Sin is overcome. That power drives us forward in faith. A faith that withstands many temptations. A faith that welcomes everyone.

In the spirit of welcome during that week all the Churches in Annan come together to offer a variety of different services to try to explain what Holy week is about. For me personally I have been given a unique opportunity to conduct an Ecumenical service on the Tuesday evening of Holy week at Annan URC. We will be considering John's Gospel and chapter 9 verses 20-36 when Jesus gives a learned explanation of what Holy Week is all about. Also, I will be conducting the ecumenical Sunrise Service at 8.00am on Easter Sunday at the Motte or Mote (depending on your understanding) in Annan.

For me the run up to Holy week through Lent helps me to gain a greater understanding of why Jesus felt we were all worth making the ultimate sacrifice for. It also makes us look at the lesser characters in importance of the Bible who suffered loss of faith then an immense resurgence that drove them on to found the worldwide Church of which we are but a small part.

Those uncertain people were empowered by the Holy Spirit to achieve goals they would never have dreamed of. War, natural disaster, and economic depression dog the world at the present moment. We need to look beyond that to see the joy of the resurrection and we need to share that joy with those in despair and despondency.

We have the experience and benefit of hindsight of seeing how our predecessors in the faith overcame many hurdles to enable us to worship in freedom and security. We must not let that freedom and security weaken our resolve or make us complacent.

Easter Sunday is a time for genuine celebration and a time to renew our resolve to follow Christ more faithfully and to show Christ in us to others in the way we lead our lives. We can do that more easily if we give time for reflection on the immense suffering that Jesus underwent for us.

With every blessing

Nick Mark

SPACE

Since the first successful landing on the Moon in 1969 many people around the world have been involved in space exploration and trying to explore other parts of the Universe. Space flight will soon be as normal as the flights to holiday destinations we accept as part of everyday existence these days. Yet eighty years ago folk like you and me never considered flying and we were unusual if we had a motor car.

Space is something we have in Church congregations – families are missing and numbers attending decline. The traditions of the past are in need of disruption as we try to explore how the post covid church fits into God's plan for the Space Age. A new and fresh approach is needed so that the Gospel message is broadcast on every variety of communication.

Space is a practical problem too for our church family. Donations for the food bank have declined and there is always space in the box for your contributions. On the opposite side we sell fewer books and whilst donations are welcome we do not have space for bags of books at a time.

The thought for this month is how do we cross the space between the church and into the community? Provision of the "Warm Hub" and monthly soup and sweet lunches continue on a Thursday, (coffee morning weekly and Lunches monthly) but are there other outreach opportunities?

Whatever space we find with the chance to help other people it needs us to be there - and that's the truth of every opportunity. So, climb out of the rut and be God's hands and feet in serving the community – there are no age limits!

Haydn Higton

The Merry Months of Spring

The months of spring are here at last

Winter days are fading fast,
Nature's joy pervades the air,
Sweet life renewing everywhere!

Madly March hares box and tease
And lambs are leaping in the leas,
Flowers are bursting forth divine,
Primrose, crocus, celandine

In April Easter bonnets grace
Ladies wearing bright new lace,
Bluebells carpet woodland floors,
What a joy to be outdoors

In the very merry month of May
Around the Maypole dance all day,
Whilst the Cuckoo sings his song,
On warmer breezes all day long.

Church Gardener

A BRIEF REPORT ON THE MARCH 2023 SYNOD by NM

Before I went Rev Haydn advised me this would be a real experience and it proved to be in the nicest way! It was the first time I can recall I have ever attended a residential Synod before. The venue Tulliallan Police College near Kincardine is an excellent place to choose. No gym was required to keep Doug or I fit as the accommodation blocks were a good half mile it seemed from the Meeting hall and the Refectory. We were well looked after with the opportunity to increase one's weight rather than lose it with the excellent food provided!

This was the first in person Residential Synod since 2019 thanks to the Covid epidemic preventing such gatherings. It's theme was ***Reconnecting.....from where we left off.***

Unlike most Synods I have attended in the past there was a good balance between serious business and joyful banter. For example, at least twice a day we had notices delivered by a lady who in her working life is a Procurator Fiscal whose warm sense of humour came to the fore and none of us forgot any of the notices!

The opening and closing Worship was memorable. The opening led by Reverend Susan Henderson and the closing by the Chaplain to the General Assembly Moderator Rev Lindsey Sanderson. On the Saturday our Moderator led a moving Communion Service.

Our first ever Scottish General Assembly Moderator, from Augustine Church Edinburgh, Rev Fiona Bennett gave a very inspiring opening speech on what she had learned in her role so far and of how the URC in all its shapes and forms is alive and well throughout England, Wales and Scotland. She emphasised especially how much smaller Churches like our own in Annan are still making a big impact in the communities they serve.

Unlike many Synods I have attended our Synod Moderator Rev Paul Whittle made it all seem interesting and time just flew by and we stuck to scheduled times well. There was good healthy debate.

On the business side of things here are a few highlights which impinge on us at Annan.

1. Financially last year was a brilliant one for the National Synod of Scotland with the accounts showing a healthy credit balance. Like all Treasurers though, the National Treasurer Duncan Walker emphasised this would certainly not be repeated every year because our "profit" was accounted mainly for by the sale of buildings.
2. We need to remember that Synod has a Development Fund to help churches progress Mission with £100000 available.
3. In the past each church has had to contribute towards the running expenses of Synod and our HQ in Glasgow. This year no contribution is to be asked for. This means our own Treasurer has only to find sufficient funds to pay the demands of the Maintenance of Ministry Fund.
4. The whole way that Synod will operate has been changed to meet with a number of factors. First and foremost, the increasing requirements of Charity Law. Second to

meet the acceptance that Churches are going to need more help with Admin. It was good to see an acknowledgement of reality in the sense that no longer does each church have as members an accountant, lawyer, surveyor and builder. We therefore approved the setting up of a Synod Resources Committee and a Council of Nominees who are trustees. I have been honoured to be appointed a member of the Council of Nominees.

5. There will shortly be a form sent out to each Church asking whether they need help in paying their fuel bills. In addition we can apply for funding if we want the warm hub plan to continue. There is £210000 available for this with a maximum ceiling of £5000 per Church in Scotland.
6. The number and deployment of stipendiary ministers continues to be a challenge for the Pastoral Committee. Rev Sarah Moore is to continue giving 50% of her time helping sort out the many legal issues that need resolving in London. Our National Ecumenical Officer Rev John Bremner is to have his scoping reduced by 25% so that he can devote that 25% to working more for local churches. Rev David Coleman's term as Eco Minister for Scotland has been extended for a third term. It would be something for Church Meeting to consider whether we should invite him to come to us to advise not just us but the other Annan Churches on what we could do to help combat Climate Change.
7. The compulsory registration of Trustees as legal owners of land which would include our church will not now need to be completed until next year which gives time for trustees to be helped as not everyone is computer literate.
8. The search is now starting to find a new Moderator as our current Moderator retires later this year.

There were many other matters discussed and it is worth mentioning a few.

1. There was a lot of emphasis on what we could do as individual churches towards saving the world by becoming an Eco Church. It is easy to say why bother when one is occupying an older building without many of the modern insulation standards. However what is asked of us is to do what we can. For example we are already fitting LED lighting where possible.
2. Rev Sarah Moore along with the Scottish Episcopal Church (SEC) representative Miriam Weibye (SEC Church Relations Officer) talked about their membership of the World Council of Churches and in particular the work of its European arm to combat violence against women.
3. The Youth representatives highlighted the need to continue to try to resolve the Israeli/Palestine Conflict
4. Our National Youth worker Tess offered some useful all age worship material for Easter.
5. Our Moderator gave a presentation about the International links our Synod have with Zimbabwe and Fiji and South India.

6. Those of you who have had to deal with Synod over the years will want to know that the Moderator's P.A. Patsi had a good send off into retirement and her successor Gemma was welcomed. Patsi's 45 years service to both the Congregational Union and the National Synod of Scotland is something to truly respect.
7. There were 3 workshops available one on On-line Worship, One on Leading Your Church into Growth and the final one on New Days, New ways which explored learning opportunities for all ages. A key feature from the last workshop which could help us was access to the Discipleship Development fund with small grants of £200 or large grants of £5000.
8. The Pastoral Committee wants to either revive or terminate LINK groups and the South Group of which we are part discussed developing mutual support given the distances between our Churches.
9. There was a brilliant presentation on *Legacies of Slavery* and how we might begin to implement this concept in both our daily and Church lives.

Synod Aspirations (Revised in September 2022):

I have left mentioning these till this point because they shone through really many times during the weekend but it is useful to set out the 8 Aspirations and add that our Moderator discussed in greater detail some of them at Synod.

1. **Unconditional Love:**
We are an active Christian Community which responds to the **Unconditional Love** of God through celebrating the Christian story in ways that bring meaning and hope to life. We seek to support each other in faith and doubt through caring community.
2. **Inclusive:**
Our **Inclusive** worship reflects a broad variety of sources and styles. Local churches offer weekly worship, regular celebration of Holy Communion and mark the stages of life in Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals.
3. **Radical:**
We believe that God's **Radical** love is for everyone regardless of age, gender, sexuality, physical and mental ability, social status, ethnicity. Young people are represented with full voting rights in our councils.
4. **Journey:**
From its formation in 1972 the URC has been committed to **Journey** to ecumenism and is a member of the World Council of Churches and other ecumenical bodies. The Synod of Scotland works closely with ecumenical partners through the Scottish Church Leaders Forum, the Ecumenical Officers Meeting and the Scottish Churches Committee. We maintain links with the world Church by engaging with global partners, mainly other member denominations of the Council for World Mission.
5. **Other Faiths and None:**
The Synod is a participant in Interfaith Scotland. Many local churches seek to build relationships with people of **Other Faiths and None** to nurture their local communities.

6. ***Peace and Justice:***

Our commitment to **Peace and Justice** is strong and through the Commitment for Life Programme, is particularly expressed the Christian Aid, Jubilee Scotland and Global Justice Now. We are a FairTrade Church and support the work of the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office.

7. ***Creation:***

We believe we are called to live in balance with the whole of **Creation**. Many local churches participate in the Eco-Congregation scheme.

8. ***Development:***

The Scottish College (Congregational and United Reformed) offers a dynamic programme for spiritual and faith **Development** for anyone wishing to explore Christianity or particular callings in the life of the Church. **URC Youth** and **URC Children** growing youth and Children's organisations within the URC offering opportunities for learning and friendship amongst youth and children.

I should finish here by thanking the congregation for selecting Doug and myself to represent you.

Nick

Scottish Synod March 2023 – a postscript

When attending Scottish Synod meetings in recent years, once residential and latterly via Zoom, I have often been frustrated by what seemed like a disproportionate and at times pedantic focus on internal business. There seemed to be little space, time, or energy to focus on the life and work of the church in our fellowships and beyond.

Nick's excellent and comprehensive report captures the spirit of this Synod which shone through the worship and the inspiring presentations.

I commend you all to read and engage with the Synod Aspirations.

While there are serious challenges to be faced, I came away heartened that here is a church actively seeking to celebrate and to support the work of its people as they strive to be outward looking and to serve their communities.

Doug