

Growing seeds of Justice and Joy

Belonging to AUC

Thank you for finding out about Belonging to Augustine United Church (AUC).

AUC offers three ways through which people can express their belonging to our community:

- Full Membership
- Associate Membership
- Friend of AUC

In this booklet you will find information about:

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2. What is the United Reformed Church (URC)?
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If you have any further questions or wish to discuss membership please contact one of our ministers: Rev Fiona Bennett or Rev Maxwell Reay. Contact details can be found at the back of this booklet.

1. What is the Church?

The Church is made up of people who are committed to following Jesus Christ in their lives and in the world. The Church is a community connected together through their relationship to Jesus Christ as “one body in him” and committed to worshipping, growing and serving together.



2. What is the United Reformed Church?



Called to be God's people, transformed by the Gospel, making a difference in today's world - This is the United Reformed Church. Although one of the smaller mainstream denominations, the United Reformed Church plays a dynamic and challenging part in the British Christian community. It has brought together English Presbyterians, English, Welsh and Scottish Congregationalists, and members of the Churches of Christ, through unions in 1972, 1981 and 2000. One hundred thousand people make up 1500 congregations, with nearly 800 ministers, paid and unpaid.

The United Reformed Church combines its commitment to the Reformed tradition with a passionate belief that all God's people should be one. It seeks to work with Christians of all traditions, and rejoices in being part of more than 400 Local Ecumenical Partnerships. It is also committed to theological and cultural diversity. It has declared itself a multi-cultural church, rejoicing in the gifts of members from across the world and seeks to hold together a wide variety of theological understandings; the valuing of different insights helps the church understand the wonder of God.

Worldwide, more than 70 million Christians are members of the Reformed family of churches. They uphold the historic Trinitarian creeds of the church universal and find the supreme authority for their lives in the Word of God in the Bible, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They order their lives through councils of the church, where ministers and lay people together seek the mind of Christ.

The URC offers both infant and adult baptism depending on the tradition and beliefs of the families / individuals involved.

3. Where has Augustine United Church come from?

The history of the present Augustine United Church is rooted in the Reformation and the establishing of a number of religious groups which were separate from the Established Church. In Scotland the Congregational Denomination had taken root at the end of the 18th Century, with the first Congregational Church formed in Edinburgh in 1799. This was known as the Tabernacle and was situated at the head of Leith Walk. The congregation soon outgrew the building and a new Church was built in North College Street, later known as Argyle Square Chapel, situated where the north east corner of the Museum now stands in Chambers Street. The Minister, Dr. Lindsay Alexander, drew huge congregations and the present building on George IV Bridge was built to accommodate up to 1000 worshippers. He gave the new Church the name Augustine.



Its central position led to a number of amalgamations with other congregations. The war years brought a major change when the entire congregation of Bristo Place Congregational Church joined the people of Augustine. The Church was renamed Augustine-Bristo and it was not until 1979 that union with Hope Park and Buccleuch Congregational Church saw the name Augustine reinstated. Thirteen years later Dalkeith Road United Reformed Church also came into the fold and the name, "Augustine United Church" (AUC) finally came into being. In 2000 Augustine became a member church of the United Reformed Church Synod of Scotland. In 2005 Dalry Congregational Church remerged back into AUC and in 2009 the Metropolitan Community Church of Edinburgh also merged into AUC.



Today, Augustine United Church is an inclusive and progressive Christian community in the heart of Edinburgh city centre and a congregation of the United Reformed Church. We celebrate the Christian Story, welcome and affirm people of all faiths and none and work to promote justice and wellbeing locally and globally.

We are committed to preserving our heritage and to continuing to develop and use it. We are an Eco Congregation and a Fair trade Church. We share in a Local Ecumenical Covenant with St Columba's by the Castle Episcopal Church and Greyfriar's Kirk, Church of Scotland and work in partnership with the Metropolitan Community Church in supporting LGBT Christians in Edinburgh.

4. Progressive Christianity

AUC is an inclusive and progressive Christian community. We welcome and affirm people of all ages, abilities, sexual orientations, gender identities, ethnic identities, faiths and none.

The theology expressed in our life and worship sits within the broad expression of Progressive Christianity.

Progressive Christianity does not hold to a particular Christian Creed or Statement of Faith, but has identified Eight Points which are an expression of how Progressive Christians live.

We are Christians who...

1. Have found an approach to God through the life and teachings of Jesus;
2. Recognise the faithfulness of other people who have other names for the gateway to God's realm, and acknowledge that their ways are true for them, as our ways are true for us;
3. Understand the sharing of bread and wine in Jesus' name to be a representation of an ancient vision of God's feast for all peoples;
4. Invite all people to participate in our community and worship life without insisting that they become like us in order to be acceptable (including but not limited to):
 - believers and agnostics
 - conventional Christians and questioning sceptics
 - those of all gender identities
 - those of all sexual orientations
 - those of all races and cultures
 - those of all classes and abilities
 - those who hope for a better world and those who have lost hope;
5. Know that the way we behave toward one another and toward other people is the fullest expression of what we believe;
6. Find more grace in the search for understanding than we do in dogmatic certainty, more value in questioning than in absolutes;
7. Form ourselves into communities dedicated to equipping one another for the work we feel called to do: striving for peace and justice among all people; protecting and restoring the integrity of all God's creation; and bringing hope to those Jesus called the least of his sisters and brothers;
8. Recognise that being followers of Jesus is costly, and entails selfless love, conscientious resistance to evil, and renunciation of privilege.

5. AUC Mission Statement

'The people of Augustine United Church seek to live out God's unconditional inclusive love in our worship, our care for each other in our communities and the world'

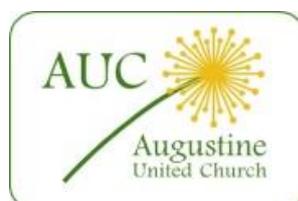
PROCLAMATION - Augustine United Church (AUC) will proclaim God's **inclusive** love through regular worship, special services, prayers and acts of devotion **throughout the week**, either at our church or further afield. We will ensure our services move and inspire, offering moments of stillness, prayer, inspiration and celebration.

We will be a voice for Christian belief in our modern city, and will be **out-going** in explaining our faith and how we help the local community and the world.

We will **include new people** who want to join our services and those who want to learn more about the Christian faith and we will provide opportunities for people to fully **participate** in and **contribute** to the worship. We will search for ways of leading worship and activities **with children**, young people **and students**.

We are open to other Christian traditions and **broader** forms of worship, and we welcome opportunities of **sharing worship** with other churches and inviting visiting ministers and lay-preachers and ordinary people to lead or be involved in our worship at AUC.

PASTORAL - AUC will follow Christ's "new commandment" to "love one another" and to make this commandment the centre of our life and works. We will find new ways of improving pastoral care for our community, new and old. The Minister and Elders will work to address the personal and spiritual needs and spiritual development of members of our community, through prayer, regular meetings, and visits. In our services, we will bring before God the joys and sadness experienced by members of our congregation, in life's journey. New members will be made welcome and their wishes and concerns will be listened to.



LOCAL - AUC will use its gifts, buildings and resources to support Church and local groups that work to promote peace, freedom of thought and freedom of expression. The work of these groups will be brought before the church regularly. We will maintain our building to allow these groups to continue to do their work using our facilities. AUC wants to break down the barriers that divide Christians, to see that we are all part of one Church. Therefore, we will consolidate our existing Ecumenical Partnership with other local churches while also supporting new partnerships and our fellow URC churches. We will celebrate the continuing contribution of church members to the local community, such as in ecumenical projects, and **voluntary work** supporting **homeless** people and those with **mental illnesses** and **vulnerable** people in our community. We will publicise our activities and **our distinctive, counter-cultural identity** to the local community.

WORLD - Christ asks us to love our neighbours as ourselves and, in so doing, AUC will **stand together** with poor and oppressed people in the **majority world** as well as the developed World.

We will continue to do this with organisations that offer **direct help** and also to those that **campaign** for a change to **world systems** that maintain poverty, division between peoples and cause damage to the **environment**. We will **give thanks** for the achievements of our own church members who work to support world development organisations. AUC will work with and **learn** from the wider World Church **and other faith groups**.

We will run our affairs with **transparency** and **professionalism** to the glory of God. We hope that new people passing through our doors will be **inspired** by our services; feel **valued and cared for**; and be made aware of opportunities for joining us to work for a better world.

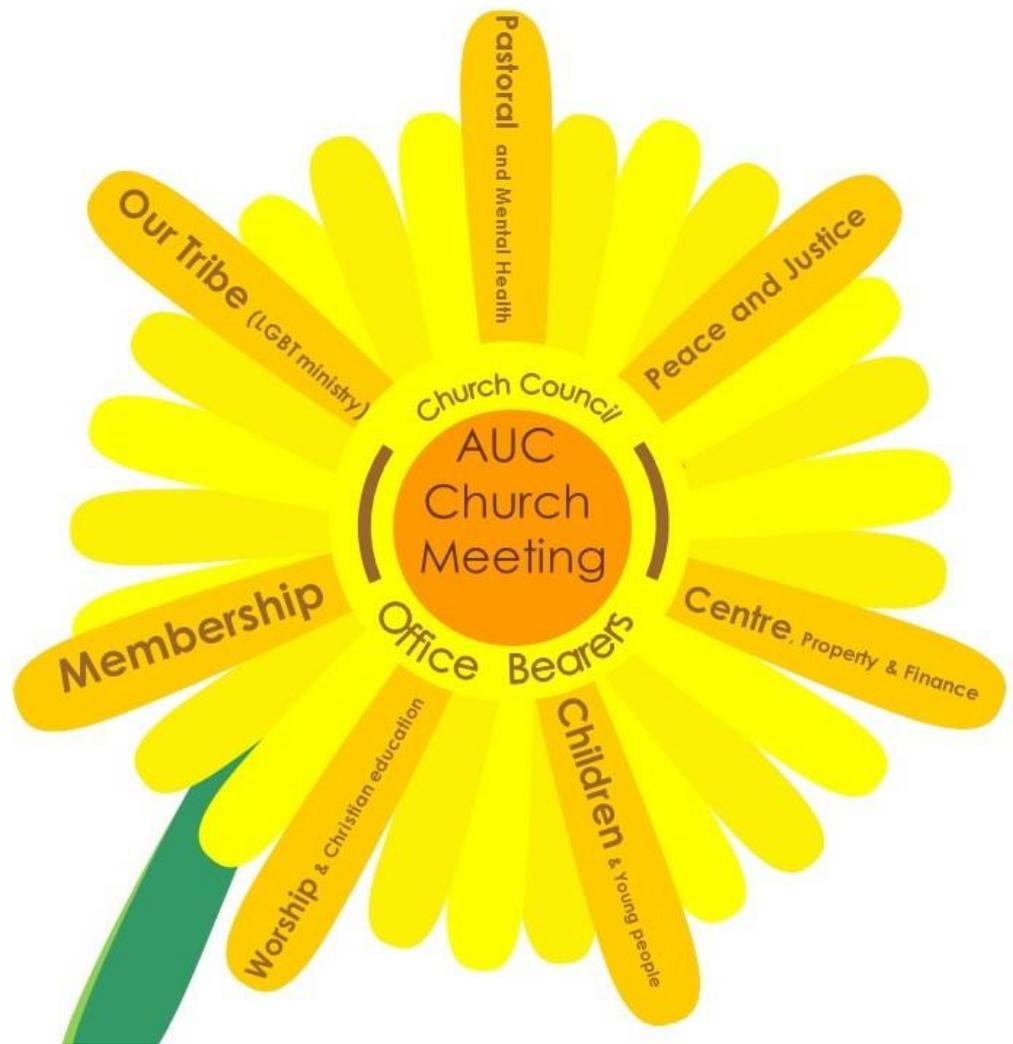
AUC 2014-2016 Priorities

As well as continuing the ongoing program of activities, in 2014-16 we intend to direct time and resources into:

- 1) Renewal of **Pastoral Care System**
- 2) Raising the Profile of AUC's **Children & Young People's work**
- 3) Continuing to develop a strategy for **Financial Self-sufficiency**, in reducing the (presently annual) deficit, alongside addressing the building costs
- 4) Creating a **Communication Strategy**

6. AUC Organisation: The Flower

Interdependent, diverse, overlapping, growing and evolving is the organisational life of AUC. At the heart of AUC is the **Church Meeting**. This meets monthly alternating between a topical discussion meeting and a business meeting. The URC ordains **Elders** who sit on the Church Council. Elders are ordained for life, but in AUC we have times when Elders are serving and times when they are non-serving. Church Council oversees



church order, acts on the decisions of Church Meeting and recommends to Church Meeting.

Church Council meets monthly. In our situation working in partnership with MCC in our Our Tribe Ministry, MCC Clergy involved with Our Tribe are also members of Church Council.

Within Church Council are **Office Bearers**: Church Secretary, Treasurer, President & Minister. This group meets occasionally to ensure support for the minister and consider issues to be explored by the Council.

In order to realise our vision, **Church Meeting** agreed to form **Church Life Ministry Teams (CLMT)** which take responsibility for different areas of Church Life. These groups have a Team Leader who is an **Elder**.

Friends, Associate Members and Full Members are encouraged to become part of these Ministry teams and to develop AUC's Church life. Contact information for each of these Ministry Teams can be found in our newsletter *SEEDS*, which is available in the Church foyer and on the website (www.augustine.org.uk).

7. AUC Church Life Ministry Teams (CLMT)



Membership: The aim of this Ministry Team is to nurture and grow church membership. Increasing Church Membership and encourage existing members to get involved in the life of AUC. This includes ensuring good systems of Information & Communication within and out with AUC.

Children & Young People: The aim of this Ministry Team is to offer an engaging, nurturing and safe program of activities for young people and children within the AUC community.

Worship & Christian Education: The aim of this Ministry Team is to facilitate within the AUC community a high quality, relevant and diverse diet of worship, to express the spirituality of AUC and of the local community. To provide a variety of education opportunities to develop Christian Spirituality, Bible Study and Progressive Christianity.

Our Tribe: The aim of this Ministry Team is to organise and develop the Our Tribe Ministry, which in partnership with MCC, offers support and affirmation to LGBT Christians in Edinburgh.

Centre Property & Finance: The aim of this Ministry Team is to oversee and manage the finances, property & staff of AUC.

Peace & Justice: The aim of this Ministry Team is to raise awareness and promote positive change for justice of people and planet. To provide education opportunities to explore relevant current issues. To encourage volunteering opportunities with social justice projects within Edinburgh.

Pastoral & Mental Health: The aim of this Ministry Team is to facilitate a web of care throughout AUC through Social events, pastoral support and education opportunities to promote good mental and emotional health.

8. Communication @ AUC

AUC is a busy Church community. It is important that people have the chance to get to know each other and hear about the different events which are happening.

In creating space for people to get to know each other we have **coffee** after the service each week, on the last Sunday of the month we normally have a

simple **church lunch**, there are monthly afternoon & evening gatherings called **Coffee, Cake & Conversation**, and a monthly **Craft Group**. Also monthly are a **Contextual Bible Study, Book Group, Church Meetings, Our Tribe Meetings** and diverse annual courses and events. These diverse events offer good opportunities to build up relationships for support and ourselves through learning together.

The focal points of our communication about events is the website www.augustine.org.uk, our monthly newsletter called Seeds and the weekly Notice Sheet at Sunday worship. Most months we will also send out emails about events at AUC to those registered on our Contact List.

SEEDS

Seeds contains news and articles about the life and interests of AUC as well as a full calendar for events @ AUC for the month ahead. Seeds also contains details for contacting Church Life Ministry Teams and Church Office Bearers. Seeds can be found in hard copy in the church foyer, downloaded from the website www.augustine.org.uk, or you can have it emailed to you through a mailing list.



9. A Question of Balance

As with good physical health, healthy church membership is about balance. Discerning healthy balance is part of the process of discerning the movement of the Holy Spirit in our lives and world, as we follow Jesus.

Whether you are just thinking about joining the AUC community in some form or have been a member for 40+ years, it is helpful to consider the role church membership plays in your life as a whole. How are you able to give and receive within the AUC community so that your experience is fruitful and nourishing? It is healthy to occasionally consider the four areas of Church Life (Worship, Growth, Support & Action) within your own life and ask yourself if there is any rebalancing which could bring you a more fruitful experience? Can the diverse opportunities available through AUC support healthy growth in you? Healthy balance – discerning the movement of the Holy Spirit in our lives and world.



10. Belonging to AUC

AUC is an inclusive and progressive Christian community in the heart of Edinburgh. We welcome all races, genders, sexualities, ages, abilities and ethnicities to get involved and become part of our community. Inspired by Jesus, we work together to sow seeds of Justice and Joy in our lives and world. We are always excited to welcome new people to share their gifts and broaden our diversity. We offer 3 different ways for people to express their sense of belonging to AUC:

✓ 10.1 Full Membership

To become a Full Member of AUC, and thus the URC, is a declaration to be a follower of Jesus Christ and to serve within his Church. Membership of the Church throughout the world is rooted in baptism. To take up Full Membership of AUC (and thus the URC) you can either already be baptised, or you can be baptised as part of the service of welcome to membership. (We require no evidence of baptism beyond your own word.) Membership of AUC is a commitment to following Jesus in our lives and in the world, taking an active role in the AUC community and wider Church community. Full Members can seek election to become Elders or Church Officers and can vote at Church Meetings.

As Full Members we commit ourselves to:

Worship

Regularly bringing to God in worship our gifts and needs, faith and doubt in our community services, in services shared with our ecumenical partners and at other times in our lives collectively and individually.

Growth

Regularly participating in opportunities to develop our spirituality, learn from each other and broaden our understanding of the world, that throughout our lives we would taste more fully the fullness of Life which Christ offers.

Support

AUC and the wider URC are bodies of members who work together and support each other and the world wide Church community. Every member has a valuable role to play within the life of the community, sharing our friendship, talents, time and resources.

Action

AUC members are committed to transforming our lives and the world to build the Kingdom of God of which Jesus spoke. We campaign and work for justice, standing with those who are oppressed and seeking to live in a balanced way as part of our planet.

If you are interested in taking up Full Membership @ AUC please speak with the Church Secretary or one of our Ministers. Contact details can be found at the back of this booklet.

10.1.1 Opportunities @ AUC for...

 **Worship:** AUC holds weekly community worship at 11am on Sunday mornings. We hold regular joint Sunday services with our ecumenical partners St Columba's by the Castle Episcopal Church and Greyfriars Presbyterian Kirk, and together with local partners we also host a variety of events which offer people other worship experiences. More details are on our website.

Worship is also something which we encourage members to do individually and to explore forms of worship and spiritual practise which deepen and enliven our experience of God.

 **Growth:** In partnership with our ecumenical partners AUC offers a diverse programme of events using different learning styles to develop our spirituality, learn from each other and broaden our understanding of the world. We also encourage members to participate in a wide range of events and activities which inspire theological and personal reflection and development. More details are on our website.

 **Support:** AUC & the URC are bodies of people which do not exist without the active involvement of their membership.

Within the area of support, members commit to:

- Supporting and encouraging each other pastorally
- Taking up the offices of the church, locally and nationally
- Sharing in the life of the church, locally and nationally
- Regularly giving to the church financially* (see *Useful Info p.10*)
- Regularly praying for the church community

All of these are within the boundaries of our resources and abilities and should be reviewed and changed from time to time.

 **Action:** The AUC community is deeply committed to campaigning and working for justice and peace with people and planet. We offer a range of opportunities locally with partner organisations which offer services to people who are vulnerable. We also encourage our members to learn and campaign about issues of national and international justice. We are an EcoCongregation and a Fair Trade Church.



✓ 10.2 Associate Membership

To become an Associate Member is to express an active commitment, contribution and spiritual connection with AUC. Associate members do not need to be baptised, make a statement of faith, or commit themselves to the connection and responsibilities of Full Membership, but they do commit themselves to supporting the work of the Body of Christ.



Associate Membership is agreed through Church Meeting and is taken up as part of a congregational service of worship, where the Associate Member declares their commitment to actively engage with and support the aspirations and community of AUC.

Associate Members are formally included within the pastoral oversight of AUC. Associate Members would not become members of the URC and would not be eligible to become Elders or to vote at Church Meeting. However, it remains the case that anyone, including non-members, can make a vocal contribution at Church Meeting and, decisions are largely made by consensus, rather than by voting.

If you are interested in taking up Associate membership @ AUC please speak with the Church Secretary or one of our Ministers. Contact details can be found at the back of this booklet.

✓ 10.3 Friend of AUC

Friends of AUC support the aims and activities of AUC. They receive regular newsletters, updates and invitations to events, and support the work of AUC through participation and giving as they can.

Friends of AUC may or may not regularly attend our services or have a Christian faith, but wish to express a connection with AUC and support its aspirations.

To become an AUC Friend you can send an email to the church administrator (administrator@augustine.org.uk) or fill out a card in the foyer.

11. Exploring Membership Further

If you would like the opportunity to learn more about Belonging to AUC we offer a 3 week course each Spring & Autumn for information and discussion. To find out when the next course is please visit our website.

Liturgy for Taking up Full Church Membership

Leader: Through Baptism we affirm that we are welcomed as part of the family of God. Through taking up Church Membership we: Affirm our Baptism, Profess our Christian faith and Accept for ourselves the gifts and responsibilities of Church Membership.

Let us all together reaffirm our faith and our commitment to building the Kingdom of God through our part in the life of the United Reformed Church. ALL: URC Nature, Faith and Order Statement

In the name of Jesus Christ and in accordance with the decision of Church Meeting we now receive: A.... into membership of this congregation of the United Reformed Church.

Let us now hear the profession of A...'s faith and affirmation that *he/she/they* intends, trusting in God's grace, to be faithful members of this community.

Do you confess anew your faith and trust in one God; Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit, Maker of Heaven and Earth; Redeemer of the world; Giver of Life?

Response: I do

Do you promise, trusting in God's grace, to follow Christ and to seek to do Christ's will all the days of your life?

Response: I do

Do you promise, by that same grace, to share with us in the life of this Church and the world wide Body of Christ and to be faithful in the duties of membership?

Response: I do

Prayer: Gracious God you have called each of us into the service of your Kingdom of Love and you equip each of us for our different tasks. As A..... have dedicated her/him/them self today to membership of your body may we all be strengthened in faith, love and unity through Jesus Christ our Lord and to your glory. Amen.

Liturgy for taking up Associate Membership.

Leader: In the name of Jesus Christ and in accordance with the decision of Church meeting we now receive: A.... into Associate membership of this congregation of the United Reformed Church.

Let us now hear A...'s affirmation that *he/she/they* intends, trusting in God's grace, to be faithful associate member/s of this community.

Do you declare your support for the life and work of this community, as it seeks to do the work of Christ's body the Church, in this place?

Response: I do

Do you promise, by God's grace, to share with us in the life of this church and the world wide Body of Christ and to take an active part in this community?

Response: I do

Prayer: Gracious God you have called each of us into the service of the Way of Jesus and you equip each of us for our different tasks. As A..... has / have dedicated her/him/them self today to the life and work of your body in this place, may we all be strengthened in faith, love and unity through Jesus Christ our Lord and to the your glory. Amen

12. Financial Support

Financial Support by members, friends and supporters is essential to the life and existence of AUC. Some members take envelopes to make a weekly offering, others prefer to make a regular offering through Standing Order. If this would be most suitable for yourself please feel free to set up a standing order through your bank. AUC details are:

Augustine United Church (Bank of Scotland)
Sort Code: 80.02.24
Account No: 00139118

Tax Payers can greatly enhanced regular or occasional donations by Gift Aiding them as AUC is a registered Charity (SC no. 000385). To find out more please contact our **treasurer** at treasurer@augustine.org.uk

13. Contacts

To contact the Minister: Rev Fiona Bennett
minister.auc@gmail.com t. 07552 162 717

To contact the Associate Minister: Rev Maxwell Reay
revmaxwell.auc@gmail.com t. 07957 543 359

To contact the Church Secretary: Mrs Kathleen Ziffo
secretary@augustine.org.uk

To contact our Administrator: Rachel Fitzgerald
administrator@augustine.org.uk t. 0131 2201677

Augustine United Church, www.augustine.org.uk
41-43 George IV Bridge,
Edinburgh, EH1 1EL
SC no 000385
Tel 0131 2201677

The United Reformed Church www.urc.org.uk



14. Membership Inquiry Form

If you are interested in becoming a full/associate member of AUC, please fill in the form below and hand it to a Minister or Church Secretary. They will then arrange a time to meet with you to discuss the process further.

Title (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms etc.)	
Name	
Contact telephone number	
Email address	
Address	
Church Membership <i>Have you been a member of a church before?</i>	
Skills & Interests <i>Do you have any particular interests or skills which you are willing to share as part of the life of AUC? E.g. musicianship, bookkeeping, praying, campaigning, fundraising, cooking, organising, listening, youth work, anything else...</i>	
Ministry Teams <i>Is there a particular Ministry Team or aspect of AUC's life which you are interested to get involved with?</i>	