

ST. ANDREWS UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Upper Hanover Street, Sheffield, S3 7RQ

MESSENGER

Price £1.25

November and December 2024



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CALENDAR

OCTOBER

Sun 27 10.45 am Worship Group

NOVEMBER

Sun 3 10.45 am Mr Ian Wileman

Sun 10 10.45 am Rev Graham Wassell -

Sun 17 10.45 am Rev Canon Adrian Alker

Sun 24 10.45 am Rev Inderjit Bhogal

followed by Caledonian Society St Andrew's lunch

Elders and Management Team met as usual in October and November

DECEMBER

Sun 1 10.45 am Rev Dr David Stec - Communion

Tues 3 10 am Community Choir

Wed 4 2 pm Elders meeting

Sun 8 10.45 am Prof Clyde Binfield

Tues 10 10 am Community Choir

Sun 15 10.45 am Carol Service

Tue 17 10 am Community Choir Open invitation

Sun 22 10.45 am Mr Chris Limb

Wed 25 10.45 am Mrs Jenny Carpenter

Sun 29 10.45 am Worship Group

JANUARY

Sun 5 10.45am Rev Dr Walter Houston

FLOWERS

We have a lovely arrangement of artificial flowers in place for Sunday services but if anyone wishes to provide fresh flowers to commemorate some special date or memorial, please do so, and then write your name on the list on the back of the vestry door.

There is also the opportunity to bring a small fresh bunch to give to the visiting preacher; again, if you do this, please sign in the relevant column on the list.

COFFEE

Sheila Cooke is keeping the rota for coffee after service on Sundays. Please tell Sheila if you would like to help.

SERVICE SHEET ROTA

Jan, May, September Judith Adam

Feb, June, Oct Sheila Cooke

March, July, Nov Margaret Fall

April, Aug, Dec Douglas Jones

Please tell the person for that month if you have any notices.



All good wishes to you all
from everyone at St Andrew's

for a lovely Christmas
wherever you are
and
a new year filled with
love and hope and peace

Once in royal David's city
stood a lowly cattle shed,
where a mother laid her baby
in a manger for a bed.
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little child.



CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE MODERATOR

Dear Friends

Across the family of churches which we call 'The Yorkshire Synod', many people will have entered our buildings and shared in events out in our communities. Amongst them there will have been regular worshippers, old friends and passing strangers. I rejoice that in this season of Advent and Christmas so many connections will have been made as we have shared this special season with each other.

I know many of you have worked hard to create these opportunities for deep engagement, and I pray that within them there has been the space to discover the God of peace and love who comes amongst us, incarnate in Christ.

Every blessing

Jamie

LOOKING BACK

The autumn has been a busy time in and around St Andrew's. Here are brief summaries of what we've been doing.

SERVICES

The **HARVEST** service on 13 October was led by Mrs Jenny Carpenter and as usual produced a wonderful collection of goods for the S6 Food Bank.



It was followed by a delicious buffet lunch, catered by Open Kitchen, and a special cake (by Arlene McMaster) for Jean Dickson and Elizabeth Draper to mark their 90th birthdays. Thanks from both of them for all your cards and good wishes.



The service led by **STEEL CITY CHORISTERS** on 20 October was a musical feast, the liturgy and music carefully chosen and rehearsed by Douglas Jones and the Choristers over several weeks. The service included a setting of the 23rd Psalm by Douglas, written when he was in his late teens in his first Choirmaster post.

SAINTS: The Worship Group service on 27 October fell so near All Saints and All Souls days that it seemed opportune to focus on Saints, and in particular our own UK patron saints. Monica Hanna appropriately spoke about St Patrick, Sheila Dunstan about St Andrew. Judith Adam on St David and Elizabeth Draper on St George.

Putting it all together and choosing suitable hymns is part of the fun of being on the Worship Group, and we always welcome more minds and ideas.

On 10 November the Rev Graham Wassell led our **REMEMBRANCE** service (as he did last year) and a new trumpeter played the Last Post since Gordon Truman is busy with family events. Rob Deakin is Musical Director of Whitwell Brass Band. He has a Masters in Trumpet Performance from Leeds College of Music, has taught and played many different kinds of music, and has led the Band to great success including first place in the Midlands Area Finals. His playing during the ceremony and in the hymns enhanced our service delightfully and we hope he will return.

The **ST ANDREW'S** service on 24 November was led by the Revd Inderjit Bhogal, who also proposed the toast at the Caledonian Society lunch which followed it. The lunch, at the Doubletree by Hilton Hotel, was open to all members of the church whether or not they belong to the Society, and several came along for a very pleasant occasion, including our organist Douglas and our three Indonesian students.

The **CAROL SERVICE** on 15 December was planned together by Douglas and the choir, and was an excellent and moving preparation for Christmas. In appreciation of the dedication, liturgical knowledge and musicianship that Douglas has given us for 25 years, he was presented with a certificate of long service and a cheque, and Sheila Cooke paid tribute to his huge contribution to our worship. See page 15.

C A P: The Sheffield branch of Church Action on Poverty held its annual Pilgrimage on 19 October, starting with a short service at St Andrew's. Ian Cooke and Jillian Creasy spoke about the many ways in which St Andrew's and the Broomhall Centre support the local community. The 40 or so pilgrims were not deterred by the rain that morning but the weather faired up delightfully to become a beautiful autumn day.

WEDDING RECEPTION: We were kindly invited to the celebration for two weddings of members of St Michael's Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The church hall was packed with people at long tables, a choir sang, and the happy couples were ushered in in a dancing procession and seated in state. The men were dressed in traditional white suits with colourful embroidery, and all the women present wore beautiful decorated skirts.

Nine St Andrew's members were able to attend; we were honoured guests and were delighted to be included. We give our very best wishes to the two couples.



Sami and Hana

THE BROOMHALL CENTRE held its AGM on 22 October and reported a very successful year. They have groups every day of the week offering advice and support, health and social activities, lunch and Food Bank, and the Homework Club (the oldest of their groups), as well as one-off events. Much of their activity chimes with our lettings and it is good to keep in touch with our near neighbour for the benefit of the local community.

OPEN KITCHEN are also to be congratulated on their 10th anniversary. They celebrated this milestone with a wonderful party on 24 October at Central URC (near their base at the City of Sanctuary on Chapel Walk). The Lord Mayor, Jayne Dunn, gave a welcoming speech and presented awards, followed by music and dancing and food, showing the many cultures that Open Kitchen draws on.

NARODOWE CZYTANIE

On Saturday 16 November we were invited to **Polish National Reading Sheffield 2024**, an event dedicated to celebrating Polish literature and culture.

This event was organised by the Polish Cultural Centre on Broomspring Lane but took place in our church, being larger. About 140 people gathered for a most impressive ceremony. (See page 10). We were pleased to have this opportunity to meet our neighbour church and to share this significant literary celebration with them.

ROUNABOUT, the local Youth Housing Charity, is our Christmas charity this year, this means that the money from our cards and Christmas Day collection will go to them. We heard a most informative and moving talk by Lucy Hurd on 22 September about the work they do to rescue and prevent young people who have no home to rely on. Roundabout held their annual fund-raising Sleep Out at Alder Bar in Kelham Island on 8 November,

We also hear about the fantastic work done by **ST WILFRID'S CENTRE** in the service on 1st September. They offer both day and residential help to people facing severe life difficulties.

SHOEBOXES

We filled 12 Christmas shoeboxes plus money donations for the charity Link for Hope, and Sheila Dunstan took them to the collection point. They were destined for Bulgaria, Moldavia, Romania, and Ukraine. Altogether, nearly 3,000 shoeboxes were collected in this region.

THE WIDER CHURCH: The Sheffield Team Ministry is about to lose one of its three ministers, as Rev Simon Copley is retiring. His final service will be on Sunday 22 December at the Michael Church. Rev Zaidie Orr is also retiring next March, so the vacancy process is now underway.



FAMILY NEWS

We have to begin with sad news again to report the death of Dr Fraser McVittie at the age of 96. A life truly well lived. His funeral took place at St Andrew's on 3 December followed by committal at Hutcliffe Wood. The service was taken by the Revd Fleur Houston, and Fraser and Anita's son Julian spoke movingly about his father's full and adventurous life. See Fleur's eulogy on pages 11 and 12.

Most of us are ticking over as usual, coping with various seasonal ailments and hoping that change of medication or treatment will improve more serious issues. It is good to see Jean Dickson, Kathleen Smyth and Ian Cooke looking better. Janet Brown visits John and Jean Price regularly, both much the same; John accepts his mobility limitations stoically and rings Jean's care home every day.

As Christmas approaches, our families dominate our lives, and we wish them all well. It is also one of the pleasures of this time of year to hear from old friends, and Wilma Love, Marjorie Green and Robert Beard all send their greetings. Some of you may remember Amy Cook, who was an MA student at The University of Sheffield in 1990-91, and lived with the Dickson's during the summer of 1991. She gets the Messenger online and has sent some news for those who may remember her. She retired last year and moved from North Carolina to South Texas, and now lives close to her mother in a retirement community. She enjoys having more time to read and also helps at the local library on care and maintenance of the books.



Another echo from the past! Can you recognise them?

POLISH NATIONAL READING DAY

in St Andrews on Saturday 16 November 2024

Every year in Poland there is a National Reading Day with a given text. The aim is to encourage the reading of one of the national classics of literature. This year the book chosen was the Juliusz Slowacki novel "Kordian". He wrote it after the November 1830 uprising against Russian rule had failed and he reflects on the causes of the rebellion which had initially filled the Polish people with such hope.

Our congregation was invited by the Polish Community in Sheffield, and our near neighbours from the Polish Catholic Church in Broomspring Lane, to an afternoon celebration. On arrival we were each given a handsome copy of the book which had been donated by a Polish bookshop.

It was quite an event with many Polish families of all ages making up to 150 people in our Church. There were introductions in Polish with an English translation. The Lord Mayor, Jayne Dunn, was welcomed and she gave an enthusiastic speech of gratitude for the work of the Polish Community. The Polish Consul from Manchester was in attendance. Two chapters of the work were read in Polish, starting with 20 adult readers followed by three Boy Scouts from a local Polish troupe and their leaders. It was impressive that the Scouts were reading beautifully in a second language.

A pianist and talented violinist from White Noise played pieces from Chopin and Wieniawski. Tea and coffee and delicious cakes were served in the interval.

Quite a lot of people were wearing Polish costumes of the era of the novel. The event was recorded by TVP Polonia and numerous photos were taken; there was considerable publicity on Facebook. Thanks were received by St Andrews from the organisers for the warm welcome they had received.

Altogether it was a vibrant and colourful event which fitted well into our church.

John Fall

DONALD FRASER MCVITTIE

From his early days, Fraser expressed a love of nature, and a spirit of adventure. He and his younger brother Ian were born in Penrith. Their parents, Herbert and Rene McVittie, lived in Brunswick Square in a substantial town house with lovely views over the Beacon. A rich smell of leather and polish wafted up from the basement. For Herbert was a cobbler like his father before him. His shoe shop in Middlegate was a well-established popular meeting place and he was highly respected in the community. But while Ian followed in his father's footsteps and in due course took over the shoe shop, Fraser was to have a career in metallurgy. From Penrith grammar school, he won a scholarship to Cambridge.

A new and adventurous phase of his life began. His first degree was followed by a PhD in metallurgy. And he fell in love with a beautiful young nurse, Anita Rosemary Hughes. The marriage took place at his college in Cambridge – the beginning of a life time of mutual devotion.

In 1956, the young couple came to live in Sheffield and over the next few years, the arrival of Julian, Susan and Alison made their family complete. Fraser's skills were in demand, first with Hadfield's Ltd. who produced manganese steels for mining equipment, and then with Streetley who headhunted him to set up and oversee blast furnaces around the world. The children grew up, showered with presents from faraway lands.

Family time was all the more precious when Fraser was at home; accustomed as a young man to trekking with scouts in the Lakeland Fells, he would take the whole family walking in the Peak district, exploring the hills, paths and expanses of moorland; and they would have picnics in pleasant places. He enjoyed spending man time with Jim, tinkering with cars; From his teen years on, this had been Fraser's main hobby – until he left home for national service in Germany, a motor bike with side car was his pride and joy. Then there was the little Austin 7. It was a family joke that the journey from Sheffield to Penrith to visit Fraser's parents took 2 days– it broke down so often. But he had a succession of finer and more sturdy vehicles since.

Fraser and Anita made their home for many years in Nether Edge before moving to the house with its colourful garden in Twentywell Lane, and finally to the bungalow. Successive houses were the scene of many a family celebration, catered for by Anita and hospitably shared with many friends.

Then there was St Andrew's. It was in every sense their family church. When Anita and Fraser came to Sheffield, Charles McCurdy was minister and it was he who baptised all three children.

Robert Cummings and Frank Pierce were prominent figures and Miss Seabourne taught in the Sunday School. Although neither Anita nor Fraser were elders, both were staunch supporters of the congregation: Anita was a great back-up for Wendy Smyllie at Network; and Fraser gave talks – without a note! They are both remembered with affection and gratitude both as friends and faithful members of this congregation.

His passion for adventure found expression in the trips organised by Margaret Fall- he and Anita took part in around 30 of these. From the Western Isles of Scotland, to Shanghai and Hangzhou in China, where Fraser is still remembered for his exploits in clambering up a steep slope in a farm to cut bamboo.

He and Anita were good companions on a bus trip; always pleasant to everyone, but content with each other's company; lovely to be with. Fraser would get people singing and jollied up; and he and Anita would join enthusiastically in all the activities. They were always interested, always on time, full of extra knowledge – you recall how on one occasion Fraser gave a spontaneous learned lecture on the coach on china clay mines in Cornwall.

He was fascinated by the huge cathedrals and their incense and took particular pleasure in Roman Catholic shrines such as Santiago de Compostela.

On Anita's death, he thought he would "put his feet up and rest awhile." He faced the prospect of his own death calmly. It was his last and greatest adventure.

In his last weeks, he showed that stoical courage which was typical of his life as a whole. One might say that it reflected also his beliefs as a follower of Christ. The apostle Paul had this to say to the Christians in Rome: Who will separate us from the love of Christ? The answer is nobody and nothing. Neither death nor suffering. We suffer because we are human; suffering is part of our human condition and some of us have more of it than others. And so we lament. And it is right and proper that we should. But in Christ, lament is turned to praise as we come to know the sure clasp of divine love. Jesus's death was very real, very human. But then as the old creed has it, "he rose again from the dead." In all these things we are not just conquerors, but more than conquerors through him who loved us. It is a word of comfort, a word of encouragement in particular for those who walk through the valley of the shadow of death. Death is always a great mystery but with the good shepherd beside us, we are blessed and we have nothing to fear. In the words of the psalmist, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

Fleur Houston and Julian (Jim) McVittie

Here are two of the Saints we spoke about on 27th October.

SAINT ANDREW

Andrew: apostle, martyr, patron saint of Greece and Scotland as well as Russia. Andrew was a fisherman who lived in Bethsaida with his brother Simon. They fished on the Sea of Galilee with their boat and net. According to John's gospel, it is Andrew who recognised Jesus' identity. He called for his brother Simon and brought him to Jesus. Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you Fishers of Men.' Immediately they left their nets and followed Jesus. Andrew is not spoken about much in the gospels apart from John 6 where he brings the lad with the five loaves and two little fishes to Jesus, from which 5,000 are fed.

He is seen in John 12 to perform an ambassador role by helping some visiting Greeks who wanted to see Jesus. He tells Jesus of their request. And Jesus' response is astonishing: 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.'

Now Gentiles and Jews have seen Jesus in word and action so the purpose of his ministry is effectively being achieved as the crucifixion approaches.

The acts of Andrew from the late second or third century are that he was an apostolic missionary. He went to Greece, to people south of the Black Sea, and to Byzantium, now Istanbul. It is because Andrew christianised the people of Scythia on the southern Baltic Sea that he becomes the patron saint of Russia, because that area belonged to the old Russia and later to the Soviet Union.

Andrew met his end at 80 years in Patras at the hands of the city's Roman proconsul. Andrew committed the grave crime of converting the proconsul's wife Maxmilla to Christianity and she refused her pagan husband his conjugal rights. Despite his age Andrew was condemned to death by crucifixion and he chose to be nailed to a diagonal cross lest people think he wanted to re-enact the death of Christ.

Andrew's body was entombed where he died in in Patras. 250 years later Emperor Constantine decided to move his bones to his new capital Constantinople. Legend has it that St Regulus was warned by an angel in a dream that Andrew's bones were to be moved and to get any bones he could. He managed to get a tooth, an arm bone, a kneecap and some fingers. He set sail for the extremities of the earth, and Scotland was near the edge of the known world. St Rule was shipwrecked with his precious cargo at a Pictish settlement called Kilrymont - later renamed St Andrews.

When the Declaration of Arbroath (1320) was sent to the Pope, St Andrew was named as the patron saint of Scotland. How did he win that status over St Ninian, St Columba (who actually was patron saint until 1068), and St Kentigern or Mungo?

There are two possible reasons: Andrew was an apostle and therefore superior to any local missionary saint; and St Andrew's cathedral which contained the relics of the apostle was to be the largest and most important ecclesiastical building in Scotland and gave the town its mediaeval status as Scotland's religious capital.

In 1879 the Archbishop of Amalfi ordered the shoulder blade be sent to the re-established Roman Catholic community in Scotland. In 1969 Gordon Gray, Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh, was in Rome to receive his cardinal's hat. Pope Paul gave him further relics of Scotland's saint which are displayed in a reliquary in St Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral in Edinburgh.

Sheila Dunstan

SAINT DAVID

It is generally accepted that David was born in Ceredigion, in the West of Wales, the grandson of the King of that region. There is less certainty about the dates of his birth – estimated at around the year 500, and of his death – estimated at around 589. Quite a lifespan for that period of history.

He became renowned as a preacher and teacher and founded many monasteries and churches in Wales and beyond. St David's Cathedral stands on the site of a monastery which he founded in Pembrokeshire.

His best-known miracle is said to have taken place while he was preaching to a large crowd at the Synod of Brefi. The spot on which he was standing rose up to form a small hill and a white dove, now his emblem, settled on his shoulder. David is often depicted with the dove.

He was declared Archbishop by popular acclaim and eventually became a Bishop.

David stipulated a strict monastic code for the monks living in the monasteries which he founded. They pulled the plough themselves without the help of animals. They drank only water and ate only bread with salt and herbs. They were allowed no personal possessions, not even a book. Evenings were spent in prayer, reading and writing. David himself led a simple, ascetic life.

Tradition holds that David died on March 1st and that the monastery was "filled with angels as Christ received his soul." That date is now marked as St. David's Day. He was officially canonized as a saint in 1123. His shrine has suffered raids and undergone reconstructions, the latest dedicated on St David's Day in 2012.

His legacy

Many churches are named after him.

One of his commands in his last sermon “do ye the little things in life” is to-day a well-known Welsh phrase.

He inspired much evangelising in Wales, Ireland, Cornwall and Brittany.

A popular poem from around 930 prophesied that in the future, the Welsh people would unite behind the standard of David to defeat the English.

His life and teachings have inspired choral works by Karl Jenkins and Arwel Hughes.

And why is the leek the symbol of David and of Wales? A broadside ballad of around 1630 claims that the leek commemorates a battle fought on St David’s Day. The Welsh pulled leeks from their gardens and attached them to their hats to distinguish themselves from the enemy. They went on to win the battle.

Judith Adam

TRIBUTE TO DOUGLAS

After a splendid Carol Service orchestrated by Douglas it seems an appropriate moment to give thanks to a gifted musician who has been our organist for the last 25 years. A lover of church music, he has enhanced our worship enormously and, despite being an Anglican with its greater formality, he has adapted very graciously to our URC/Presbyterian simpler order of service.

He not only plays the organ and the piano but also composes. He produced a memorable anthem for the church’s 150th Anniversary to the words of John Donne, which was sung again recently when the Steel City choristers came to St Andrew’s. He writes descants for the trumpeter and joined Billy on his flute. How often do we hear a familiar melody in his voluntaries that reflects something picked up during the service?

His considerable computer skills are highlighted when he produces service sheets for special services like our Carol Service this morning.

For years, Thursday night was when the choir practised the hymns and the anthem for the following Sunday, always an enjoyable experience. Practice is now sadly reduced to 20 minutes before the start of the morning services.

Douglas, your voluntaries, which show off your musical skills, have become a much loved part of the conclusion of our worship.

A man of many talents ! Douglas, we are so grateful for your commitment to St Andrew’s and its congregation. We would like you to accept this certificate and something to spend on yourself with our love and thanks.

Sheila Cooke

SNIPPETS from the BASQUE COUNTRY

The Basque country is a beautiful area in the north-east of Spain, from the Bay of Biscay south to Navarre and from Catalonia on the east to Galicia on the west, and historically it extended into what is now the south-west corner of France.

It is an autonomous region in government; you may remember that some years ago there was a fierce independence movement there (ETA). The people consider themselves Basque, not Spanish, and the culture and language are quite different. Navarre is a separate province, mostly Basque; it was not part of Spain until the 16th century.

The language looks very strange, with lots of T, X, Z, and K. All signs are in both Spanish and Basque but there is no relationship between them. Basque is unique - one of a small group of European languages that do not derive from Indo-European roots.

'The rain in Spain falls mainly on the plain.' Not true! The Basque country is very green, heavily wooded with huge forests (deciduous and conifer) and grassy slopes. It is very hilly with some quite big peaks, in the foothills of the western Pyrenees. It rains there much as it does in England.

Pamplona is on the Way of St James, the pilgrimage route from France to Santiago de Compostela in Galicia. Since the 11th century, this has contributed to the commerce and culture of the area. There is also a Spanish route coming north and the two meet at Punta la Reina, a beautiful bridge. The legend is that St James (son of Zebedee) found his way to the Iberian Peninsula and preached there; when he returned to Rome he was beheaded but his disciples brought his body back to Galicia. Each year, many thousands of pilgrims walk the 800km route, or part of it. It is allowed to ride a horse, and now to cycle, and you can have your baggage sent on ahead or take a rest break. Going by car is not allowed; I'm not sure about electric bikes!

Elizabeth Draper

