

# Augustine United Church

Newsletter  
February 2008



The  
United  
Reformed  
Church

Dear friends,

January has done its job of waking us up well. On the 13th we had Jan Adamson to start our search going. On the 20th we had the service led by the Rev. John R. Smith devoted to the Medical Foundation for the Victims of Torture, marking a week-long exhibition, and a Press meeting in our Sanctuary on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, our Cross hanging above the Foundation's name on their banner giving its words extra force. On the 27th Homelessness Sunday was led by our own members. We cannot be said to be asleep, as the items in this issue show....

*Before going on to cover these activities, an editorial lament: no-one has yet produced a response to Doris's letter about Prayer (reprinted on p. 3) in the last issue. Everyone has thoughts or opinions on the matter, so please ... a line or two, or a paragraph or two? Or I'll write it myself—*

## Between Ministers

We are between ministers, Bungie having left us over 3 months ago now. Church life of course goes on, indeed our church life continues to be challenging and richly rewarding. One challenge, being addressed in the first instance by the elders, is to compile our 'Pastoral Profile', a document which will assist ministers who may be interested in a new pastorate to decide whether they may be interested in the Augustine pastorate. So, many of you will know, we are having to document our church life and work.

The profile first describes the church: who we are, where we are, how we worship, who are our friends, what we do, what our building is like. We are including a lot of information on the life and work of the AUC Church Centre and on the Local Ecumenical Partnership with Greyfriars and St. Columba's. The document will be fairly long, and will include pictures of the congregation and the

church building. Through the process of compilation we are learning more about each other, what we do and what we believe. Perhaps the greatest benefit is to those who are contributing to its compilation. We will be looking for everybody's contribution, and finally members' approval at the Church Meeting on Sunday 2nd March, so draft copies will be circulated beforehand.

If you would like a copy now, please email me (robert.somerville@bbsrc.ac.uk). Jan Adamson, who in her role as interim moderator has been carefully guiding us through the process of compilation, is leading the service on Sunday 9th March, when the profile will be dedicated. After that, we will wait to see who may be interested, and then whether we are interested in them. If you have any questions about the process, please ask me or any of the other elders.

Robert Somerville

## The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture

*"Vex not a stranger, neither oppress  
him".<sup>1</sup>*

Government policy and action seem, rather, designed to "vex" the stranger. The service on January 20<sup>th</sup>, devoted to the work of the Medical Foundation, was the beginning of their Awareness Week. Their exhibition was on display for a week, and a news conference was held on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, addressed by Patrick Harvie, MSP, to publicise the Foundation's work.

Those who were at the service need no reminder of the nature of the Foundation's work. Since it was founded in 1985, more than 40,000 people have been referred to the Foundation,

<sup>1</sup> Ex. 22: 21, from Tyndale 1536, more pithy than any of his modern successors who prefer the unfortunate *alien over stranger*.

receiving in 2006, in Scotland, 78 new cases. Its purpose is not to duplicate Amnesty's work abroad, but to give care for the victims who arrive on our shores.

They need it. Refugees are met on arrival, before any enquiry into their case, with the warning, "You are liable to detention". This is no way to treat a visitor: still less one appealing for refuge. What follows is in effect indefinite imprisonment without trial (banned in Magna Carta even by King John of England's warlords), and by denial of the chance to work for their living. Compare this to the tone of the warning about trafficking given by Lothian police to women arriving in Scotland: "the police want to help".

Although the facts of torture may be quickly proved, the derogatory term "asylum-seeker", meaning "chancer," is attached to the victim, on the principle expressed by the urchin in a *Punch* cartoon of 1854: "Who's 'im?"—"A stranger!"—"Eave 'arf a brick at 'im". This is an attitude that sees the public, not as honest millions with a smattering of villains, but as an unreliable mass who must be controlled by all means and at all costs.

Where does this come from? Thackeray, in *Vanity Fair*, observes,

The world is a looking-glass, and gives back to every man the reflection of his own face.

The Home Office looks at a refugee and sees a shifty character. Is this a reflection? Of whom?

The usual thing is to call on the spectre of "Public safety"? Milton's Satan makes the same argument to justify his destruction of Paradise: "public reason ... compels me", he says, "To do what, else, I should abhor."

### **Old Spectacles**

I've lost count of the number of pairs of old glasses you've all supplied me with since I started asking you to turn out your drawers: it must be nearing 150.

That's 150 people in the Third World who can now see, thanks to you, to do the ordinary things we take for granted—go to school, look after their families, hold down a job, read the instructions on a medicine bottle.

Keep up the good work!

*Mary Brockington*

### **Open Fellowship**

At a meeting on 10th January, attended by fourteen interested people, it was agreed to resume meetings of the Open Fellowship, albeit in a somewhat different form. It was agreed to continue meeting on Thursdays, but in the winter months (October to March) in the afternoons from 2pm to 4pm, and to continue throughout the summer (April to September) in the evenings, 7.30 to 9.30pm. The meetings will normally be held in the former Christian Aid room on the ground floor at Augustine, but in the summer some may take

So spake the Fiend, and with Necessity,  
The tyrant's plea, excus'd his devilish deeds.

Plainly, there must be serious scrutiny. But even at the dullest level, courtesy to strangers is a sound rule, even though they may turn out to be impostors. Even the wicked Pharaoh saw that this is no way to make friends. If wrongly treated, "they may become our enemies". And we all know the parable about behaviour towards "the least of these brothers of mine".

This is the nation which, in 1939, accepted 10,000 refugee children. What has gone wrong with us?

*"Let the stranger that lives with you be as one of yourselves. You shall love him as yourself."*

*Bill*

### **Fairtrade Fortnight: Advance Warning!**

As a Church committed to using and promoting fairly traded goods wherever possible, we shall be participating in this year's Fairtrade Fortnight (5<sup>th</sup> February to 9<sup>th</sup> March). This is our opportunity to put pressure on local retailers to stock more Fairtrade goods, make it easier for us to buy them ourselves and—more important—to introduce them to more of the general public.

So why not start preparing for the Fortnight now, by checking your local shops and cafes to see what goods they stock or serve, bearing the Fairtrade logo? Or even start agitating now?

More information next month.

*Mary Brockington*

the form of visits or excursion, and be held elsewhere.

The first meeting of the 'new' Open Fellowship will be held at 2 pm on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2008, in the Sanctuary, when there will be an illustrated talk by Brenda Moon, with the title, 'The Sixth Earl of Hopetoun goes up the Nile.' It is hoped that a programme for the summer will be available at that meeting.

*Brenda Moon.*

### **Thanks**

Isa Morey, the heroine of the account of young people's doings at Augustine (or Augustine Bristo, as it was), some years ago, wishes to "thank everyone for my card and gifts on my birthday. It was nice to know so many friends thought of me".

### **Apology**

The editor wishes to apologise for an error (a fault in the system) of dating in Isa's stories. It was in 1949, not 1969, that Isa went to her nephew's christening.

### Abraham's Children

On January 23<sup>rd</sup> 2008, before the Medical Foundation's press conference, half a dozen people, some ordinands, some ordinary church-goers, met at Morningside United church under the hospitality of the Rev. John Smith, for a discussion of the importance of Abraham and his family in the foundation of our respective faiths., led by the Rev. George Sykes, using passages from Bruce Feiler's *Abraham*, which is based on interviews with clerics of almost all religious groups, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, conservative and radical.

The thought of "College" meetings may alarm some of us. They may be reassured. It was an informative, thoughtful, lively and enjoyable morning. The coffee and cakes were excellent. Come on the 20<sup>th</sup> Feb. To get in, go right round the back and ring the bell.

*Bill*

### Doris's Letter

For some time now, I have been wondering if my conception of "Prayer" is different from other people's. The CAIRS meeting in our church the other week pinpointed my concern, when the Muslim speaking was talking of the set prayer

times in Islam. He said that some Muslims repeat verses of the Q'ran, and I spoke to him afterwards of their concept of prayer. Of course, there is a difference in our approach to God. We see the Father/Child relationship while, I understand, Islam sees a Master/ Servant one. "Petition" comes into prayer in both religions, as does worship, and it is difficult to define the difference, but I feel that it is there.

However, there are, increasingly, times when what is offered in public worship is more comment to the hearers than communication with God. (I am not speaking necessarily of preachers in Augustine. I have this difficulty in many places.) Sometimes it is hard to know when the prayer starts or finishes. Perhaps my view is too informal. I am too ready to "courie-in" to a loving Father, who accepts me with all my faults and who will forgive my stupidity and even my stiffneckedness, but I feel that spoken prayers should be addressed either directly to God or through Christ or the Spirit, as the Trinity.

What do you think?

*Doris*

### Induction

The Rev. David Michael Warner will be inducted to the Joint Pastorates of the United Reformed Churches of Greenock East and Port Glasgow, at Greenock East URC, Bawhirley Road, Greenock, on Saturday, 16<sup>th</sup> February, at 2.00 pm.

For information, contact Patricia Dickie, Personal Assistant, URC, Synod of Scotland, Church House, 340 Cathedral Street, Glasgow G1 2BQ, by phone: 0141 332 7667, or Fax: 0141 332 8463,

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### Pulpit Arrangements for February

3rd February. Rev. Russell Fountain.

10th. Feb. Rev. Steven Manders,  
followed by **Church Meeting**.

17th Feb. Rev. William Young: **Communion**.

24th Feb. **10.30 am. United Service at Greyfriars.**

**Fair Trade Fortnight** begins.

2nd March. **Mothering Sunday**. Rev. William Young: **Communion**;  
Presentation of **Pastoral Profile**. Fair Trade stall.

### Midweek Events

Tues. 5th Feb., 5.30-7.30 at St. Columba's-by-the-Castle,  
sweet and savoury Pancakes, and soup.

7.30 Elders meeting at Augustine.

Wed. 6th Feb., All day: Edinburgh Zoo is open free to Pensioners.

Thurs. 7th Feb., 10.30-3.00 College retreat at Shawlands U.R.C.

Mon. 11th Feb., 2.00 pm, Women's Meeting at Saughtonhall, "A Visit to Tasmania".

Fri. 15th Feb.. 10.30 am. World Day of Prayer; Preparation meeting at 121 George Street, open to all interested.

Sat. 16th Feb., 2.00 pm. Induction at Greenock East (details above).

Mon. 18th Feb., 2.00 pm. Women's Meeting at Saughtonhall, "Pets in need of a Vet."

Wed. 20th Feb., 10.30-12.30 College at Morningside United: "The Children of Abraham", continued.

Fri. 22nd Feb., 10.30 am, World Day of Prayer Bible Study at 121 George Street.

Mon. 25th Feb., 2.00 pm, Women's Meeting at Saughtonhall: "Habitat for Humanity".

Fri. 29th Feb to Sun. 2nd March, Synod meets at Tullyallan.

*Material for the next Newsletter by **Sunday 24th February** please, latest Thursday 28th. Copy in any legible form is acceptable, but email helps:  
newsletter@augustine.org.uk, Tel. 225 4417.*

Augustine United Reformed Church,  
41 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1EL.  
phone: 0131 220 1677. email: auc@augustine.org.uk