

Augustine United Church

Newsletter
December 2007



The
United
Reformed
Church

Dear friends,

WE have two important items this month. The first is a further part of Kathleen's report on Synod, concentrating on the central issue: What is the URC to do next? My own feeling is that we need to recover, actively, the meaning of the phrase often heard in my youth, of the few 'gathered together in my name'. The proposal to bring small-group study into the centre of our activity seems to me exactly right, but the '*process-preparation*' (what a phrase!—and *if* the congregation will takes part?) seems like mere delay. We do need to reconsider our view of the Bible. So, when the first year's material comes, why wait? Why not just get on with it?

The second is the first part of Isa Morey's recollections of the Augustine Youth Club sixty years ago. This may not seem a clarion call for the future, and it is not a pattern for us to copy now. But it is a reminder of the vigorous and effective life a church can have.

Now for **Christmas**. One advantage Americans have is that they needn't think about Christmas till after Thanksgiving (thankful for still being there. I don't think the Pilgrim Fathers 'did' Advent.). That was this November 22nd, so I'm already looking for material for the December Newsletter: if it's to appear on the 23rd December, by the 19th, preferably 16th, please. And it would be good to have some pictures.

A Note of Thanks

We should like to thank Church Meeting for their greetings as we cease to edit the Newsletter. We're sad to have to give this up, but we're now unable to attend Church regularly.

We succeeded Meredyth as editors with the May 2001 issue, after having set up the printing layout for some time before that. It's been an interesting few years! We enjoyed sitting with our after-service coffee and collecting "family news"; Olive Malcolm, whom we so sadly miss, was an especially good source of news about members.

One of the first items we included encouraged members to write about books they were reading – remembering how Bill Martin used to quiz people on their reading. Augustinians *do* read a lot!

For a few months in 2003 we joined with our partner Churches, Greyfriars and St Columba's - by - the - Castle, in producing a joint newsletter entitled *Collage*.

Each month we were glad to include Bungie's Vestry Letter and his Church Diary. When sometimes we were running short of material, we could always rely on Bungie to produce extra material and graphics. And thanks to everybody who contributed.

And now we pass our task on to Bill Stevenson, and hope that he will find it as interesting and rewarding as we have.

Mary and Michael Smyth

We're glad to know Mary and Michael enjoyed Newsletter; but surely all of us owe our thanks to them for all they have done.

Vision4Life

One of the most important topics at this year's Synod, was "Vision4Life", and the keynote speech by the URC General Secretary, Rev Dr David Cornick. It is about transforming the church!! It's about Spirituality and Evangelism!!

Vision4Life is the second part of the "Catch the Vision" process in the URC. The first was the reorganisation of the URC UK Office in London and the abandonment of a whole tier of administration – the Area Councils, and as a result some changes to the way Synods work. Assembly decided this was all necessary, as the URC is a much smaller church than 35 years ago, but it has all taken quite a while to achieve.

Now comes the bit we've been waiting for, though we have to wait a little longer yet to actually make a start on anything!

Over the years it has been the case that most URC congregations are pretty good at "doing things" to help within the community, witnessing by our actions, if you like. What we are less good at is expressing our faith to others. It is now realised that this is at least partially because we *don't read and discuss the Bible, and gain insight from this and from fellow Christians*, in the way we used to. (Nor do children read and learn passages or even verses the way once happened in the long distant past in day schools or Sunday schools.) The other "problem" we in the pews (or chairs!) have is our *ability to Pray*, and there needs to be a new focus on how we pray.

So, the idea is that over 4 years, *Four things will happen*. This first year, up till summer 2008, ministers and then congregations will receive material designed to help them work out *what is wrong, and if the congregation should take part in this process-preparation time*. (Perhaps you feel that the proposed action in Vision4Life is long overdue and we just need to get on with it. I personally feel that way, as do some others; but there we have it!) In the second year, the *Bible and how we discern it* will be the focus. Then, in the third year the concentration is on *how we pray*. In the fourth and final year it is *hoped that we all become much better at expressing our feelings, the stories from our experiences in life and expressing our faith to others* in a much easier way.

Kathleen Ziffo.

Free Will Offering

At the recent Church meeting our Treasurer, Tom Murray, spoke about the fact that contributions to the Free Will Offering Scheme are considerably down in the past three years. This is due in large part to the fact that we have lost so many members in that time, sadly because of deaths or because families have moved away (though we have been fortunate in gained a few new people especially following the Dalry church joining with AUC). Tom and I mentioned the possibility of folk's considering

giving a small percentage increase, in line with cost-of-living rises, if they felt their circumstances allowed.

If you are not already in the Free Will Offering scheme, we would welcome you joining. I can supply you with a set of Weekly envelopes, in which to put cash or cheques, or you can contribute by standing order, or in other ways, which Tom can arrange with you. If you are also a Tax Payer, and declare that fact to Tom or me, on signing a form which I can supply, the church is able to reclaim the tax paid on the amount given to AUC from the government.

Thank you all for the support already being given.

Kathleen Ziffo. (FWO Secretary)

Some Notes:

Kathryn Gilchrist

was welcomed a few Sundays ago as a visitor to our service. As one of the boarding pupils at Cranleigh School she used to come to church and Sunday School. The name Gilchrist resonated with the erstwhile S. S. Teacher, Meredyth. The Cranleigh girls first started coming to Augustine because the then headmistress Kathleen Kelly was a member of the church. Kathryn remembered Erik Routley as the minister, and that Margaret Routley used to teach her the violin.

Charles Somerville

Rotas for Sunday duties.

Because Mary and I will be away on Sundays 23rd and 30th December. The rotas for Sunday duties need to be ready for distribution on Sundays 9th and 16th December. So will everyone involved please let me know dates when they know they will *not* be available, by Sunday 2nd December (or by post or email to reach me by Tuesday 4th at the latest).

As a result of the decision at the Church Meeting on 11th November, that two people must be listed each Sunday for the crèche, more volunteers are

URGENTLY needed for the crèche rota, which otherwise faces a serious risk of collapse. Please consider this carefully, and let me know; anyone working with children need a "Disclosure" form., but Sheila Storrier or Doris Caldwell can provide an application form and will help you to fill it in. Volunteers for any of the other duties would also be very welcome.

John Brockington

Editor's note: The so-called "Disclosure" process takes time to surmount the bureaucratic hurdles. And it must be repeated for each new place. So if you wish to be able to pat a child on the head at Augustine, please don't delay getting and sending in the form.

Christmas Card Table

There will be a Christmas card table again this year for the exchange of cards with others in the church. This will operate on Sundays 9th and 16th December, so remember to bring your cards along in good time. Please remember that they are only for people whom you can reasonably expect to be at church on at least one of those two Sundays.

John & Mary Brockington

Jim & Christine McLennan

would like friends to know that their email address is now: _chnswaiting@hotmail.co.uk.

The ABC Youth Club (as much as I remember)

(written by Isa Moray for Bungie, and passed on by Della, to whom thanks):

In 1942, our minister, the Rev. C. T. Rae invited the young people, aged fifteen upwards, to a meeting. Some were in the forces, of course, but they were included in the invitation. We were asked our views on the possibility of starting a Youth Club, and what ideas we would have. The meeting lasted a lot longer than expected, but when the details were approved, we had to decide on a name. Everyone said, 'ABC!' (*the initials of Augustine Bristo Church, ed.*); We had not said anything to each other, but we all gave the same answer.

So there we were with a new place to go. I was not quite fifteen, but I was let in. There was a set of rules which we had to keep. Firstly, the weekly fee we had to pay at the door. Down the iron staircase, a few steps across the inside, then two long umbrella stands with a table between them, and a small space to squeeze through. There sat the formidable Isobel Bone, known to us as Boney. Try to cheat her if you can!; – however, her bark was worse than her bite. We had a few leaders who were with us for some time: Mr. Rae, Mr. Knobs, Willie and Tom Shearer, James Horsley, Isobel Bone, Ina Durrant, and Miss Nisbet who took some of us for singing. We found out later that Mr. Rae had sold his car to buy a billiard table for the club, so afterwards he cycled.

We all enjoyed our time there. To qualify for the grant we received there had to be educational activities, so we had First Aid, woodwork, photograph painting (photos were mainly black-and-white then), and all sorts of handwork. At times we went out entertaining the wounded forces; I remember young or old in the care of the Salvation Army. Some outside trips were also made, but as the war was on we could not go wherever we liked. One trip was to the Royal Observatory, and we did get down the Lady Victoria Mine. We had been asked to wear old clothes and flat shoes, but, typically, one of us did not listen and turned up wearing all her finery and fancy high-heeled shoes. The miner in charge took her off, and she was some sight when she came back, ready to go down. We had the chance to see the men coming up on bogies from where they had been working; the machine pulling them was made in Bruce Peebles', where I worked in the drawing office. As we came back to the surface, one of the passing miners said I was blacker than him (we had a bit of fun down there).

Once I was chosen to represent our club at a Twelfth Night ball in the Assembly Rooms. The guest of honour was the Queen's sister; we had to do a demonstration of 'Dances from Foreign Countries'. We had flat shoes to wear, but mine were a bit tight and nipped. We joined in the ball for the rest of the evening, and while I was watching, as we were about to be taken home, a very tall gentleman in a kilt asked me to dance. For the life of me I could not tell what the dance was, as I was shaking like a leaf. I mustn't have been too bad, as he complimented me on being so light on my feet.

After the war, when it was decided to reopen the church halls in Gilmour Street, we went to have a look and see what needed done. It really was in a state, but nothing daunting us, OK, we would see to it. As I stayed nearest, we collected brushes, shovels, mops, pails, dusters, etc., and off we went. We were a bit funny, all in old clothes, but we were a happy bunch. There was a lot to be done, so everyone was involved. There was Mr. Rae up a ladder fixing the lights, not to mention Hetty McKay and me giving the ladder a gentle shake. Henry, who was a joiner to trade, was putting in new window ropes, and in between some of us girls had a wee skip. The work did get done, though, the girls finally doing the sweeping,

mopping and dusting. I was not around for the opening, as I married on 21st February 1948, and the opening was later that year.

Mr. Rae was a good leader. He maintained that he would look after the youth, and in turn we had a part to play in looking after the elderly and the very young. We had evenings when the elderly came in, and it was at one of these I found out that my grandmother was a lovely singer, as she won a prize. When it was time for the children's parties, we were delegated to collect them and take them home again.

It may have been wartime, but I would not have missed it. All our personal life was somehow changed, as we were encouraged to go forward and speak to anyone new. As Mr. Rae said, they may be as shy as yourself. I had occasion to say that in later years to my daughter Linda, as she felt that no-one in the church spoke to her or Glynis. I was a bit of a tomboy, but, believe it or not, I was very shy with other people, especially with the one I felt were better off than me; so it was not till later that someone said that we all have different things to offer, and I should not be put off. I became a Church member at fifteen, and on the Tuesday before, I was sitting quietly in the club when Mr. Rae came over to me and said that because I was joining the Church I was not to change, as he liked me the way I was I had to explain that I was worrying about my mother who had been ill.

I came home for my nephew's christening in 1949, and went to visit the new premises, which seemed to be doing well; but I believe it close soon after. Most of my friends came to the club, and some stayed. Others, when I meet them, talk about it. One in particular remembers the time Ina Durrant tried to get us to dance like the chorus girls of that time. No, it never worked.

Isa Moray

On 28th November 1757,

250 years ago this Wednesday, William Blake, engraver, painter, poet, and total Nonconformist, was born. You can see works of his in the National Gallery on the Mound. Everyone knows of at least two of his lyrics: the one known (wrongly) as "Jerusalem"; and "The Tyger". Having spent a good many years in the company of this artist and poet, I can't forebear to say something about him.

Some say he was a political radical, and so he was—in his own way. In his young days he wrote daring things that sound anti-religious; but in truth he was denouncing only the smugness of those who dispensed rigid, unattainable moral laws.

He spent much of his life writing cryptic, lengthy poems, often difficult, but his finest poems ("London", for example) have a sudden brilliance no-one else can match. And he was one of the greatest, if most individual, religious poets in the language. The poem he did call *Jerusalem* is a long, strange, but powerful lament for the spiritual stupor into which the nation has fallen, but in the end a glorious evocation of resurrection in Christ. It was dismissed in his lifetime. He was a cussed but entertaining man, but but he is well worth the trouble. Now he has a wider audience than ever before. His verses and paintings pop up everywhere. Try them.

Bill Stevenson

Pulpit Arrangements for December

2nd Dec. Rev. William Young.

9th Dec. Rev. Alison Elliot (ex-Moderator of the Church of Scotland).

Church Meeting afterwards. (See note on 9th Dec. below).

16th Dec. Rev. Jan Adamson (Synod Development Officer)

Newsletter items, please.

23rd Dec. The Elders will lead the Service.

25th Dec. Christmas Day. Rev. Kerri Messner, MCC.

30th Dec. Mrs. Helen Mee.

Programme for November - December

November

TODAY: Sun. 25th Nov. 4.15 pm. BBC1 TV Songs of Praise from Greyfriars, etc.

Mon. 26th Nov., 2 pm. W.U. at Saughtonhall, 'Aspects of Humour'.

Tues. 27th Nov., 7.30 pm. Elders meeting at A.U.C.

Wed. 28th Nov., 7.30 pm at AUC. Joanna Smith from Selkirk URC, 'Everyday Life in a Trading Post in Malawi'.

Fri. 30th Nov. 11.45 am. St. Andrew's Day. A short service at the Covenanters' Prison in Greyfriars Churchyard..

December

Sat. 1st Dec. World AIDS Day.

2 pm in St. George's West, the ordination of Maxwell Reay (MCC).

Multicultural Celebration in London: see the Noticeboard.

Sun. 2nd Dec, 4 pm. Nativity Carols on the Mound.

Mon. 3rd Dec. 2 pm. W.U. at Saughtonhall, Mrs. Ross Mackay, 'The Royal National Lifeboat Association'.

Thurs. 6th Dec. 7.30 at Morningside United, Lecture by Alexander McCall Smith.
Tickets £2.50

Sat. 8th Dec., 7.30 pm at St. George's West, **A Silent Night**, a traditional carol service with the exile choir and orchestra. Tickets £7.50. For details, www.inexile.net.

Sun. 9th Dec. Church meeting after the service. We will discuss ideas for Bible study; the

Open Fellowship; other activities we may develop. **Any Ideas?** Please think about them, and come ready to speak of them.

Sun. 16th Dec., 6-8.30 pm. A Carol Ceilidh at Greyfriars.

Tues. 18th Dec. Newsletter items last date for this month.

Tues. 20th Dec, 12.45 pm, at St. Cuthbert's, Carol Service, in aid of Fresh Start.

Editor: www.newsletter@augustine.org.uk, 0131 225 4417.

Augustine United Reformed Church, 41 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1EL.