

CONTACT

January 2024



The monthly magazine of
Annan United Reformed Church



JANUARY 2024 WORSHIP AT ANNAN URC
SUNDAY MORNING SERVICES 11:00 AM

Sunday 7th: **Communion Service** **David Townsend**

Welcomer: Anne Foster
Bible Reading: Edith Woodman
Intercessions: Ruth Mitchell

Sunday 14th: **Morning Service** **Revd Nick Mark & Nan Maxwell**

Welcomer: Helen McNairn
Bible Reading: Robert Mitchell
Intercessions: Marion Kerr

Sunday 21st: **Morning Service** **Alan Dodds**

Welcomer: Marion Kerr
Bible Reading: Jenni Jones
Intercessions: Doug Maxwell

Sunday 28th: **Morning Service** **Rosalind Fearon**

Welcomer: Anne Foster
Bible Reading: Nan Maxwell
Intercessions: Helen McNairn

Apology: sorry the December service information was inaccurate - arrangements changed after publication - editor.

CHURCH CONTACT INFORMATION

Church Website	www.annanurc.chessck.co.uk	
Church Facebook	Annan URC	
Church Email	annanurc@gmail.com	
Church Administrator	Doug Maxwell 01387 249300	
Magazine Editor	ruthmitchell821@btinternet.com	01461 201450

Items for February magazine should reach Ruth by Friday 19th January, please

INTERIM MODERATOR'S LETTER JANUARY 2024

Dear Friends,

A warm welcome to the first issue of 2024. A New Year brings conflicting thoughts for many of us. Joy to be starting a New Year. Regret at the things we failed to do last year. Sadness for some that all the jollity of Christmas is over. On the other hand, if you had a lonely Christmas, happiness that things are returning to normality and groups are meeting again. It is that time of year where it is customary to make resolutions: some serious, others less so.

Two of the great worries for everyone as we begin 2024 can be summed up in the following way. First why the world seems to ignore what a key feature of Christmas was about: namely peace? It baffles me how world leaders who claim to be Christian can use their power to promote so much deadly conflict. Peace still seems far away in Palestine, Sudan, and Ukraine. It is a challenge to all Christians to implement what Christ came for.

Second we still have the ever increasing problem of poverty and how we cope with it in a modern society. Our ruling party in Scotland have produced as their answer the old chestnut of taxing the rich, but history has demonstrated so many times that this is not the answer long term and especially in Scotland where there is not a huge pool of rich to tax. Even though we are supposed to be living in a post Christian world, in the view of many our society for its *raison d'être* still relies on strong Christian principles. As our Central and Local Government find they can no longer provide the essential services that the population have come to take for granted, there is a much greater need for the charity sector to take up the slack. The charity sector for its part depends on humanity, rich and poor, to help it achieve a more caring society. One of the goals for Annan URC in 2024 I suggest is how we can contribute not necessarily monetarily to improving the lives of the people who suffer in the area we serve. Suffering takes many forms and one of the resolutions, listening to both Elders and Church meetings last year, is to discern how with God's help we can as a small church make a difference in our small part of the Kingdom.

Our Church Lectionary in January begins on the 7th January with the Baptism of the Lord. We will be looking at the beginning of Genesis and the beginning of Mark's Gospel and thinking about how God has this wonderful habit of shaking things up. How can we, I wonder, shake things up in a way that is manageable and acceptable?

On 14th January, in looking at 1 Samuel, we think about how to recognise what God is actually calling us to do. This is followed on the 21st January by looking at Jonah chapter 3, in trying to consider how we respond to God's call. Finally on the 28th January we look at Deuteronomy chapter 18, in trying to discern what actually comes to us from God.

Janet and I both wish you a happy and prosperous New Year.

With every blessing.

Nick Mark

DEATH

We record the recent death of
Mrs. Mary Ellen Bell,
formerly of Hillview Crescent & Shawhill Road, Annan,
and latterly residing at Burnfoot Coach House Care Home, Ecclefechan.
We give thanks for her life and offer our sincere condolences to her family.

~~~~~

## **THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH**

When we feel overwhelmed by worries and struggles, when life seems dark and depressing,  
uplifting hope comes as we pray to God.

~~~~~

RAINBOW TRIBE AND SPECTRUM CONCERT

I would like to express sincere thanks:

To all the Ladies who provided mince pies and shortbread for the adults' refreshments, and served the tea and coffee;

To the Mums who provided food for the children;

To the Gentlemen who set tables and chairs in the hall and cleared them away after the event and also the gentlemen who put extra chairs away and made the church ready for Sunday;

To Barbara and her assistants for an excellent performance from the youngest children to older children – everyone sang, played and acted beautifully.

A great team effort enjoyed by all who attended.

Marion Kerr

WELL DONE EVERYONE!

We also thank Rainbow Tribe and Spectrum for so kindly donating the proceeds of their festive evening, £170-65, to the church to help offset heating costs.

Rehearsals will start up again on Tuesday 9th January.

CHRIST IN THE RUBBLE

You may have read that most of the Christmas 2023 celebrations in Bethlehem were cancelled. This powerful photograph below shows a nativity scene in the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem. Here a service of lamentation held on 23rd December on the theme of Christ in the Rubble included an equally powerful sermon preached by Rev Dr Munther Isaac.



The image and sermon certainly made me question what is the world doing to Christ now in the lives of those with whom He identifies. The phrase “ Silence is complicity” echoes repeatedly in my brain and I echo the voices of the congregation in their response at the end of that sermon.

... .. “Christmas in Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus, is this manger. This is our message to the world today. It is a gospel message, a true and authentic Christmas message, about the God who did not stay silent, but said his word, and His Word is Jesus. Born among the occupied and marginalised. He is in solidarity with us in our pain and brokenness. This manger is our message to the world today - and it is simply this: the genocide must stop NOW. Let us repeat to the world.”

Stop this genocide NOW. This is our plea.

This is our prayer: Hear, oh God. AMEN.

Ruth Mitchell

with thanks to David for bringing this to my attention

CHRISTMAS IS OVER?

After weeks and weeks of preparation, Christmas is over all too soon and the church calendar thinks of the Wise Men, and the baby Jesus being brought to the Temple for the first time. Christmas is over, but what it celebrates is not.

The Wise Men arrived in Bethlehem some time after the birth of Jesus. After their long journey, perhaps they wondered if they would be too late – the event they had come to see long over and done with. Perhaps they only spent brief moments with Jesus, but although the first Christmas was over the truth behind it and the reason we continue to celebrate Christ's birth was and is as real as ever.

The babe of Bethlehem is God coming among us in Jesus – sharing our humanity and continuing with us through His Holy Spirit throughout our lives and beyond.

At the beginning of another year we can take heart remembering that whatever our mistakes and shortcomings God is always willing through Jesus to offer us a new start. So let us use this month to renew our enthusiasm, to serve God in what we do for him, to plan and strive harder to spread the love of God in the community -

He has no hands but our hands!

Haydn Higton

~~~~~

## **I WILL LIGHT CANDLES THIS CHRISTMAS**

I will light candles this Christmas.  
Candles of joy, despite all the sadness.  
Candles of hope where despair keeps watch.  
Candles of courage where fear is ever present.  
Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days.  
Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens.  
Candles of love to inspire all of my living.  
Candles that will burn all the year long.

*Howard Thurman*

*(Howard Thurman was an African-American Baptist minister and civil rights leader. He was a mentor to such as Martin Luther King Jr)*

*If it sounds familiar, this is the poem which David read aloud for the lighting of the third Advent candle, and it echoes our thoughts now as to whether Christmas is over.*

## **YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

### **COMMITMENT FOR LIFE UPDATE**

Commitment for Life is the global justice programme of the United Reformed Church. It is the recommended programme through which the local United Reformed Churches engage in global justice.

The programme encompasses many passionate people interested in seeing justice done throughout the world. Everyone is encouraged to take action through life giving faith, defiant hope and generous love.

Commitment for Life makes a real difference to the lives of some of the world's poorest people by working in partnership with Christian Aid and Global Justice Now. Commitment for Life has opted to take action in four vulnerable areas around the world. These include Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, and Central America encompassing Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala. It is supporting campaigns and projects that include tax justice, climate justice, Fairtrade and women's rights. Information regarding the above countries and projects can be found in the magazines on the stand above the tombola and food boxes in the church vestibule. Once read, please return so others can share the information. You can also go to the Commitment for Life web site at [www.urc.org.uk/cfl](http://www.urc.org.uk/cfl).

With Commitment for Life, it's not about large donations by individuals. Most people save their loose change and give it throughout the year. Elaine and myself don't mind counting up all those 1p and 2p before banking it. There is also another advantage in giving. If you are a tax payer, the amount you give can be passed on to Robin who will claim Gift Aid on your donation.

This year our church members gave £450 to Commitment for Life as seen by the certificate at the church front door notice board. Many thanks for all your donations this year.

All donations will be gratefully received by Kevin or Elaine throughout the year.

*Kevin and Elaine Higton*

~~~~~

STAMPS - A REMINDER

This year our Girls' Brigade Company is collecting used or new stamps for the R.N.L.I. and we are asking you to help in this charity event by donating stamps. They can be old or new, from anywhere in the world. Please try to leave a one centimetre border around them. You can give them to Kevin when you see him on Sundays and the Company will be grateful for your support.

~~~~~

### **MARMALADE TIME**

I am sure we have all sampled the marmalade which Lyn makes for sale at church. It is that time of year again. Can you please help by passing on clean jam jars, with screw-on lids if possible? Lyn Higton will be pleased to receive your jars at church any Sunday.

## A PRAYER FOR THE NEW YEAR

Lord, we thank thee for this place  
In which we dwell;  
For the love which unites us;  
For the peace accorded us this day;  
For the hope with which we expect the morrow;  
For the health, the work, the food;  
And the bright skies that make our lives delightful;  
For our friends in all parts of the earth.  
Give us courage, gaiety and a quiet mind,  
Spare to us our friends, soften to us our enemies.  
Bless us, if it may be, in all our innocent endeavours,  
If it may not, give us the strength  
To encounter that which is to come,  
That we may be brave in peril,  
Constant in tribulation, temperate in wrath  
And in all changes of fortune,  
And down to the gates of death  
Loyal and loving one to another.

Amen

*Church Gardener*





## **JANUARY 2024 AND ONWARD DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

|          |                                                                                    |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|          |                                                                                    |
| Sun 7th  | Communion Service 11:00am                                                          |
| Tue 9th  | School term begins                                                                 |
| Tue 9th  | Knit & Natter social time 10:00am till 12:00noon (and every Tuesday)               |
| Tue 9th  | Elders Meeting 2:30pm                                                              |
| Tue 9th  | Rainbow Tribe from 5:30 & Spectrum from 7:30pm<br>(and every Tuesday in term time) |
| Thu 11th | Soup and Sweet Lunch 11:30 –1:30 in hall                                           |
| Thu 11th | Girls' Brigade 6:00pm (and every Thursday in term time)                            |
| Sun 14th | Morning Service 11:00am                                                            |
| Mon 15th | 7th Annan Brownies and Guides 6:00pm –9:00pm (each Monday in term time)            |
| Fri 19th | Deadline for items for February Contact Magazine                                   |
| Sun 21st | Morning service 11:00am                                                            |
| Sun 28th | Morning service 11:00am                                                            |
| FEBRUARY |                                                                                    |
| Thu 8th  | Soup and Sweet Lunch 11:30 –1:30 in hall                                           |
| Tue 18th | School ends for mid-term holiday                                                   |
| Mon 24th | School resumes after mid-term holiday                                              |

~~~~~

MISSION CREED

We believe in God's mission beginning at creation with a word of possibility and a promise of abundance breathing us into existence reflecting God's diversity, bringing good news in person, bursting through the walls of our churches, to reach out to the marginalised with unconditional love, challenging complacency, calling for action through contemplative love,

Published by the URC for Vision 2020

Haydn Higton