

# CONTACT

## JANUARY 2023



The monthly magazine of  
Annan United Reformed Church



## Services January 2023

Date	Event	Leader
1/1/2023	<b>New Year's Day</b>	Revd Nick Mark
8/1/2023	Digital Service	Revd Sue McCoan
15/1/2023		Mrs Seddon
22/1/2023		Mrs Rosalind Fearon
29/1/2023	<b>TBA</b>	

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Items for the February Magazine should reach Judith by 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2023

## Thought for the month

God is able to do far more than we can think or imagine, according to His generous power at work in us.

(Ephesians 2 v20)

## **INTERIM MODERATOR'S JANUARY 2023 LETTER**

I hope and pray that you have all had as good a Christmas as possible bearing in mind the many challenges life threw at all of us in 2022. In our religious calendar this month there are two main areas to cover. First on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January we look at something rather appropriate to the time when we make New Year resolutions and that is the first 13 verses of Ecclesiastes chapter 3. It gives us the opportunity to explore the simple question of what is it time to do now? The rest of the month is filled with the period known as the Epiphany. Epiphany simply means a manifestation or an appearance. In Christian terms it is the appearance of Christ to the Gentiles signified by the visit of the Wise Men to the baby Jesus but there is so much more to the Epiphany if we look at it in detail for in 4 Sundays we cover the following:

- 1) the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist.
- 2) the identification of Jesus as the long awaited Messiah by John.
- 3) Jesus calling people to repent and follow him.
- 4) The call to walk humbly with God.

We can look back as a Congregation on 2022 and see how despite all the problems caused by the aftermath of Covid and the economic issues arising from the war in Ukraine we managed to make a good start on resuming some kind of normality. Folk are beginning after an understandable pause to resume regular attendance and we are seeing new life breathed back into the Church with excellent connections with other Churches in Annan. Also with all the restrictions disappearing, our long term relationship with Hecklegirth School is again flourishing.

New initiatives have included the provision of sandwich lunches for some children during the school holidays and the opening up this month of a warm hub to help those who cannot afford to properly heat their homes. In other words, we are seeking to reach out to folk for whom Annan URC has been something of a mystery. When you look back through the history of the Christian Church it has always been subject to change and in 2023, we are charged with the challenge to see how we can maintain our core beliefs and traditions yet remain relevant in our ever transforming world.

This letter is an opportunity for me to say thank you to all those who have supported the Church in many different ways. Without you we would be just another statistic of churches closing, for as my title says, we are in an interim

period seeking a new minister to build on the work already started. When I took on this role our Moderator based in Glasgow had real hopes for us because he could, and still does, see real possibilities for growth. I also see in my short time with you a congregation that has ideas and one that is looking forward and not simply going through the motions. We are evolving into a church that is very different from that which those who set up the Church envisaged. To give one example of this, we are still here although the fishermen who were the backbone of the congregation at one time have long gone into other occupations because their way of life has been lost.

May I take the opportunity on behalf of my wife Janet and myself to wish you all a happy and prosperous New Year. Saying that reminds me that prosperous means far more than monetary wealth.

With every blessing

Nick Mark

Interim Moderator

### **REMEMBER REMEMBER**

These works are normally associated with Bonfire night but as many people are struggling with rising prices and fuel poverty there is a need for us to put our care for others into firm action by donating to food banks.

There is urgent need to feed the hungry and if we all brought one tin of food or packet each week what a difference we can make!

### **Post Christmas**

If you have Christmas presents and other items which you cannot use please donate them to the "Tombola Box". They may be used as prizes as our Soup and Sweet events become Welcome Lunches.

## How do you feel

What sort of mood are you in to greet the first month of the New Year? Short days, icy weather, struggling to keep warm and doom and gloom in the media contribute to our worries and depression. It's not a good feeling to be down and tired as the year begins, and it doesn't seem long since we moved out of 2021 into 2022.

Advent and Christmas are past, but the message that Jesus is coming and is here is given to encourage, to boost our thoughts, minds and actions in the dark days of winter and beyond. So change despair into optimism – greet the future not with nostalgia or dread but with confidence of what we can still discover in Jesus Christ and his way of walking with us in thought, word and deed.

Each new day is an opportunity to learn more about walking the Way – about serving the hungry and homeless, about talking to the lonely and those who find life difficult. The end is not yet – there is still time for us to be the eyes, hands and feet used by God to spread His love in the area.

The beatitudes (Matt. 5, 3-12) challenge our thinking and values. God reaches out to each of us and in that is our hope for the New Year and beyond. Haydn Higton

## In The Bleak Midwinter

This much-loved Christmas Carol was originally a poem. It was written in 1872 by Christina Rossetti and is based on the nativity story.

We know the familiar words; Earth stood as iron, Water like a stone

Snow had fallen, snow on snow, In the Bleak Midwinter long ago.

Recently for us, the word Bleak was very relevant meaning miserable and cold as we experienced temperatures in minus figures, day after day.

The cold spell came as we are all too aware of the hike in energy bills and people had to deal with frozen pipes and destruction in their homes.

We thought about those who are homeless or are sleeping rough and Christmas will indeed be "bleak" for them.

The garden birds that visit our gardens regularly struggled to find food and any extra crumb that was put out was quickly picked up. The Robin red breast added colour in the white blanket that covered the ground.

The cold spell has now hopefully past and the warmth of the Christmas story once again warms our hearts as we remember "A stable place sufficed" and the baby in the manger.

Fiona Glass.

## ANOTHER YEAR AHEAD

A New Year just beginning  
Who knows what lies ahead?  
Will there be love and laughter  
Along the path we tread?

Will there be friends we've yet to meet?  
And happiness to find?  
Forgetting last year's problems  
We'll leave them all behind

Will there be a new excitement?  
A time when dreams come true  
Step out toward tomorrow now,  
It waits for me and you

A Happy New Year to all "contact" readers from the  
Church Gardener

# Moving STORIES

Commitment  
for **Life**

Life-giving Faith | Defiant Hope | Generous Love

Committed to supporting our global partners **BANGLADESH**

## Christmas as Resistance

**Luke 1:46-55, 2:10-12**

Julie Sim from the Council for World Mission reminds us that Mary's Prayer is a revolutionary song – not just a spiritual hymn but a social and political revolution in rousing verse. 'It is,' she asserts, 'a declaration of liberation and emancipation, a construction of a new social order for all people to live with hope.'

'The language of the angel is political: this child is the anti-Caesar; this babe will radically oppose the designs of Empire. In this anti-empire reading of the story, we see how 'the family' experiences the political, social, and spiritual consequences of choosing to resist rather than succumb to empire.

'Empires tend to follow one another through history. They all manifest themselves in domination, arrogance, self-congratulation, and wealth distribution to the top. If there are differences currently from previous times, it is only that today's empires are significantly more efficient in their devastation of cultures, species, and the planet itself in pursuit of profit.

'This New Year, may we develop a renewed discernment of the subversiveness of Christmas. May we pledge allegiance not to power, violence, and economic exploitation, but to the Jesus of life-flourishing communities.'

## Prayer

O God, we come to you this Christmas with grateful hearts. We praise you for the gift of Jesus. We are deeply thankful that Jesus changes our stories of hardship into testimonies of hope. We rejoice in all the great things you have done. Guide us, O God, so we can bear witness to your love, grace, and justice. Amen.

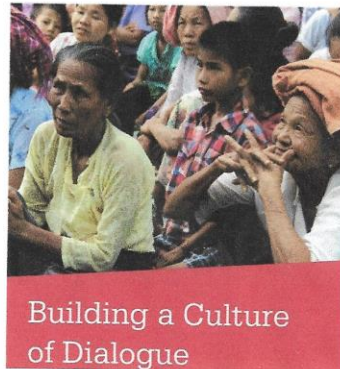


Photo: © Christian Aid

Myanmar is mired in violence, protracted conflict, and economic hardship. These are too often exacerbated by fear, hatred, and distrust. This is why there are so many refugees in Bangladesh.

In partnership with Christian Aid, Commitment for life is determined to make a difference. Our theology and shared experience in peace building work make us believe in the value and effectiveness of dialogue as a tool to build trust and strong relationships. We (Kevin, Lindsey, and Philip) met online recently with the Revd Ram Thanga, General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Myanmar (PCM). His son is a leader in the struggle for democracy in the face of the military coup. Ram Thanga believes in dialogue but worries for his son. He knows that "God is able to fulfil our dreams if we have a desire to serve him with sincerity, humbleness and together constant prayer." Let's pray for the PCM.

A genuine attempt to engage in open and honest dialogue often provides opportunities to share feelings, understand different points of view, and to reflect on situations and facts using the worldview of our dialogue partners.

Our partner Christian Aid has developed – through a project called 'Sagar Wine' (culture of dialogue) in Rakhine State, Myanmar – a training manual for dialogue. In three creative and interactive modules, with many visuals, participants can explore personal development, understand the dynamics of conflict, and practise dialogue facilitation skills. Could this be useful in your local, UK context? Give it a try. The manual 'Building a Culture of Dialogue' is available in English.

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-07/myanmar-culture-of-dialogue-manual-guide-english-sep2019.pdf>