

Augustine United Church

Newsletter
January 2008



The
United
Reformed
Church

Dear friends,

We are living in a time of change (the editor's inability to think up a good opening sentence without cliché, however, has not changed.). It is all around us, in particular on the floor. After a great deal of chair-moving, to the sides, to the back, in rows, in squares, like an inanimate trooping of the colours, and a good deal of hard work by a number of people, we are back to order again with a fine new, unmarked carpet, thanks to many and various helpers, and to Ian, never to be taken for granted.

And, at this season, particularly, with the splendid array of the Christmas tree, for which we have to thank Robert Somerville, bringing it from the family place near Peebles. As some will know, Christmas trees are unwieldy things, and there are quite a few hills between Peebles and George IV Bridge.

Besides which, on behalf of those who finally received them, we wish to thank all those who contributed to the splendid array of gifts at the service on December 16th.

And as we head for the New Year; there is a rustling in the coverts. I have had some response agreeing with my comment about Bible study in the December issue, first, that it is a good idea; and second, that the problem, that some people can manage to meet between 9 and 5 while others can't, is surmountable. But it's a matter for a Church Meeting, and, now it's been stirred up, we should deal with it in that other capacity.

The second issue to be awoken is in Doris's letter on Prayer, on page 2. This is not just something to be arranged, but a fundamental question, one which affects us all, in different ways, a valid matter for discussion in these pages. Why not let us have a few lines, or a paragraph or two, expressing your thoughts?

**And a Happy Christmas
and a New Year just as happy
to all friends.**

To the Editor: on Prayer

Dear Editor,

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 ore 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 "courrie-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.

[As I said on p. 1, we look forward hopefully to contributions in discussion of this subject.]

Scottish Churches House, Dunblane: Appeal Launch.

On 22nd November 2007, a meeting of *Action of Churches Together in Scotland* (ACTS) was held in Scottish Churches House, Dunblane.

On the agenda was the future of Scottish Churches House. Action of Churches Together in Scotland gives its commitment to the launch of an appeal for Scottish Churches House, with an initial target of £500,000, for the interim running and subsequent refurbishment of the House. Full details of the Appeal and its launch date have yet to be confirmed. Further information will be available as soon as possible.

Scottish Churches House is a small ecumenical retreat and conference centre, situated in a collection of properties alongside Dunblane Cathedral. Since its establishment in 1960, Scottish Churches House has played a significant part in the development of ecumenical activity in Scotland, and in the engagement of the Churches with d]wider society. It is held in great affection by many people across the denominations and country.

About ACTS

Action of Churches Together in Scotland is the national ecumenical instrument for Scotland. Its member churches are the Church of Scotland, the 'Congregational Federation, the Methodist Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Salvation Army, the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Society of Friends, the United Free Church of Scotland, and the United Reformed Church.

For further information, contact Dr. Stephen Smyth, General Secretary,
Tel. 07753 988628. Email:
stephensmyth@acts-scotland.org.

The Open Fellowship

We are hoping to resume the Open Fellowship in the New Year. There will be a preliminary meeting at my house, 4 Cobden Road, on Thursday 10th January 2008 at 7.30 pm, for a short slide show, light refreshments, and a discussion of our future programme. All are welcome, whether or not you were accustomed to attend in the past. Please put this date in your diary.

We need to discuss several points:

—Should the Open Fellowship to continue?

— If so, how often would you like to meet? Monthly, as before? September to June ? October to May? Some other option?

—What time of day would you prefer? 2pm to 4 pm? 4pm to 6 pm? 6 pm to 8 pm? 7 pm to 9 pm? 7 pm to 10 pm? Some other option?

—Should we meet at Augustine? Or in Members' houses?

—Other comments or suggestions?

Please let me know nearer the time whether you will be able to come on 10th January, and if not, please send your comments to me at my home. I look forward to hearing from you, and I hope to see you on 10th January.

With best wishes for Christmas and
the New Year,
Brenda

(Miss Brenda E. Moon, 4 Cobden
Road, Edinburgh, EH9 2BJ.)

Working in Malawi

Recently, a “Get-Together” meeting of the linked area churches was held at Augustine, when we had a really interesting and informative talk from Joanna Smith, not long returned from working in Malawi. It was really enlightening to hear first-hand about life in a really isolated, poor rural area, far removed from any cities or large towns, and therefore in a virtually forgotten area as far as any kind of development was possible.

Joanna was an experienced teacher, but her project was not to be a teacher, as such, but, as I understood it, to be a kind of enabler, or facilitator, to get the local people, to take on the problems, of almost non-existent schools, where what little equipment there had been, had been broken and neglected for years—there being no money available to have anything repaired. At least it seemed to me that this was Joanna’s rather novel, but extremely effective way making use of the small financial resources available to her.

She did this by involving the local population; adults and eventually the children as well, to effect the necessary repairs to the broken desks the wrecked classrooms, then, with the enthusiastic participation of the pupils, the decoration of the classroom walls, with what they wanted on them.

This approach was obviously most successful, as we were able to see from her excellent pictures of the many children participating in education and enjoying it, because “they” had helped to achieve it, and their ideas listened to and taken on board, instead of them just “being done good to”.

It was really inspiring to see what Joanna has been able to do, with very little finance, but lots of imagination, and a good grasp of what motivates people. She also had many interesting,

inventive artefacts to show us made with skill and imagination from odds and ends, by the local people—quite fascinating and amusing many of them were.

This was the first of what it was hoped would be an occasional “get together” of the area churches so the attendance was rather disappointing. True, we are a very large scattered area, but we hope that as people get used to the new set-up, more will be encouraged to attend. They missed a most inspiring evening.

Nancy Dyer

An Appreciation

This was written in a Christmas card addressed to the Church:

Dear Friends

I am writing to let you know how much we appreciate the use of Augustine for the Gaelic Family Worship which we've been holding at Christmas and Easter, for the past four years.... Many of the people who attend comment on how warm, welcoming and lovely the church is. Our service yesterday was attended by almost 50 people (including babies), around a third of whom do not otherwise attend church. With the help of your caretaker, we all experienced a lovely service with piano accompaniment, the use of the projector to share children's art, and a buffet lunch afterwards which enabled people in Edinburgh's Gaelic community to spend time together.

Caterina Penalosa
{Gaelic Family Worship Group}

Isa's Memories of Young People's activities at Augustine 50 years ago.
Part Two. A reminder of the delinquent teenagers of fifty years ago.

We had a whole range of activities: the Religious Fellowship; Discussions; and, for a change, Dancing, modern and country, and proper concerts. According to the season, there were fêtes and sales of work; or rambles and Youth Hostelling.

We had services at the end of our meetings on Tuesdays and Sundays after the normal evening church; we were encouraged to choose hymns for our club services, and to take part in Bible readings; then we would go for a walk in the Meadows.

Back in the club, Boney did our canteen, and Helen helped, as she liked staying in the background. She was not as outgoing as me. This we paid for—sausage rolls, cakes, or whatever was on offer. An orderly queue had to be formed, or else!

We made things for the sales of work; they were all sold; sometimes the older peoples' work was sold along with ours. I remember one discussion whether double-deck buses would ever go down the High Street, and none of us thought it possible. How wrong can you get?

Once we went to Peebles Youth Hostel. It was quite a walk from the bus to the hostel; but never mind: we soon found a much shorter route along by the river. From there we divided into two groups and set out for the Y.H. by St. Mary's Loch. Our group went over the hill, and. At one point we were taken unaware, and got caught in the mist, but with a bit of shouting managed to keep together. By the time we got down the other side I had huge blisters on my heels, and was hobbling along, when along came a very posh car, an Elderly Lady (I mean LADY)

opened the back door and, as I was obviously having trouble, offered me a lift to the hostel. In I got, and, passing the others, gave them a little wave. My friends Hetty and Ina thumbed a lift somewhere, and “Boney” was angry at them when they arrived. (At the time they thought this was unfair, as they believed I had done the same.) In the morning, we found the boys had taken the girls’ shoes and hidden them—all except mine; Ina’s were found later up a tree. It did not deter them; they went on a walk without them, and were taken for a trip on the loch by a man and a boy who were fishing. I stayed at the lochside; when the boys came looking for us they got quite a shock to see the girls in the boat.

Once we went to Loch Lomond, and stayed in the big house that was later used in *Take the High Road*. It was lovely; we had a view right over the loch. I enjoyed these times, as I had never had a holiday since I was five.

Mrs. Ferguson, whose daughter Irene, and sons, Duncan, George and, Ian were in the club, always took an interest in what we did. In one play that we did, George was the father and I the daughter. At one point he missed his cue. I waited, realised what was happening, got off my chair and said,, firmly, “DAD!”. Then he remembered!. From that time I always called his mother Granny Ferguson. Even when I got married, she wrote from “Granny Ferguson” on my gift card, and was there at my wedding to wish me well. I think I am the only one to have in my wedding photograph the Minister, Choir Master cum organist and some good friends apart from my family. I know I have lots of good times to look back on, and am glad that these helped shape the way I should go.

Family and friends mean a lot to me, and I am glad to say, “Where

would I have been without them?” I know people say that we should not always look back, but it does us no harm to know where we came from and how we are now, and be pleased that we have not done too badly.

Isa Morey.

Christmas Memories

Both my parents were born in the last decade of the nineteenth century, and remembered a very different world. My father was a Londoner (born within the sound of Bow bells, and proud of it), and he used to tell us of going one Christmas morning to visit an aunt who was housekeeper to a gentleman living in the Albany, a grand residence just off Piccadilly. It had been snowing overnight, and the snow was unmarked: no marks of horses or carriage wheels or boots. His footmarks as he crossed Piccadilly Circus were the first to spoil the untrodden snow that day.

Brenda.

[One of the editor's best Christmas memories is of 1960: a magnificent French repast at L'Hôtel des Atlantides in Gao, Mali, to tired travellers just arrived from Niamey: but most, of delivering the post on Christmas Day itself. It was fun just to be going round those quiet, empty streets that Brenda speaks of; but the greatest pleasure was the look on people's faces as they opened the door to an unexpected gift on Christmas morning! But most, in 1944, learning 'Stille Nacht', the original of 'Silent Night, from our German master, a refugee from Bavaria. To this day I've never really learnt the English words. Ed.]

Pulpit arrangements for January

Christmas and New Year

25th December, 10.30. Christmas Day service, led by Rev. Kerri Mesner.
30th Dec. Mrs. Helen Mee.

January

6th January. Rev. Russell Fountain
13th. Jan. Rev. Jan Adamson, Interim Moderator.
20th Jan. Rev. John R. Smith, Morningside United Church.
27th. **Homelessness Sunday.**

February

3rd February. Mrs. Stephanie Nicholson (and Mrs. Doris Caldwell, Communion).
10th. Feb. Steven Manders.
17th. Feb. *To be arranged.*
24th. Feb., at 10.30 am., **United Service** at Greyfriars.

Forthcoming Events

7th January. Women's Union at Saughtonhall, Bring & Buy.
9th Jan. College at Morningside United: "Abraham's Children", 10.30 am-12.30 pm.
10th Jan. Open Fellowship at Brenda's.
12th Jan. Elders meet at Tom's.
13th Jan. **Church Meeting.**
14th Jan. Women's Union at Saughtonhall: The Vine Trust.
16th Jan. College at Giffnock, "The Names of God", 10.30 am-3 pm.
17th Jan. College at Augustine, "Lyrics and Music of Simon Garfunkel",
10.30 am-3 pm.
19th Jan. "Survivors of Torture" Exhibition opens in foyer at Augustine.
Lay Preachers' conference at the Synod offices, 340 Cathedral St., Glasgow.
21st Jan. Women's Union at Saughtonhall, "Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home",
TLC at Greyfriars.
23rd Jan. College at Morningside, "Abraham's Children", 10.30 am-12.30 pm.
25th Jan. **World Day of Prayer** Bible Study at 121 George Street, 10.30 am – noon,
led by Sigrid Marten.
26th Jan. Lent study Facilitators at Dunblane Cathedral.
"Survivors of Torture" exhibition closes.
28th Jan. Women's Union at Saughtonhall, "My Work as a Nun".
31st Jan. Edinburgh Churches Together, AGM.

February 1st. World Day of Prayer, 121 George St., 10.30 am.

*Material for next Newsletter by **Sunday 20th January** please, latest Thursday 24th. 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.