

# Annan United Reformed Church

[www.annan.urc.org.uk](http://www.annan.urc.org.uk)



## November 2016 Newsletter



## NOVEMBER WORSHIP AT ANNAN URC

### **Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> November:**                      **Church Meeting**

Bible Reading:                      Luke 20:27-38                      Jim Murray

Service Theme:                      *God of the living*

### **Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> November:**                      **Remembrance Sunday**

**Note:** *Town Service as normal; short service (if agreed at Church Meeting) in church 10:45am, including 2 minutes silence 11:00am; service continues when people return from town service*

**Prayer Leaders:**                      Jim Murray & Haydn Higton

Bible Reading:                      Luke 2:5-19                      Margaret Jones

Service Theme:                      *Remembrance*

### **Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> November:**                      **Alan's last service at Annan** **Communion and Welcoming of new members**

Bible Readings:                      John 3:1-9                      Helen McNairn

John 3:10-21                      Fiona Glass

Service Theme:

### **Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> November:**

**Prayer Leaders:** Helen McNairn & Lyn Higton

Bible Readings:                      Mamie Lamont  
Haydn Higton

Service Theme:

## MINISTER'S MESSAGE

This will be my last message as minister in Annan. On 15<sup>th</sup> November Trish and I move out of the manse and head off for Dunfermline. My last service at Annan will be Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> November with my induction to Fife and Tayside on 26<sup>th</sup> November.

As many do I look back over the last 5 years, the good points, the not so good, even the sad times when I have led funerals. I have really enjoyed the time I have spent in Annan, the freedom I have had in my first pastorate (even the freedom to make mistakes), the opportunities within the Church for development and the opportunities I have had in the community. As I look back I give thanks to God for leading me to Annan and pray that my next pastorate will be as fulfilling as Annan has been.

Over the years there are too many things that have happened to list them all here, but perhaps the three which leave me feeling so blessed to have served this congregation are:

- The way people embraced the refurbishment and aftermath (that is not saying everyone agreed with it). From the start of the process back when Connie was minister through until Church Meeting agreed to go ahead and refurbish this building making it suitable for the current (and hopefully) future generations. This was as brave a decision for our day as it must have been for generations past who agreed to build this building.
- The number of new people involved in the life of the Church and taking on roles they would never have imagined 2 years ago, never mind 5 years ago. I think our prayer life has been enhanced with the number of prayer leaders we have and how blessed a Church of our size is to have so many who are able to lead all or parts of worship. God works through us all in the most unexpected ways.
- The way young people are so welcome and feel welcomed here. Be it on a Sunday, Rainbow Tribe and Spectrum or Girls' Brigade we have for so long before my time here and during the last 5 years saw so many encounter God – long may it continue.

So as I leave – with some sadness and a lot of excitement – I can honestly say thank you to each person involved with our Church for helping and encouraging me as my ministry developed. Annan and the people I have known in my time here will be in my prayers for a long time.

God Bless

*Alan*

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Please pray for Alan and Trish in the following weeks as they leave Annan, moving home and then settling into new routines and new churches in Fife and Tayside.

Pray also for our Elders and the Moderator as they prayerfully seek ways forward for our church here in Annan. Ask God to show each one of us in this congregation what he would have us do.

Editor

## **PAST CASE REVIEW**

### **Why a past case review?**

A number of organisations in the UK have faced allegations in recent years that they have not dealt well in the past with concerns about the behaviour of employees or others associated with the organisation.

The United Reformed Church is not exempt from this, so in order to try to ensure that as a Church we take seriously any concerns which may previously have been mishandled the Past Case Review has been set up. The first phase of this looked at Ministers' files, to see if there were issues that needed to be re-examined: where these were found (and they were very few) they have been investigated.

### **What is happening next?**

The second phase of the Past Case Review is starting on October 4<sup>th</sup> 2016. The general public will be advised through the media that there is a process for concerns to be raised relating to the behaviour or conduct of anyone associated with the URC since its formation in 1972.

If there has been anything which you feel has affected you over the years in relation to this you should, in the first instance, take your concerns to our Vulnerable People Protection Person – Paula Mitchell. This review will conclude in spring 2017.

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## **OUR CHANGING CHURCH**

As a follow-up to my remarks in the service on 16<sup>th</sup> October, read Jesus' words in Matthew 5:13-16:

"You're here to be salt seasoning that brings out the God-flavours of this earth. You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colours in the world. I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand – shine! – be generous with your lives.

"By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in Heaven."

Haydn Higton

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## **JARS WANTED**

Lyn is making her annual appeal for empty jars to fill with Marmalade. If you can help, please bring jars to church any Sunday morning, or we can collect.

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## **FAIRER WORLD FAIR**

Dumfries Fairtrade Group are holding their annual Fairer World Fair on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> November between 10am and 2pm in St Georges Church hall, George Street Dumfries.

Fairly traded gifts, crafts and foods ~ inspiration and information ~ Fair Trade Café

Admission free. Please support this event. [www.dumfriesfairtrade.org.uk](http://www.dumfriesfairtrade.org.uk)

## THANK YOU

You may remember that John Ellis, who has just retired as Treasurer of The United Reformed Church, came to Annan when he was one of the Moderators of General Assembly. In the stewardship leaflet which was referred to in last month's newsletter John also emphasises the partnership and community aspects of discipleship. He says:

"The society around us encourages individualistic consumerism. We take what money we have to the supermarket and come out with what we can afford. Whether the next person at the checkout can afford to feed their family is not our concern. From the beginning, the URC has set its face against that approach to the use of our resources.

"In contrast, a local congregation does not give to the Ministry and Mission Fund in order to buy as much ministry for them as they can afford. We give to contribute to our partnership with all other Christians in the Church. As we look at the opportunities for the whole church we deploy ministers where we hope their work can make the most difference to our mission. Because of our partnership principle, we do not have to restrict where we deploy ministers to places that are rich.

"Giving generously now makes future work possible. The part of the M & M Fund that does not fund current stipends is invested in the training of the next generation of ministers, so that they in turn can equip the whole church in future decades for the work of ministry. "So thank you for your commitment to the M & M Fund, reflecting the principles of partnership that bind together the disciples of Jesus."

PS - See leaflet on the notice board describing how the money is spent.

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## CHURCH LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME REVISED

The URC's Church Leadership Programme has been refreshed.

A robust leadership programme, taking spirituality as seriously as skills, the programme is offered for local lay leaders and Christians in leadership of secular organisations as well as to URC ministers.

The Church Leadership Programme is planned and delivered by a team of URC trainers and hosted by the Windermere Centre. It consists of two residential sessions six months apart, with supported self-directed development in the intervening months.

With a particular emphasis over the next three years of encouraging lay leaders to participate, the URC's education and learning committee has undertaken to work with Synods to make it financially possible for lay people to take part alongside ordained and commissioned ministers.

All expressions of interest should be directed to the Revd Ann Jack, convener of the planning team for the programme. Ann would be grateful to receive initial expressions of interest for residential dates 24 April 2017.

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What have previous participants said?

- 'A regaining of confidence and a new feeling of empowerment, real excitement at much of what I've seen and heard.'
- 'This is the best, most challenging, most thought-provoking and most inspirational course I have had the pleasure of attending.'

From [urc-news.org.uk](http://urc-news.org.uk)

NB *If anyone wishes to volunteer, all costs will be met by the church* – Haydn

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## **CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL 2016**

We are looking for volunteers to help in various ways during the three-day festival planned for Thursday 8th, Friday 9th and Saturday 10th December this year. It is intended to offer tea/coffee throughout the days, with light lunch refreshments in the middle session. Available in Church there are three pink binders (one for each day), containing sheets on which volunteers are invited to sign-up for any of the timed sessions under each of four categories of tasks.

The three sessions each day are 9:30 am to 11:30 am, 11:30 am to 1:30 pm and 1:30 pm to 4:00 pm. The four task categories are Kitchen, Serving/Hall, Dishwashing and Door Duty/Stewarding.

Please consider whether you could commit to one or more sessions and categories, and put your name down accordingly. The more volunteers there are, the lighter the load for any one of us, and the better organized we can be to serve visitors to the event.

Any queries about the event, please contact Mrs Edith Woodman.

Also, help is required (men included) on the days when we are setting up. This could be helping with the decorating of the trees and other items which will be on display, clearing up or just making tea and coffee for those who are working on the exhibits. We are proposing to start on Sunday afternoon (4th December) and have to be finished on Wednesday 7th. We will be working during the day and most likely into the evening.

Edith Woodman

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## **COMMITMENT FOR LIFE – STORIES FOR CHANGE**

### **BANGLADESH**

Across the developing world, rural women play a crucial role in agriculture and farming. Bangladesh, where women exceed 50 percent of the agricultural labour force, is no exception, so it's no surprise that much of Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations' (FAO) work in the country has focused on supporting rural women farmers across a variety of sectors. This work includes aquaculture, crop and dairy farming.

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Shipra Bagchi is a shrimp farmer from a village in south western Bangladesh. When she first started shrimp farming twenty years ago, Shipra had less than a tenth of a hectare of land. She recalls how difficult it was to make ends meet in those days. “At that time, this whole area was inundated. Rice cultivation wasn’t possible.” She remembers that people used to survive by picking water lilies, and Shipra herself struggled with her new endeavour. “Earlier, I didn’t know the good practices of shrimp farming.”

Thanks to a project implemented by FAO and the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, with support from the Standards and Trade Development Facility, Shipra received training in key skills and techniques for improved and increased shrimp production: “How to enhance shrimp production, the benefit of the nursery and the use of PCR certified seeds, correct doses of lime, etc. If I hadn’t received this training, I would not have come to this stage,” she says, noting that her shrimp production has increased significantly. “It is more than double.”

Today, Shipra has around 4 hectares of land. “I bought land,” she says; and that’s not all. “After all these years I have managed to build houses, and provide education for my children.” Shipra is eager to share the skills she has learned with others. “Now other people come to me, wanting to learn shrimp farming techniques,” she says. “They seek advice from me on how to become successful. This has all become possible because I followed the instructions under the project.”

## **ZIMBABWE**

Although not officially a failed state, Zimbabwe remains a country that is once again on the verge of total collapse. With extensive curbs in place on criticism or any attempts at political opposition, restrictions are in place to ensure no attempts are made to weaken the government’s tight grip on power.

Simultaneously, the civil society space has seen renewed demonstrations of resistance and protest, with previously silenced voices, including the church, now gaining the courage and momentum to speak out. As such, a new wave of violent confrontation is anticipated over the forthcoming year. Beatings and the indiscriminate use of tear gas and water cannons have already been used over the last couple of months, and in late August this year the police introduced a total ban on demonstrations, something that represents a direct violation of Zimbabwe’s constitution.

The economic outlook in Zimbabwe is currently gloomy, with prospects for recovery and stability looking bleak. The supply and availability of cash is progressively worsening, with people having to queue outside banks overnight in order to access their meagre salaries. When they do secure some cash, they are only allowed a maximum of \$50 per day, making life and business activities extremely challenging. The government’s proposed response to this is to introduce ‘bond notes’ in November, but many Zimbabweans predict these to become a new ‘surrogate currency’, something which will further erode the diminishing confidence people have in the current government. It is anticipated that this move to introduce bonds will fan the flames of protest, and increase the likelihood of violent confrontations.

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In relation to Christian Aid's work on the ground, this cash crisis is having a direct effect on partners engaged in cash based interventions – such as cash and voucher distributions – a key tool used in humanitarian responses, with the purpose of both meeting immediate human needs and boosting the local economy. The cash shortage means that the 'food-insecure households', identified by Christian Aid as part of its emergency response to drought in Zimbabwe, are now finding it difficult to access cash in order to buy food.

## **CENTRAL AMERICA**

Christian Aid works in four countries in Central America – Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua. They work with around 30 partner organisations, from community-based groups to larger organisations operating across the region and beyond. Their partners include indigenous communities, small farmers' associations, development organisations, research institutions and faith-based organisations; they have strong links with sister ecumenical agencies and work to seek new alliances with government ministries and agencies, and the private sector.

Twenty-seven years on from the Central American Peace Accords, poverty, violence, environmental vulnerability and widespread inequality remain serious challenges for the region. This inequality is starkly shown by the high rates of malnutrition and poverty in the poorest communities, particularly in rural areas.

Together with Haiti, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador are the least developed countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Current tax policies shed some light on the problem: the average tax revenue is just 15.95%, leaving Central American governments without sufficient resources to invest in social spending. Against this backdrop, Central America has become the most violent region in Latin America and the Caribbean. 'Femicide' (the intentional killing of women because they are female) is prevalent, and young people are stigmatised. The perception that they are involved in violent gangs, means they are denied their essential rights to education and employment. Across the region, the closing of spaces within which civil society organisations and social movements can participate is worrying. This has created a very precarious situation for human rights in the region. International aid has reduced significantly in recent years because of the global financial crisis and the political decisions of major donors to withdraw support for the region.

According to a recent UN report on climate change, Central America has three main challenges: to resolve the high levels of socio-economic and environmental vulnerability of the majority of the population, to promote climate change adaptation alternatives and to move towards sustainable low-carbon economies based on renewable sources. The region's climatic vulnerability is worsening, with recurrent droughts, flooding and hurricanes – events which always hit the poor hardest.

During the week beginning 20<sup>th</sup> November, please pray for the work of Christian Aid partners in Nicaragua who are working to dismantle the damaging 'machismo' society so that women will be free from fear and become equals.

## NOVEMBER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

|                      |                                                                                                                        |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tue 1 <sup>st</sup>  | Tea and Natter Group meet in Church – 10:00am – All welcome                                                            |
|                      | <b>No Games Afternoon</b> due to kitchen refurbishment                                                                 |
|                      | Rainbow Tribe and Spectrum – 6:00pm (every Tuesday except 8 <sup>th</sup> due to kitchen refurbishment)                |
| Wed 2 <sup>nd</sup>  | Rehearsal Wedding Christina Beattie and John McCreadie – 1:30pm in Church                                              |
| Thu 3 <sup>rd</sup>  | Wedding Christina Beattie and John McCreadie – 4:00pm                                                                  |
|                      | Girls' Brigade – 6:00pm (every Thursday except 10 <sup>th</sup> due to kitchen refurbishment)                          |
| Fri 4 <sup>th</sup>  | Fridays in Faith – 7:00pm – The Community Hub, Ednam Street                                                            |
| Sun 6 <sup>th</sup>  | Church Meeting                                                                                                         |
| Mon 7 <sup>th</sup>  | Refurbishment of kitchen commences                                                                                     |
|                      | <b>No Floral Art</b> - postponed to Mon 21 <sup>st</sup> due to kitchen refurbishment.                                 |
| Tue 8 <sup>th</sup>  | Tea and Natter group meet at Hetland Garden Centre (please speak to anyone who attends this for details – all welcome) |
|                      | <b>No Games Afternoon</b> nor Rainbow Tribe (due to kitchen refurbishment)                                             |
| Wed 9 <sup>th</sup>  | The minister is attending a meeting in London                                                                          |
| Thu 10 <sup>th</sup> | <b>No Soup &amp; Sweet Lunches</b> (due to kitchen refurbishment)                                                      |
|                      | <b>No Girls' Brigade</b> (due to kitchen refurbishment)                                                                |
| Fri 11 <sup>th</sup> | The minister is leading an assembly at Hecklegirth School at 1:15pm                                                    |
| Sun 13 <sup>th</sup> | Remembrance Sunday – please see services page 2 for details                                                            |
| Tue 15 <sup>th</sup> | The minister is moving to Dunfermline                                                                                  |
| Sun 20 <sup>th</sup> | Alan's last service at Annan – 10:15am                                                                                 |
| Mon 21 <sup>st</sup> | Last date for contributions to December Newsletter (Christmas edition) to Ruth and Robert                              |
|                      | Floral Art – 7:00pm – all welcome                                                                                      |
| Sat 26 <sup>th</sup> | Alan's Induction Service to Fife & Tayside Pastorate                                                                   |

## NOVEMBER DATES FOR PRAYER TOPICS

|                                     |                                                              |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8 <sup>th</sup>                     | Presidential election in the USA                             |
| 11 <sup>th</sup>                    | Thanksgiving – Armistice Day                                 |
| 14 <sup>th</sup> – 18 <sup>th</sup> | Anti-Bullying Week – vulnerable people suffering persecution |
| 27 <sup>th</sup>                    | St Andrew's Day and beginning of Advent                      |

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## DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NOVEMBER

<b>Date</b>	<b>Old Testament</b>	<b>New Testament</b>
Tue 1 <sup>st</sup>	Ezekiel 18:21-end	Matthew 18:12-20
Wed 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Proverbs 3:27-end	Matthew 18:21-end
Thu 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Exodus 23:1-9	Matthew 19:1-15
Fri 4 <sup>th</sup>	Proverbs 3:13-18	Matthew 19:16-end
Sat 5 <sup>th</sup>	Deuteronomy 28:1-6	Matthew 20:1-16
Mon 7 <sup>th</sup>	Isaiah 40:21-end	Romans 11:25-end
Tue 8 <sup>th</sup>	Ezekiel 34:20-end	John 10:1-18
Wed 9 <sup>th</sup>	Leviticus 26:3-13	Titus 2:1-10
Thu 10 <sup>th</sup>	Hosea 6:1-6	Matthew 9:9-13
Fri 11 <sup>th</sup>	Malachi 4	John 4:5-26
Sat 12 <sup>th</sup>	Micah 6:6-8	Colossians 3:12-17
Mon 14 <sup>th</sup>	Micah 7:1-7	Matthew 10:24-39
Tue 15 <sup>th</sup>	Habakkuk 3:1-19a	1 Corinthians 4:9-16
Wed 16 <sup>th</sup>	Zechariah 8:1-13	Mark 13:3-8
Thu 17 <sup>th</sup>	Zechariah 10:6-end	1 Peter 5:1-11
Fri 18 <sup>th</sup>	Micah 4:1-5	Luke 9:28-36
Sat 19 <sup>th</sup>	Exodus 16:1-21	John 6:3-15
Mon 21 <sup>st</sup>	Jeremiah 30:1-3, 10-17	Romans 12:9-21
Tue 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Jeremiah 30:18-24	John 10:22-30
Wed 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Jeremiah 31:1-9	Matthew 15:21-31
Thu 24 <sup>th</sup>	Jeremiah 31:10-17	Matthew 16:13-end
Fri 25 <sup>th</sup>	Jeremiah 31:31-37	Hebrews 10:11-18
Sat 26 <sup>th</sup>	Isaiah 51:17-52:2	Ephesians 5:1-20
Mon 28 <sup>th</sup>	Malachi 3:1-6	Matthew 3:1-6
Tue 29 <sup>th</sup>	Zephaniah 3:14-end	1 Thessalonians 4:13-end
Wed 30 <sup>th</sup>	Isaiah 65:17-66:2	Matthew 24:1-14