

CONTACT

August 2022



The monthly magazine of
Annan United Reformed Church



August Services

07/08/2022	Communion	
14/08/2022	Service	Lesley Richmond
21/08/2022	Service	Rev. Nick Mark
28/08/2022	Service	Rev Haydn Highton

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 September Magazine should reach Judith by 23rd August.

Thought for the Month

Peace is more than just the absence of war. True peace is justice.

True peace is freedom and true peace dictates the recognition of human rights.

(Ronald Reagan)

The Essence of Prayer

Was it not wonderful news that the United Nations Secretary General and diplomats from Turkey had managed to broker an agreement between Russia and Ukraine to allow the millions of tons of grain in store in Ukraine to be transported across the Black Sea for distribution throughout the world. This was particularly important for the impoverished countries of the world like Somalia who depend on grain from places like Ukraine to feed their populations. It seemed some of our prayers had at long last been answered. Then just one day later we seemed in danger of going back to square one when Russia organised a missile strike on the port of Odesa (sometimes spelt Odessa)

It set me thinking about the passage in Luke's Gospel chapter 11 verses 1-13 where Jesus gave teaching on prayer. Prayer is something for all ages but humanity often seems to tie itself up in knots about something which should not be at all contentious.

What then are the secrets of success of prayer?

The first is that we need to have faith in a loving God who knows our needs and who enjoys in responding. It means trusting God and being ready to be open and honest about ourselves. I would add to that it is about doing something ourselves within our own capacity. So for example praying for our fellow citizens who cannot afford food to feed their families doesn't mean leaving it only in God's hands but if we can afford it we should contribute to a local Foodbank or food cooperative like Katie's Kitchen.

Secondly prayer is not about being clever. Rather it is concerning praying in a simple manner and not necessarily in perfect conditions. We can pray to God at anytime and anywhere. God likes direct and honest prayers.

Thirdly is a bit of a conundrum. Why bother to pray at all if as we believe God knows everything about us? We pray because we want God's will to be done rather than what we often think God should be doing. Then within this third point is the simple question why do prayers fail. It isn't necessarily because they lack sincerity but often because we are not putting the matter in God's hands but simply telling God what to do to satisfy our requirements. Also prayers can fail because we require God to take action within our time constraints ignoring God's time.

How often for example does the Christian Church decide that God's purpose is to satisfy our needs, match up to our expectations and to only bother us when we need God. You cannot turn God on and off like a water tap. Prayer is about remembering that God is with us both in the good times as well as the bad times. Also we have to remember that God cannot be contained like a genie in a bottle. God has the capacity to annoy us, to challenge us. When we consider the challenges of our world today God is challenging us in the traditional Christian churches to wake up before it is too late.

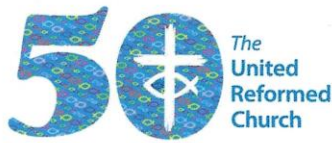
God challenges us in ways we really don't like at all. We reserve the right to shut God out especially if the message is one we don't want to hear. A praying community is one which shares God's ideal of harmony, interdependence and mutuality. This concept is hard for us humans because our chosen nature is to cherry pick. The truly amazing thing is that as the Theologian Gerard Hughes describes it we have a God of surprises. A God who doesn't give up on us when we are a success story and ignore God or treat God with contempt. God is especially there to pick us up when we are overconfident and trip or fall.

Prayer reassures us of a God of hope even when the earthly parameters tell us the chips are down. God doesn't lose patience, even where, as must be the case we fail to learn from our mistakes.

Prayer to me defeats the idea that we cannot have a proactive God. Prayer reminds me so often that God is actually hounding me to follow the right path and not to follow the human path of self-interest.

A praying Community is one which achieves so much because it understands it has that indefinable power of the Holy Spirit strengthening and inspiring it to share God's love with others.

NM



Finance

The United Reformed Church
United Reformed Church House
86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT

To: All members and adherents of

United Reformed Churches and our Local Ecumenical Partnerships

Dear Friends,

Is anyone back to normal?

After two years of pandemic and lockdown, and Covid still with us (thankfully, for most, in a much weaker form), we can now worship together in person and find fellowship again. But for most of us it is not simply a return to how it used to be; some people have not returned to church, some have died or become too frail, some churches have closed and others considering it.

Now we have significant European turmoil and its likely effect on fuel and food prices for us in the UK. Thank God that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13 v.8). Whatever else changes, He is our rock, our cornerstone.

Financially, things were extremely tough for churches in 2021. Plate offerings had collapsed; some regular givers had to reduce or entirely stop giving to support God's work; and those churches which hire out their premises had seen income from that source disappear. Even those churches where the majority of the giving was by standing order or bank transfer (*if you have not considered regularising your giving in this way, please do – it helps your treasurer significantly*) may have seen a 20%+ drop in income.

If this had been replicated in giving to the M&M Fund in 2021, we might have been faced with a serious financial crisis last year.

But no, through the generosity of individuals, churches and Synods, we can report that income only fell by 4.4%. With a similar reduction in expenditure the M&M Fund result was a deficit of only £80,000 (less than one-half of one percent of income), a deficit that can be comfortably covered by reserves.

So, thank you to all who continued to contribute to your local church, thank you to all those churches who met their commitment for 2021 in full, and thank you to all those who, in adversity, continued to treat the M&M Fund as the first priority and paid what they could.

With churches and individuals under financial pressure, 2022 is not going to be an easy year either. The M&M Fund budgeted income (based on Synods' projections) will not be sufficient to cover expected costs and we are reconciled to dipping into our reserves more seriously as a result.

However, if we "ordinary Christians" are to fulfil the call of Jesus to be His witnesses in the world around us we need ministers and other workers "on the ground" and we need shared resources which are often best created centrally. That all comes from the M&M Fund.

United Reformed Church Trust is a limited company registered in England and Wales. Charity no. 1133373, Company no. 135934

Chief Finance Officer: John Samson 020 7916 8641 john.samson@urc.org.uk www.urc.org.uk

Again, thank you all!

If you have any questions or comments arising from this letter, please speak to your church treasurer who has been provided with more detailed information. If they are not able to help directly then they can get in touch with the finance team at Church House.

Yours in Christ,

Ian Hardie (Treasurer)

Vaughan Griffiths (Deputy Treasurer)

Volunteers Needed

A Rota was established to encourage wider participation in worship. If you are able to welcome folk at the door, lead prayers or participate in services, please let one of the Elders know.

If you know you have a holiday booked advise Haydn Higton so substitutes are not needed.

A New Beginning?

As we emerge from the shadow of Covid we should be honest with ourselves asking what our Faith in God, and the way of living that Jesus taught to us, mean to each of us. Is the faith we had pre-Covid still an important part of our being? There is no turning back and we need a sense of realism about our life as part of God's Church.

In the June issue of this Newsletter our concern about the number of members who had not returned to worship with the church family was raised and has not improved. Why?

What we are and what we do as Christians is under the microscope, and it needs every person whose life has been helped by their knowledge of Jesus Christ to stand up and be counted - to make your voice heard in showing and talking about our faith in God and his ways.

Celebrating this Jubilee year is an opportunity to build on the past and to make a fresh start.

Haydn Higton

Down Memory Lane

As part of our celebrations for the 50th Anniversary of the United Reformed Church there will be a concert by "The Border Strathspey and Reel Society" on Saturday October 15th at 7p.m. in the Church. Tickets will be on sale shortly!

On Sunday October 16th the Service at 11 a.m. will be aimed at celebrating God's faithfulness in times past and so to build trust for the future. To this end if you have photographs, memorabilia or brief reminiscences concerning past events please give them to Haydn Higton so we can exhibit them before and during the weekend.

Celebrating our heritage and looking forward with hope and expectancy!

Haydn Higton

Another Day Begins

Another day beginning, Lord
Who knows what it will bring?
Please keep me strong and cheerful, Lord
And let my spirit sing,
So many are in need of love,
In need of comfort, too,
Please let me show them hope and joy,
A little kindness, too,
Another day ahead of me,
With battles I must win,
Lord, stay beside me all the way,
And give me strength within.

Church Gardener

Back to School

A new academic year begins and we have to face up to the rising number of young people who are being excluded from school because of unacceptable behaviour – one in five of them under twelve. The Ministers of the churches in Annan are trying to re-establish connections with local schools but think of ways in which you may be able to help – not least with regular prayer. Can you suggest other ways to provide opportunities for youngsters.

We have Girl's Brigade, Guides and Brownies using our buildings how do we improve our connections with them?

Come to the Church meeting on September 18th with your ideas!

Haydn Highton