

CONTACT

DECEMBER 2022



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The monthly magazine of
Annan United Reformed Church



December Services

Date	Event	Leader
4/12	Advent 2	Mrs Rosalind Fearon
11/12	Short Service followed by Church Meeting	Revd. Haydn Highton
18/12	Carol Service	Worship Group
24/12	Watch Night Joint Service URC 11.30pm	Revd. Nick Mark
2023		
1/1	New Year's Day	Revd Nick Mark

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Items for the January Magazine should reach Judith by 21nd December

For your Diary

The following are dates for Soup and Sweet Lunches

December 2022	Thursday 8 th
January 2023	Thursday 12 th
February 2023	Thursday 9 th
March 2023	Thursday 9 th
April 2023	Thursday 13 th

Helen and family would like to thank our friends at United Reform Church for lovely Sympathy Cards and messages received. We hope the friends who attended Roucan Loch enjoyed the lovely service given by our friend Rev. Ian Bell and joined the family at Hetland Hall Hotel. Thank you all for your support.
Helen, Graeme, Trish, Jack & Sam.

YOUR OUTREACH GROUP NEEDS YOU!

Everyone knows that this is a busy time of the year but, as part of our Outreach as a church we have decided to do something practical for those in our community who are less well-off particularly with the tough times our country finds itself in.

This will involve preparing sandwich lunches for about 60 of the most needy children at Hecklegirth Primary School during their Christmas holidays. This will mean we need teams to cover 9 days starting on the 27th of December and will not include a Saturday or Sunday.

If you can help, please speak to Marion Kerr before the 12th December and if you could indicate to her the dates you are available so we can then prepare a rota. We will need people between 10 and 12.30. If you cannot stay for all of this time any free time you have would be very welcome. Even if preparing food is not your forte there will be other opportunities like washing up, brewing tea for helpers and making up the bags or collecting items needed.

INTERIM MINISTER'S LETTER

December marks the time when we reach the shortest day of the year in terms of daylight. This year Christmas will undoubtedly be for many people a very difficult time. The war in Ukraine and the economic downturn have affected almost every human being on earth in some way or other.

The one constant though in our Christian lives is the season of Advent and of course the celebration on the 25th of December of the birth of Christ our Saviour. This year at our Midnight Service on the 24th we will be joined by the Congregations and Ministers of the two local Churches of Scotland which we all hope will be a positive sign of the resumption of normal service after the lockdown and other implications of Covid.

Advent is about much more than simply a time of waiting and in the secular world burning oneself out trying to find those elusive gifts for those we care for most. This year as a congregation we are trying out a new idea through our Outreach Group of thinking about some of those who will be suffering most over the Christmas period. The aim will be to provide sandwich lunches for some of the children at Hecklegirth School during the holidays to ensure they have a basic meal when the school is not in a position to help parents out.

In terms of Scotland, Advent begins on the Sunday nearest St Andrew's Day, 30th November and we are not simply historically remembering the birth of Jesus. We are actually looking both back and forward because Advent looks back to the birth of Jesus but also looks forward to something which is yet to happen, namely the Second Coming of Christ. Instead of many people saying why can't we get this long drawn out period of Advent over we need to utilise the time more for reflection on how prepared are we as individuals and as a congregation for the Second Coming. It is no good us saying that because there has been no second coming for over 2000 years then we needn't bother to prepare in any way. The need to prepare is an ever present one because the First Coming of Jesus, which we celebrate at Christmas, was to redeem the world whereas the Second Coming is to judge the world.

The world is certainly not ready for such an event when we look at our inability to really get to grips with climate change following COP27 or our failure to achieve world peace or thirdly our inability it seems to be able to ensure equality for all God's children.

Advent and Christmas are a really useful time for each one of us to think about how we might reshape our lives to help the Kingdom of God on earth become a fulfilled reality. That doesn't mean we can't have some enjoyment because the last thing God would want is God's followers to be overwhelmed and miserable. This time of year should be an opportunity to recharge our batteries so to speak and renew our service to God and honour the reason Christ came to save us.

May Janet and I take this opportunity to wish you all a happy Christmas and to thank you for your warm welcome to us and to keep in mind those for whom Christmas is a really difficult time for all sorts of reasons.

Nick Mark

BANISH THE ROUTINE

Sometimes the same the routine day after day becomes depressing and we become weary doing the same things. If we find ourselves in this state it takes a very conscious effort to change the routine – to look at life differently, It's the same with our Christian faith.

Is what we do in worship and other church activities guided by tradition and long practice or are we alive to the challenge of being part of God's work needed in the world. Amid the tensions that abound in the world faith and hope need to be kept alive and that is best achieved by regular weekly worship together and by contributing opinions when the church meets for discussion.

Forget the routine and make more time for faith to grow and translate into action. Worship is not just when we feel like a trip to church – it is a vital part of enriching our lives – making our church and all its activities better known – keeping hope and faith in action. You are important to God – use your time, energy and skills to show His love for all your neighbours.

Haydn Higton

Thinking of the less fortunate during the Festive Season

As most of us are fortunate

As Christmas draws near

To know that we'll be safe and warm

And filled with Christmas cheer,

We really need to think of those who're lonely, sick or old

Or those who'll spend their Christmas

In a doorway in the cold

We're lucky and its up to us

To give a helping hand

However small, to try to spread

God's love throughout the land

Church Gardener

Recently after covid cancellations we had the pleasure of once again visiting the island of Jersey.

Beautiful St Brelades Bay was home for the week. The joy of staying right on the bay is amazing waking up to the sound of the sea has to be one of life's pleasures.

Highlights of this year's stay included visiting Samares Manor which has beautiful gardens designed way back in 1920. One of its outstanding features is the Japanese Gardens with its stunning colours even in Autumn. We enjoyed delicious galettes for lunch in the garden.

A visit to the Jersey War Tunnels is an insight into how difficult life was for islanders during the years of occupation in World War 2.

The accounts of islanders living through this awful time are so interesting and thought provoking. No stay on this island would be complete without a visit (or two) to Jersey Zoo. Established in 1959 by conservationist Gerald Durrell. It is wonderful to watch the agility of the lemurs as they swing from tree to tree or the antics of the gorillas to name only two. Thank goodness for the foresight of Gerald Durrell to save these animals from possible extinction.

I can't wait till next year already, as this is definitely one of my favourite places.

Fiona Glass.

CHRISTMAS WITH LOVE

Christian Aid have suggested this year a new way in which the twelve days of Christmas may be celebrated – by donating so that others may eat. Bags of seeds, fruit trees, solar pumps, healthy goats, manure picks, thriving gardens all result from love sent at Christmas and produce food security.

Shoe Boxes

Your shoeboxes are on their way to bring joy to children in the Ukraine and Eastern Europe this year we collected 38 full boxes and £184.50 towards cost of transport. Well done to all who contributed!

MINISTER BECOMES BBS NATIONAL CHAPLAIN

The following article appeared in the November issue of Life & Work. Stewart has been to Annan several times teaching us about safeguarding.

A Scottish minister has been appointed as the new National Chaplain for the Boys' Brigade.

The Rev. Stewart Cutler, who has been involved in the BBs since the age of six, said he was 'delighted' to take up the role.

Stewart is a United Reformed Church (URC) minister serving at St. Ninian's in Stonehouse, Lanarkshire, a Local Ecumenical Partnership of the URC and Church of Scotland. He has worked with children, young people, volunteers and students in churches and communities around Scotland during his ministry.

Stewart said "I am delighted to become the Chaplain of the Boys' Brigade in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland. I've spent the last 30 years working with children, young people and their leaders in churches, so I know just how important the Boys' Brigade is to the Church – for reaching out into the community, and engaging with young people, bringing them to faith and telling them the good news of Jesus. For me the Boys' Brigade has hugely impacted my spiritual journey and my working life. It has always been a place of fun."

Jonathan Eales, Chief Executive of the Boys' Brigade, said "I am pleased to welcome Stewart as our new Brigade Chaplain. He brings to the role a wealth of experience and passion for our work with children and young people. As a Christian youth organisation we are determined to build and to strengthen our partnerships both locally and nationally with the Church

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

Some news is so good it simply must be shared – an engagement, the birth of a baby, a great academic success or the finish of handiwork that took many hours. We feel we will burst unless we tell someone.

The early Christians felt that about the good news of what God had done for us through Jesus Christ. Can we recapture that sense of wonder and excitement of the early Christians?

Thank you to all who contributed to Commitment for Life in 2022. A total of £450.00 was raised.
