

CONTACT

February 2024



The monthly magazine of
Annan United Reformed Church



FEBRUARY 2024 WORSHIP AT ANNAN URC
MORNING SERVICES 11:00 AM

Sunday 4th: **Morning Service** **David Townsend**

Welcomer: Robin Richardson

Bible Reading: Marion Kerr

Intercessions: Haydn Highton

Sunday 11th: **Communion** **Revd Nick Mark**

Welcomer: Helen McNairn

Bible Reading: Ruth Mitchell

Intercessions: Nan Maxwell

Sunday 18th: **Morning Service and Church Meeting** **David Townsend**

Welcomer: Anne Foster

Bible Reading: Jenni Jones

Intercessions: Marion Kerr

Sunday 25th: **Morning Service** **Revd Neil Campbell**

Welcomer: Marion Kerr

Bible Reading: Edith Woodman

Intercessions: Ruth Mitchell

Note to Readers and Prayers: visiting Service Leaders have the option to choose their own theme and readings, and may wish to lead prayers themselves.

Such information will be given to you as soon as possible.

CHURCH CONTACT INFORMATION

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Items for March magazine should reach Ruth by Friday 16th February, please

FEBRUARY 2024 INTERIM MODERATOR'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

I hope that you are all managing with our strange and changing weather patterns as best as you can. For some people it has been very hard to face yet another so called once in a lifetime flood. It seems that those who govern us of whatever political shade are really struggling to catch up with the effects of climate change. It does seem coincidental that on 18th February on the first Sunday of Lent our theme is looking at the Covenant God made with Noah that there would never again be such a thing as the Great Flood. Not only that the world seems to be moving far away from any kind of peace with governments resorting to military force rather than talking to their opponents. As we begin February, in our Worship on the 4th we look at Isaiah 40 verses 21 to 31 with the assurance that none of us are forgotten by God. That must be very hard to understand if you are near the frontline in Gaza or Ukraine.

Why I mention those two Sundays in particular is the need for all the Christian Churches to look at how we try to bring God's message of love in our very disturbed world. On 11th February, the Sunday before Lent, we study that amazing conclusion to Epiphany, the Transfiguration of Jesus. It reminds us very much of the importance of witnessing and telling about the love and joy we have received from our individual and collective faith in God. If we struggle with all this, as many of us do, then the key reading at the end of the month on Sunday the 25th from Genesis 17 encourages us to trust in God when we don't understand. That for me has been particularly important when we have seen how the Israeli incursion into Gaza has been so indiscriminate towards Christian Churches who do not shelter or encourage Hamas, yet our Government seems fully behind the continuing bloodshed.

On a more positive note, our Elders will be meeting with the Scottish Synod Transition Minister Rev Sarah Moore to seek guidance on how we can develop further from the Open Sunday last year. There is much for us to give thanks for, especially with the continuing success of the monthly Soup and Sweet Lunches which provide a great opportunity for social interchange at a time of year when many people begin to suffer from winter blues or, using the modern term, cabin fever, when the weather confines so many folk at home. It gives the hard working team who provide this service great satisfaction to see the joy this provision brings and also the increasing variety of folk attending.

As we enter the period of Lent in the latter half of February, it reminds us to think positively about Lent. Rather than merely as a time to give up something, it is better to think of it as a time to think of doing something new in God's service.

With every blessing

Nick Mark

Interim Moderator

THOUGHTS ON JANUARY

January is often seen as a dull month after the excitement and joy of December as Christmas has been celebrated.

However I see it as a fresh start almost like a blank canvas. It is a chance to look forward and plan for all the things we would like to do in the months ahead.

Although winter continues and we have seen this very clearly this year, with snow and minus temperatures, we also witness the sign of spring bulbs beginning to peep through the soil and the days are becoming lighter for longer.

Garden birds give a little colour in our garden. Our feathered friends are grateful for the food provided in these cold days.

Early January began for me with a get together with friends at Lochside Spa. The scenery around was stunning even in January. Friendship is a very special gift.

Let's hope 2024 is a good year for everyone; may it be a healthy and happy one.

Fiona Glass



Daily hoping the feeders are full

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## **A QUOTE FOR FEBRUARY**

### **YOU ARE AT HOME WHILE STILL ON THE WAY**

When God has become our shepherd, our refuge, our fortress, then we can reach out to him in the midst of a broken world and feel at home while still on the way. When God dwells in us, we can enter into a wordless dialogue with him while still waiting on the day that he will lead us into the house where he has prepared a place for us (John 14:2). Then we can wait while we have already arrived and ask while we have already received. Then, indeed, we can comfort each other with the words of Paul (Philippians 4:6–7):

There is no need to worry; but if there is anything you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayer and thanksgiving, and that peace of God, which is so much greater than we can understand, will guard your hearts and your thoughts, in Christ Jesus.

*Henri Nouwen*

*suggested by David Townsend*

## COMMITMENT FOR LIFE

*Commitment for Life* are inviting you to join us for 'Gaza in Crisis: Join CFL in conversation with Christian Aid' zoom meeting on **Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> February from 2pm to 3pm**, to hear an update from Julie Mehigan and William Bell (Christian Aid) about the situation in Gaza and what is happening on the ground. We are hoping to provide an opportunity for questions to be asked during our time together.

Join us for a

Zoom Event



Commitment for Life

# CRISIS IN GAZA

## AN UPDATE FROM **CHRISTIAN AID**



Julie Mehigan



William Bell



WED 7 FEB



2 PM - 3PM



REGISTER FOR LINK

[commitmentforlife@urc.org.uk](mailto:commitmentforlife@urc.org.uk)





The  
United  
Reformed  
Church

Commitment  
for **Life**

The message above from Suzanne Pearce at Commitment for Life and the attached poster were received by our Commitment for Life representatives, and all church members are invited to register and join the Zoom meeting on Wednesday 7th February.

*Elaine Higton*



## HOW TO BE CONTENT THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE OF 2024

Why do I ask for wealth and possessions  
When I am satisfied  
If God gives me good health  
Then I'm happy  
And sing my song morning and evening  
With a thankful heart.



Many of us have more than we need  
With house and home and money  
And still we are not satisfied  
Not happy with the world  
The more we have the more we want  
And so we still complain.

The world is thus a vale of tears  
And yet it seems so good to me  
Joys without measure and number  
No one gets nothing at all  
Even the bird and beetle  
Enjoy it when May comes along.





Meadow, mountain and forest  
 Adorn themselves for us  
 Birds sing far and near  
 So that all resounds with their voices:  
 When we're at work  
 The lark sings to us  
 And when we're at rest  
 The nightingale.

And when the golden sun comes up  
 And golden is the world  
 And all is in blossom  
 And the fields fill with corn:  
 Then I think, all this splendour  
 God has made for my pleasure.



Then I praise and extol my God  
 And my spirits soar to the sky  
 I think it must be a kind God  
 Who wants only good for us all:  
 So I will always be thankful  
 And delight in his goodness to me.

*Church Gardener*

## **14<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY**

This year the date is not only marking Valentine's Day when we think of our nearest and dearest but it is also Ash Wednesday – the beginning of Lent which reminds us it is a time of challenge. It is a time of hope and asking for forgiveness.

For some folk Lent is a time for reflection but also sometimes for decision. We need to seek God's timing to discover which is right for us. Faced with different kinds of choices it is not easy to make a decision sometimes, and if we think of the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness we see He was faced with the same problems. It is time to decide, to act – to respond and not sit on the fence.

What is God calling us to do – as individuals and in our church outreach to the community? Are there new areas of service, to take new responsibilities or is God challenging us to stop and take stock of where we are and what we are already doing?

Lent is a time for reflecting on what God wants us to do – a time for listening to His voice and seeking His will. Is God saying to you and the church now is the time to decide? The love of God is free to everyone and we can repay that love by offering our service. There is a price worth paying, for it leads to lasting happiness and life in all its fullness.

*Haydn Highton*

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FAIRTRADE

Each year we are reminded in Fairtrade Fortnight about buying food items which give a guarantee of a fair price for the producer but now the campaign also highlights the climate and food security benefits. If the changing climate means crops will not grow then the farmer will have to stop farming and try something else. Can you imagine life with no cocoa or chocolate, no tea or coffee?

To qualify for Fairtrade registration producers have to meet certain environmental standards. Many farmers are organic to meet the sustainable development goal. Whilst the focus of the Fairtrade movement is developing, the rising cost of living means many people will struggle to make ethical choices - there are cheaper goods than the ones marked "Fairtrade".

We have all read how the situation in the Middle East is hindering shipping using the Red Sea and Suez Canal, so increased shipping costs will also impact on food prices. Supporting Fair Trade producers will mean supporting changes in methods of production aimed at improving carbon footprints to give better climate control.

Think before you buy!

Haydn Highton

LIVING THE CONTRADICTIONS

A meditation from Richard Rohr

The question we must ask ourselves is, “How do we live the contradictions?” Live them - not just endure them or relieve ourselves from the tension by quickly resolving them. The times when we meet or reckon with our contradictions are often turning points, opportunities to enter into the deeper mystery of God. I’m deliberately using the word mystery to point to depth, an open future, immense freedom, a kind of beauty and truth that cannot be fully spoken or defined.

Many mystics speak of the God-experience as simultaneously falling into an abyss and being grounded. This sounds like a contradiction, but when we allow ourselves to fall into the abyss - into hiddenness, limitlessness, unknowability, a void without boundaries - we discover it’s somehow a rich, supportive, embracing spaciousness where we don’t have to ask (or answer) the questions of whether we’re right or wrong. We’re being held and so do not need to try to “hold” ourselves together. Please reflect on that.

This might be the ultimate paradox of the God-experience: “falling into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31). When we can give ourselves to it and not fight it or explain it, falling into the abyss is ironically an experience of ground, of the rock, of the foundation. This is totally counterintuitive. Our dualistic, logical mind can’t get us there. It can only be known experientially. That’s why the mystics use magnificent metaphors - none of them adequate or perfect - for this experience.

Mystery is not something we can’t know. Mystery is endless knowability on many different levels. Living inside such endless knowability is finally a comfort, a foundation of ultimate support, security, unrestricted love, and eternal care. It usually takes much of our life to get there; it’s surely what we mean by “growing” in faith. Each soul must learn on its own, hopefully aided by observing other faith-filled people.

The source of spiritual wisdom is to hold questions and contradictions patiently, much more than to find quick certitudes, to rush to closure or judgment as the ego and dualistic mind want to do. The ego wants to know it is right. It wants to stand on its own self-created “solid” ground - not the mysterious solid ground of the abyss. This is why so much religion remains immature and is often a hiding place for people who want to be in control instead of people trained in giving up control to a Loving Presence.

A mature friend or a good spiritual director will companion us as we learn how to negotiate the darkness, how to wait it out, how to hold on, how to live in liminal or threshold space. The dualistic mind just doesn’t know how to do that. The dualistic mind cannot deal with paradox, but the nondual mind can. In fact, it almost relishes and revels in mystery. Nondual consciousness is at home inside of the abyss.

Richard Rohr and Henri Nouwen (see page 4) are two of my ‘wisdom gurus’. Both have been huge influences on my thinking and spiritual journey: Richard for about 15 years; Henri for best part of 3 decades.

David Townsend

FEBRUARY 2024 AND ONWARDS DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Thu 1st	Girls' Brigade 6:00pm (and every Thursday in term time)
Sun 4th	Morning Service 11:00am
Mon 5th	7th Annan Brownies and Guides 6:00pm - 9:00pm (each Monday in term time)
Tue 6th	Knit and Natter social time 10:00am -12noon (and every Tuesday)
Tue 6th	Church Elders meeting 2:30pm
Tue 6th	Rainbow Tribe from 5:30pm and Spectrum from 7:30pm (and every Tuesday in term time)
Wed 7th	Commitment for Life Zoom Event - see page 5
Thu 8th	Soup and Sweet Lunches 11:30am -1:30pm in hall
Sun 11th	Communion Service 11:00am
Mon 12th	Start of School mid-term holiday
Wed 14th	Ash Wednesday
Thu 15th	School resumes after mid-term holiday
Fri 16th	Deadline for items for March Contact Magazine
Sun 18th	Morning Service 11:00am followed by Quarterly Church Meeting
Tue 20th	Elders meet with Sarah Moore 1:45pm
Sun 25th	Morning Service 11:00am
MARCH	
Thu 14th	Soup and Sweet Lunches 11:30am -1:30pm in hall
Mon 25th	School Spring holiday begins
Fri 29th	Good Friday
Sun 31st	Easter Sunday



THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

How should our Outreach Group develop
our work outside in the community?

Haydn Higton