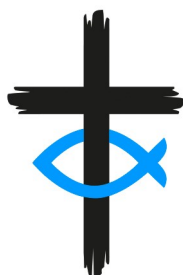


# CONTACT

October 2023



**The monthly magazine of  
Annan United Reformed Church**



*The*  
**United  
Reformed  
Church**

**OCTOBER 2023 WORSHIP AT ANNAN URC**  
**SUNDAY MORNING SERVICES 11:00 AM**

**Sunday 1<sup>st</sup>:**                      **Harvest Service**                      **Nan Maxwell**

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

**Sunday 8<sup>th</sup>:**                      **Communion Service**                      **Revd Nick Mark**

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

**Sunday 15<sup>th</sup>:**                      **Fellowship Time**                      **Revd Haydn Higon**

Welcomer:                      Marion Kerr  
Bible Reading:                      Helen McNairn  
Intercessions:                      Doug Maxwell

**Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup>:**                      **Morning Service**                      **David Townsend**

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

**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup>:**                      **Morning Service**                      **TBA**

Welcomer:                      Robin Richardson  
Bible Reading:                      Marion Kerr  
Intercessions:                      Haydn Higon

**CHURCH CONTACT INFORMATION**

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*Items for November magazine should reach Ruth by Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> October, please*

## INTERIM MODERATOR'S OCTOBER 2023 LETTER

Dear Friends,

It is a special privilege to be invited to contribute to this special edition of *Contact*. Special because this edition comes out early to coincide with *Open Church Sunday* on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2023. This started off as a simple revival of an old favourite entitled *Back to Church Sunday* but the organising committee when we reflected on it realised that here was an opportunity to think about what Church is about in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Church is about far more than the idea of trying to bolster up the Sunday Morning service and revert to the time when thousands of people attended Sunday Services. Now, society has moved on to a 24 hour, 7 day a week society where Church not only has to reflect that many people cannot attend church on Sunday even if they want to, but also to reflect on what we actually mean by those often used words *the Church family*. I can remember the days when you had communion cards which if you didn't attend you lost your membership. Many people for example have to work every Sunday to support the idea that every facility should be available 7days a week. It means that Church needs to be able to cater for them on the day they are given for rest or recreation.

When we looked as an organising Committee at what goes on in Annan URC over a typical week, we realised that an awful lot of people come through our doors for a whole raft of reasons and purposes. Many people see The Church as outdated and useless to them but it has not, contrary to popular opinion, totally lost touch with reality. We realise the old concept of the Sunday School for young people cannot be revived because families come together sometimes only on a Sunday. Therefore Church encourages activities for young people on weekdays after school and tries to support those activities with a much subsidised heating and lighting and venue to help young people develop into rounded people with organisations like Brownies, Girls Brigade, Girl Guides, Spectrum and the like. It isn't just young people we look to serve but also those in what is often euphemistically called their twilight years who find contemporaries and friends have passed on, or the ability to visit much is hard because of ill health, and so community activities in Church like Knit and Natter or our regular Thursday lunches provide a welcome opportunity to socialise and get the opportunity to meet other people in a warm and comfortable environment.

What about the missing generations between young and old? They often don't see a place for them in a local church yet there is huge scope for them to volunteer in the many activities that the church promotes or is involved in. Politicians of all types realise how much of the vast volunteer force that keep our country functioning come from a Church background. Increasingly because of outside factors like the war in Ukraine, climate change and economic conditions there is an ever greater demand for volunteers. For me, volunteering is not a chore but a joy because, especially after the Covid restrictions, people have realised how important human interconnection is. Our mental health services cannot deal with all the demands upon them and so often people can benefit from the simple care and fellowship a church offers.

Church is often seen by some as a bunch of "do-gooders". What Church is really about is trying to create a society where everyone is given a fair opportunity. Our church services, if you choose to attend, are about encouraging us all to share our God given talents with others to make a better world. Some of us may say "I have no talent" but often it takes many years to find the talent we have been given or equally to find the opportunity to use that talent.

It may well be that you cannot attend Open Church Sunday, but why not come along to another of our services or an event that appeals to you, to experience the kind of welcome we offer.

With every blessing, Nick Mark

## **ABOUT CONTACT MAGAZINE**

My thanks to various folk who listened to my ramblings about the photo on the front of the previous issue of the magazine, and the encouragement of your suggestions. People were in favour of making it more obvious that THE DOOR IS OPEN and I think we have solved that by including folk in the doorway. Special thanks to the Elders who agreed to being photographed at their recent meeting.

Several of us thought the photo would look better in colour, showing off the warmth of the Annan sandstone, which led me to examine why it has been in greyscale! The church printer/copier produces a black and white image, and when most copies were distributed in printed form this was the way to go. However, there is no constraint on emailed copies, and these are now in the majority, so we propose to send these in colour.

I hope that this will not displease people who need to have their magazine in printed form. It may be that some will wish to change to receiving a digital copy (pdf format). If this is your wish, please email me: [ruthmitchell821@btinternet.com](mailto:ruthmitchell821@btinternet.com)

An apology: I unfortunately missed three names from the list of members of the Social and Fundraising Committee last month. My apologies to Elaine Higton, Judith Stannard and Lesley McLean. As I write this, we have just enjoyed the first church lunch of 2023/24 – a fresh and tasty Harvest Salad. Thank you for all the planning and preparation – and thanks to the washer-uppers!

*Ruth Mitchell, editor*

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## **OPPORTUNITIES**

Our church building is large and close to the town centre, and there is a strong sense of community in Annan. The people are friendly, welcoming and down to earth, and the building we have can be used to meet the needs of the community that we try to serve.

We also have links with the local primary school, and we want people to feel some connection to our church even if they don't walk through the doors every Sunday. It may be with one of the groups meeting weekly in the church, or support with funerals, or enjoying the monthly Soup and Sweet lunches. It may be members of the congregation out in the community as we get out from behind these four walls and take the love of Jesus to make it more widely known in our town.

What are your views on how we can improve our outreach?

*Haydn Higton*

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## **THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH**

"Motivated by our hope in Christ, let us continue to play our part in God's mission to the world as agents of reconciliation in a broken and fragmented world."

*(Words of the vice-president, World Council of Churches)*

## **MEET THE ORDINAND**

As a very mature student with Scottish College, it's my pleasure to be with you at Annan URC on placement for the next wee while, probably till the end of January.

I live with my dogs, Billy-boy (Bilbo), a rather bouncy terrier cross, and Wenie (Arwen), a miniature dachshund, in a converted church in rural Dumfriesshire. It was a former Free Church of Scotland and I moved here 7½ years ago.

I was originally a member of St Columba's URC in Oxford, where I was an elder and established the LGBT+ ministry, which I led for about 11 years until my move to Scotland. Whilst at St Columba's I began studies with the URC's Training for Learning and Serving (TLS) before transferring to The Southern Theological and Educational Training Scheme (STETS), which was primarily an Anglican training programme for Ordinands based in Salisbury, where I completed a Foundation Degree and then a BA Hons Degree in Theology for Ministry and Mission as a lay student.

My placement whilst with STETS was with Augustine United Church (AUC) in Edinburgh, which has a very similar ministry to LGBT+ folk as the one we had established at St Columba's in Oxford. We had already forged a link between the two ministries and it was a privilege to get to know the AUC church community.

After moving to Scotland in early 2016, I joined a Church of Scotland congregation in the Northwest of Dumfries. I was inducted as an elder to the Kirk Session and, after the then Minister left, became increasingly involved with the ongoing life of the church community. Then came the pandemic.

The Dumfries church community didn't pursue any online presence and I started attending online services with AUC. In many ways, it really felt like coming home and, after a while, I spoke with the Minister about Associate Membership. Her response was, 'Why don't you consider full membership?' I really hadn't thought it possible to be a member of two churches, but it seemed right and there were possibilities of ministry within AUC and the URC that simply didn't exist within the Church of Scotland. It was a coming together of minds and hearts and so, together with the community that is AUC, we pushed doors and they opened. I guess the rest is history.

I love my life here living in a converted church, which I find a rather delightful irony. I would describe myself as a contemplative, and I walk with my dogs virtually every morning, come rain or shine, to a bench in a quiet country lane about a mile from where I stay where I sit and take time just to be. It has become my spiritual practice.

My other delight is reading, and my home affords me space for my books. At the moment, I am studying for a Post Graduate Diploma with the Scottish Episcopal Institute and virtually all of my reading is in theology and spirituality. But I also enjoy reading novels when I get the chance.

I'm looking forward to being a part of the Annan Church Community in the coming months and engaging in the life of the Church, and in getting to know you, its members. It's my prayer that this time will be richly rewarding for us all.

Every blessing,

David Townsend



## REPORT ON THE SEPTEMBER 2023 SCOTTISH SYNOD

As your Church meeting elected Synod Representatives, Doug and I duly attended Augustine United Church Edinburgh yesterday for the shorter of the two Synods held every year. Augustine Church is not far from Edinburgh Castle and caters for a much more cosmopolitan congregation than we do in Annan but it had all the facets of a URC Church with the typical sort of warm welcome one comes to expect. It is a very old building that has been tastefully modernised and is very close to George IV Bridge. It is a very well used church and our Student Minister David comes to us from that church.

This Synod was the last Synod where we will see Rev Paul Whittle as our Moderator because he will be retiring to Norfolk later this year and we look forward to Rev Lindsey Sanderson coming into post as his successor next year to lead the Synod forward at a time of huge change, not just in the Scottish Synod but in all traditional Churches as we try to serve a very volatile world. Paul welcomed her as an able successor.

Moderator Paul naturally talked in his opening address about his many years of loyal service to the URC, remembering especially how Scotland made him so to speak. For he is the son of a Scottish Baptist minister and on being ordained started his ministry in the Congregational Church of Scotland. Presentations were made to him later in the day in recognition of the work he has done in trying to bring the National Synod of Scotland into line with the ever changing requirements of Scottish legislation.

The Moderator reflected on Acts 2 verses 42-47 and offered thoughts on the “Walking the Way” approach to Mission using a Methodist designed series of books known as “Holy Habits”. He offered us a simplified version of the theme of journeying, based on an interesting book by Michael Frost entitled *Surprise the World*. If one was to sum it up in one sentence it was about Mission concerned with the reign of the triune God. At its core are 5 behaviours a Christian could follow:

- Bless.* Aim to bless 3 people per week: one in church, one outside your church life and a third from either in or outside church, with an affirmation, a kindness or a small gift.
- Eat.* Eat with others to develop a greater sense of hospitality, and especially eat with at least 3 people during the course of a week. This reflects the symbol of the Table for church gathering.
- Listen.* Listen for the voice of God in prayer, which is no easy task in our action packed lifestyles, but an essential aspect.
- Learning.* Be immersed in the Gospels and try to make space for Bible study.
- Sent.* Be a missionary in your own neighbourhood. A task all churches wrestle with, but there are ways of being a Christian in the world.

In the list of those who have passed on to Higher Service made by the Synod Clerk, particular reference was made to Lesley Richmond who made a real contribution, both here at Annan and also at Shawlands URC.

The Finance report was full of both joy and warning. We have just had another year of profit due to the sale of redundant buildings. The warning was that this won't continue, with likely expenditure on Manses. The Energy fund grants of £5000 have been slow to be claimed but your Elders are hard at work getting quotes so that we can take advantage of this opportunity.

Continued/...



.../Synod report continued

Governance: Synod approved new Articles of Association for the Council Of Nominees and recognised the key part Synod plays in approving annual accounts so that we can comply with Scottish Legislation relating to how we operate as a denomination in Scotland.

Property remains an ongoing concern. The requirement of Church trustees to compulsorily register the church at the Land Registry is still being negotiated to keep expense and complexity to the minimum. The national Church Scheme relating to compliance with OSCR is being revived and Synod will help in guidance on how to respond to questionnaires.

Pastoral Matters: Synod approved Coatbridge and Wishaw becoming a joint congregation. Also two ministers who have previously not served any Church but only Synod will now reduce Synod roles and take up ministry in Pastorates namely John Bremner and Sarah Moore. This should be a welcome help.

Jess Poole set out various ideas for Advent which could be used for both Children and All Age services.

The highlight of our afternoon session was an address by Karen Campbell, a CRCW, who is now part of our national Global and Intercultural Ministries team, with a specialisation in Racial Justice, Anti-racism and the legacy of Slavery. She made us realise how much the Church needs to be a part of the healing and reconciliation process.

There was a lot more but these are selected highlights.

*NM Sunday, 17 September 2023*

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### **A QUOTE FROM ONE OF MY FAVOURITE AUTHORS**

Our true challenge is to return to the centre, to the heart, and to find there the gentle voice that speaks to us and affirms us in a way no human voice ever could. The basis of all ministry is the experience of God's unlimited and unlimiting acceptance of us as beloved children, an acceptance so full, so total and all-embracing, that it sets us free from our compulsion to be seen, praised, and admired and frees us for Christ, who leads us on the road of service.

This experience of God's acceptance frees us from our needy self and thus creates new space where we can pay selfless attention to others. This new freedom in Christ allows us to move in the world uninhibited by our compulsions and to act creatively even when we are laughed at and rejected, even when our words and actions lead us to death.

Henri J. M. Nouwen *The Selfless Way of Christ*, (Orbis Books. 2007)

I think this is a message that needs to be heard. Far too many of us church people, and indeed people from other faiths, are stuck in our heads. When our scriptures talk about the 'mind', they're not talking about our brain; they're talking about the 'centre', the 'heart' that Henri Nouwen is referring to here. I think this is the only place in which The Way of Jesus makes any sense: 'Let the same \*mind\* be in you that was in Christ Jesus.' (Phil 2:5)

*David Townsend*

## **ALL IS SAFELY GATHERED IN**

The skies resound with ordered flocks  
En route to winter homes,  
While in the brown and empty fields  
A scarecrow stands alone.  
The crops are safely gathered in  
And we can now rejoice.  
It's time to sing familiar hymns –  
In thanks we raise our voice,  
For all the work the farmers do,  
Their faithful toil and care,  
With factories and delivery teams  
Who also do their share,  
So markets, bakeries and shops -  
Far more than we could name  
Can keep us all supplied with food  
Come sunshine or come rain.

*Church Gardener*

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## **SHARE GOD'S LOVE ...**

... with a Shoebox Gift! Operation Christmas Child shoebox gifts go to some of the hardest to reach locations in the world. From refugee camps in the Middle East and churches in war-torn Ukraine to remote villages in Africa and central Asia, shoeboxes offer hope and joy wherever they go.

Each shoebox you lovingly pack with treasures reminds a child that they are known and loved and gives opportunity for them to learn about God's love. Our shoeboxes should be brought to church by the end of October so that they can be taken to the Area Collection Point.

*The following items should **not** be included in your shoebox:*

*All types of food and sweets; toothpaste, baby powder, medications, nail polish and lip gloss; aerosol cans, glass containers, breakable items and aerosol cans; liquid paints and glues, matches and fire starters; seeds, rocks, shells etc gathered from nature; war related items (such as toy soldiers, guns and knives, military vehicles, or wearable camouflage); used clothing and toys.*



## A VISIT TO BEAMISH MUSEUM

During the Summer Holidays, another highlight was spending two days visiting the amazing Beamish Museum at Stanley, County Durham. Beamish is an open air museum and a living museum; it preserves examples of every day life of time gone by. It was founded in 1970.

We began our visit in the 1820s at Pockerley Old Hall - how very different life was then - and travelled through time throughout the two day visit, to end in the 1950s. There are so many fascinating things to take in.

The Pit Village showed what life was like in a mining community in the years leading up to the First World War. Chapel was the focus of the community and also the school was another place of importance. The school leaving age was 12, and attendance was compulsory. Miners worked in very difficult, dangerous conditions.

A visit to Ravensworth Terrace show-cased life for middle class and professional families in the early 1900s.( I think I wouldn't want to go to the dentist!).

The Cooperative showed how you could buy food, clothes and hardware goods all throughout one shop. Other popular shops included the Jubilee Sweet Shop with lots of delicious treats to tempt you.

Speed through time to the 1950s and we had a fascinating insight into life in the post war period. Social housing, the early years of the NHS and huge changes to peoples' life-styles were taking place. The welfare hall had so much happening in it and was obviously a great meeting place for the community.

It was a great two days looking back in time with trams and old buses going by all the time transporting visitors around all the places of interest.

We stayed nearby at Beamish Hall Hotel which is linked to Beamish Museum as it was where the first exhibition "Museum in the making" was held. It is also linked to the Percy family who live in Alnwick Castle: centuries ago they were owners of this magnificent place.

*Fiona Glass*



## **OCTOBER 2023 AND FORWARD DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

Sun 1 <sup>st</sup>	Harvest Service 11:00am
Mon 2 <sup>nd</sup>	7th Annan Brownies & Guides 6:00-9:00pm (each Monday in term time)
Tue 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Knit & Natter 10:00am-12noon (each Tuesday)
Tue 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Rainbow Tribe from 5:30pm and Spectrum from 7:30pm (each Tuesday in term time)
Thu 4 <sup>th</sup>	Girls' Brigade 6:00pm (each Thursday in term time)
Sun 8 <sup>th</sup>	Communion Service
Fri 13 <sup>th</sup>	Hecklegirth School end of term harvest service at the Church at 9:30am
Sun 15 <sup>th</sup>	Fellowship Time
Mon 16 <sup>th</sup> to Fri 27 <sup>th</sup>	Schools' Autumn Holiday
Sun 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Morning Service
Sun 29 <sup>th</sup>	Morning Service
Sun 29 <sup>th</sup>	Final date to bring remaining Christmas shoeboxes to church
Mon 30 <sup>th</sup>	Schools return
NOVEMBER	
Thu 9 <sup>th</sup>	Soup & Sweet Lunch 11:30am -1:30pm in hall
Sun 12 <sup>th</sup>	Remembrance Service 11:00am
DECEMBER	
Sun 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Church Meeting after service
Thu 14 <sup>th</sup>	Soup & Sweet Lunch 11:30am -1:30pm in hall
Sun 24 <sup>th</sup>	Carol Service 11:00am followed by mince pies & mulled wine
Mon 25 <sup>th</sup> to 8 <sup>th</sup> Jan	Schools' Christmas Holiday

### **STOP PRESS**

Congratulations to the winning team (named "Older but not Wiser") from Annan URC at the recent Christian Aid Quiz Night. It was a well attended and fun event, ably organised by the Annan Christian Aid Committee, and raised £318.19 for Christian Aid. Thank you all.