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In this edition

2. Communal Card
3. Members & Christmas News
4. Jesus Queen of Heaven
5. Advent Calendar Making
6. Our Tribe Survey
7. Eco-congregation Update
8. Dates for 2018
9. Amnesty & Concert
10. Seedlings
12. Calendar

Good News?

By Rev Fiona Bennett

The angels announced to the shepherds that there was good news of great joy for all people...

Good news of great joy – sounds like something we and our whole world could do with hearing. So what is it? What's the good news? What is so good about the news that the angels sang about it to the shepherds? The news was about the birth of a Saviour. The one who would save us. The one who would offer salvation for all. The problem today with the words Saviour, save and salvation is that we are often not sure what they mean.

Salvation in the Bible is God's good desire for the whole earth. Salvation is God's working toward wholeness of life for all. For those bound in slavery, salvation is liberation. For those wandering in the wilderness, salvation is a route to safety. For those cast in exile, salvation is a way home. For those who are alienated, salvation is reconciliation. For those

excluded from society and friendship, salvation is acceptance. For those who have caused harm to others, self or the earth, salvation is forgiveness and a new start. For those on a destructive path with their life, salvation is repentance (a 180 degree turn). For those starving or thirsty, salvation is nourishment (bread/water). For those broken in body, mind or spirit, salvation is healing.

All of us will need and experience salvation in different ways throughout our lives. The angels got very excited because they could see that Jesus would show the earth how to find the way to salvation in the midst of whatever situation it found itself. There is no situation too difficult or desperate for God. God's love and hope for us and for this world cannot be extinguished. There is a way of Salvation.

Jesus is the Saviour because he revealed God alongside us, showing

Getting Involved

Within AUC there are 7 Ministry Teams which are responsible for different areas of Church Life. If you would like to know more or get involved with one of these please e-mail the contact person.

Children & Young People

Kirsty Murray

kirsty.murray@ed.ac.uk

Membership

Alex Peden

a.peden@ed.ac.uk

Our Tribe (LGBTI Ministry)

Rev Maxwell Reay

revmaxwell.auc@gmail.com

Peace & Justice

(Commitment for Life)

Harriet Davidson

harrietdavidson@hotmail.com

Pastoral & Mental Health

Doris Caldwell

hhfcaldwell@gmail.com

Worship & Christian

Education

Rev Fiona Bennett

minister.auc@gmail.com

Centre, Property & Finance

Tom Murray

murray.tom@blueyonder.co.uk

If you would like to get involved volunteering within AUC or the local community:

AUC Volunteering

Fiona Somerville

rota.auc@gmail.com

Local Community

Volunteering

Della Morris

dellagreenlanes@gmail.com

<1 us the Way out/to freedom/home/to a new start/to healing/of salvation from wherever we are. Jesus' Way will often surprise us, but it is the way of salvation, the way to abundant life for all.

So what is the good news of salvation? What salvation do you, we and this world need? A diminishing ozone layer, refugees, huge discrepancies between rich and poor, war, violence, ill health, loneliness...Salvation is God's deep longing and working in the midst of this very real need, towards abundant life for all. This salvation was revealed in Jesus, born in an unlikely stable in Bethlehem. Surprising hope which cannot be extinguished. Could that be news good enough that we too might want to sing about it?

Service of the Longest Night

Sunday 24th December 2pm

Amidst the parties and tinsel, Christmas can be a stark reminder of absent loved ones and a hard time of year. The Service of the Longest Night offers gentle reflective space to acknowledge and honour those we miss at Christmas, and to seek God's light of comfort.

All are very welcome.

'Enough for Everyone' Communal Christmas Card



"Feed the hungry and help those in trouble then your light will shine"

Isaiah 58:10

As our thoughts turn once again to sending seasonal greetings, please consider making a contribution to the work of Christian Aid and signing our communal AUC Christmas Card. Our card allows us to show that we will be thinking of our AUC friends and family as we celebrate, whilst contributing to the invaluable work of Christian Aid in supporting the poorest of the poor. This year for every pound we give the UK Government will give a pound more through UK Aid. The UK will bin a staggering 23,000 tons of food this Christmas at a time when many across the globe are literally starving. Help to tackle hunger by giving what you can and letting the light of Christ shine for everyone.

Harriet Davidson

Election of Elders to Church Council

Elder elections were held at our Church Business Meeting on Sunday 26th November, where Eilidh Carmichael and Anne MacKenzie were both accepted.

They take over positions vacated by Ben Forsyth, Doris Caldwell and Stephen Hoare, who we thank for their hard work and dedication.

Anne and Eilidh will be inducted and/or ordained during our service on Sunday 28th January.

New members

We'll be welcoming a number of new members in the coming weeks and months.

Francis Nuñez, Tyler McNeil, Steven Smillie and Caro Smyth will all be taking up full membership, while Matt Baines is becoming an associate member. We're delighted to have them on board!

...And if that wasn't enough lovely news for you, along with the introduction of new members on Sunday 17th December, we will also be baptising Oliver, the son of Lesley and Linsey Paton-Donaldson. What a great day it will be!



This coming Sunday (3rd December), after the service there will be an Advent Lunch followed by the making of decorations for the AUC Christmas tree. This year we are making many Angels, Marys, Shepherds and Josephs to hang on the tree. No skill is required and all the materials are provided. It would be great if you are able to join in.

Rev Fiona Bennett

(If crafting isn't your thing you could also consider joining some members of the congregation who'll be card signing and letter writing for Amnesty International. More info on p.9!)

Gift Service

At our service on Sunday 10th December we'll be gratefully receiving: gifts of unwrapped toiletries, socks and sweets for patients at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital; and new or second hand winter clothing, boots, new underwear, fabrics, basic toiletries, first aid items and school supplies for Syrian refugees in mountain camp in Lebanon - to be delivered by Edinburgh Direct Aid.

Thank you!

Kathleen Ziffo

TLC partner events

There is carol singing for Christian Aid at the Castle Terrace Farmers' Market on Saturday 16th December, 10am–12.30pm, organised by friends from St Columba's.

The Greyfriars Carol Ceilidh will be held on Sunday 17th from 6-8.30 pm in the Kirk. This is a family-friendly evening of fun for all, ceilidh dancing, carol singing and soup & stovies. Tickets - Adult £5/Family £10 from Kirk Office (225 1900) or administrator@greyfriarskirk.com

Christmas Carol Singalong

...at Anne's on Thursday 28th December, 5.30pm onwards.

All ages, voices and instruments are welcome to share in this time of fun, fellowship and light refreshments.

If you aren't sure of Anne's address do get in touch!

The Gospel According to Jesus Queen of Heaven

Following on from her article in our last edition of Seeds, telling us about her play *Eve*, Jo Clifford brings us up-to-date with the travels of *Queen Jesus*.

It was the morning before the last performance of *EVE* that I woke up to discover that my *GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JESUS QUEEN OF HEAVEN* had been banned the night before.

Renata Carvalho, the Brazilian *Queen Jesus*, had been putting on her makeup when she was told that a judge in a suburb of Sao Paulo had granted an injunction against the venue hosting it, on the grounds that the play was insulting to the Christian faith and so was causing grave offence.

That was almost exactly what the demonstrators had said when they tried to stop me performing the very first production of the play in Glasgow in 2009. At that time, an Archbishop condemned the play on the grounds that it was 'hard to imagine a more grievous insult to the Christian faith'.

And sure enough the Bishop of the town concerned said almost exactly the same thing in a radio broadcast the following day.

It was obvious that nobody concerned in condemning or banning the play had actually read it, or knew anything about it. They all felt they didn't need to; as one of the protesters against the first production said: "*You don't need to go near a sewer to know that it stinks*".

What makes people like me and Renata stinking sewers in these people's eyes is the fact that we are trans.

So they would obviously be distressed by the fact that we are portraying someone as holy as Jesus.

It would be easy to write about how mistaken they all are...but that's beside the point, somehow.

Natalia Mallo, the director and translator of the piece, makes a habit of not being drawn into



attacking the people who attack her. She speaks to them respectfully, and respectfully about them too, always invites them to take part in dialogue, reminds them they are always welcome to see the play.

She saw the play a bit by accident when I was performing it late at night in St. Mark's church in the Fringe of 2014 and came up to me straight afterwards and asked for a copy. She wanted to translate it, she said, and there was something about her that made me trust her.

There's something about working on this play, she says, that changes you. She doesn't go to church, I don't think she would call herself a Christian, but she recognises a spiritual dimension to our lives and does what she can to put the message of the play into practice.

Above all, she does not judge and she does not condemn. And when people attack her, as they frequently do, she does not attack back.

She says she thinks that's what's kept us going; and in fact the attacks on the play have given it more visibility and more popularity and made it probably the best known play in Brazil right now.

Natalia originally comes from Argentina and has recently translated the play into Spanish. Last month I travelled out to Montevideo and Buenos Aires to see the Spanish language production opening in theatre festivals

<4 there.

Renata came from Brazil to support the Spanish speaking Queen Jesus, Fabiana Fine, and it was so lovely to see the transformation the play has effected in her too.

Renata was thrown out by her family when she was 17 and had to work as a prostitute in Rio de Janeiro. She said she soon discovered she had no talent for prostitution and that theatre was her home.

Brazil, like many Latin American countries, generally offers young trans women only two options - to work as a prostitute or a beautician - and making a living in the theatre is almost impossible. Renata was about to give up and go back to prostitution when the play came along. And now she's been touring for a year. It's lovely to see she's gained a little weight - for the first time in her adult life she's been able to afford regular meals - and the pleasure she was taking to have money.

She has been able to use her sufferings in her performance as Queen Jesus, and it so touches me to see the depth and beauty and anger and love in what she does.

Fabiana has spent the last twenty years as a cabaret performer. Her Queen Jesus is

completely different - full of the discipline and the glamour and the amazing performance skills of her old calling.

I love them both. And I love the effect they have on the audiences who encounter them. Fabiana played to full houses in both cities and Renata these days makes newspaper headlines wherever she goes.

In Brazil, trans women come up to me and tell me how much the play means to them, and how deeply it has transformed their sense of themselves. And for everyone the play has become a symbol of the right to free expression and the right to live lives without prejudice and discrimination.

It's very strange to think how it all began in a tiny theatre in Glasgow in 2009 and those angry people protesting against it in the street outside.

How they frightened me. And yet they also taught me that what I was doing mattered, somehow, and that I must keep trying to do it.

One of them carried a banner that read "GOD SAYS: MY SON IS NOT A PERVERT". The dear man. I wonder what's happened to him since.

I owe him a great deal. And I hope he's happier.

Jo Clifford

Advent Calendar Making

We had a lovely eco advent calendar making evening at the end of November. The cookie decorating table was very popular along with the craft table where everything from little gift packages using loo rolls to lovely cards and advent calendars were being made. Warm spiced apple juice, snacks and nibbles were abundant, all in the glow of a little wire hanger and lights from the Advent tree.

The crafts on offer for making advent calendars included stringing



up a numbered leaf for each day, decorating and hiding presents in 25 loo rolls, and making a paper calendar with windows from recycled paper. To fill calendars we had an ideas table. For permanent calendars, or calendars with pockets, they could be filled with things like Fairtrade chocolate, or paper with an activity on it, and then even useful little things like chapstick or toys from around the house, hidden as a surprise. The paper calendars could have



>6

<5 pictures, activities, or quotes behind the windows. Activity ideas included anything from walking to see the lights, to baking gingerbread, singing a carol, or reading scripture relating to women, or the gardens in the Bible, or what Jesus says about God. There were even ideas about how to sustainably wrap Christmas gifts: such as fabric bags or using newspaper that had been decorated with painted potato stamps. But most of all we talked about how Christmas and Advent are not about the presents, but instead the love and attention we give each other and how we can use Advent to intentionally focus on God's love in the world.



Maybe think of how you want to make your Advent and Christmas season more sustainable for yourself and for the planet and jot down a few things you could do differently this year (see *overleaf for more ideas!* ~ed.) Or what would you add to our lists?

All the best in your Christmas making!

Elizabeth Bay



Our Tribe Survey Results and News

The Our Tribe survey results are in and have been processed. We had 38 responses and we are very grateful to everyone who took the time to complete it.

The results were very interesting:

- People wanted to focus on social activities, worship and education so we will be refocusing Our Tribe events on these issues.
- The Church building is seen as a safe and secure meeting place so we will continue to hold Our Tribe events at Church.
- The majority of people wanted to meet on a Sunday from 3.30-5pm (doors open at 3pm), so we will be holding events at that time beginning in February.

We will continue to provide a monthly communion as 2/3 of respondents said this is an important part of events. As communion is so important to people we have decided to meet on the second Sunday of each month because communion is available on the first and third Sunday at 11am worship. This gives people the opportunity to have communion available 3 times a month.

We have two more 'Come Out with Our Tribe' events on Sunday 3rd December and Sunday 7th January at 2.30pm at Starbucks Middle Meadow Walk.

On Sunday 11th February 2018, we will relaunch Our Tribe at AUC with a worship celebration at 3.30pm (doors open at 3pm). *Full details of this event in February's newsletter.*

The Our Tribe CLMT has had some changes – a very big thank you to Nicola Robinson, Christine Rarity-Middleton and Susan Rarity-Middleton who have stepped down after serving on the team and facilitating events over the last 18 months. The newly formed CLMT consists of Maxwell Reay, Stephen Hoare, Lewis Reay, Mike Holroyd, Francis Nuñez, Rachel Brand and Lucy Parker.

This is an exciting time for Our Tribe as we look to the future. We hope you will join us on this new journey.

Our Tribe CLMT



Ideas and Questions



Do you think caring for God's planet Earth is a vital part of our Christian response to God's love for us, and trust in us?

Are you aware that climate change impacts most on the poorest in every society?

Have you made any specific attempts to prevent human damage to the earth by taking even little steps to lessen pollution of air, sea and land?

Well, we are looking for your ideas to be more environmentally friendly! Please send them to Harriet, the leader of our Justice & Peace CLMT, or Kathleen, who is leading our Eco-Congregations sub-group. Any suggestions you have for folk to try or little ideas which you personally find useful in lessening damage to our environment will be gratefully received.

Can we all cut our carbon footprint? What do you do in your own home and lifestyle?

AUC is going to apply for consideration for an Eco-Congregation Award in the New Year, partially as a way to broadcast to others that we consider God's world to be so important that we must stop damaging it, before that damage becomes irreversible.

Christmas is fast approaching – can we give fewer un-needed gifts to clutter people's homes and instead contribute to a charity helping others? (Christian Aid, Oxfam and other charities have schemes to buy a gift for someone in the developing world – a duck for someone in Bangladesh, a goat for someone in Palestine, or a safely burning and efficient stove for someone in an African village...for example.)

Do you recycle wrapping paper and decorations from previous years? It can be fun to find out if members of your family re-use the paper you sent them on their gift last year, or even the year before!! I love putting up decorations the boys made when at school or nursery, and old family favourite decorations can become traditional. Remember the council will recycle food waste (stick to what they say is permissible). We recycle stamps at AUC (bring these in any Sunday – there is a box for them) and envelopes (from Christmas cards and letters) are recycled by various supermarkets in January.

If you buy 2for1 or 3for2 food offers, and you don't really need the extra, pop them in the box at the supermarket for a foodbank user (most supermarkets do this now). If you have extra turkey, chicken, sausages, or vegetables after Christmas dinner, re-use over the next day or two, or freeze for another occasion. (If we/you eat meat, let's not devalue the animal/bird by wasting the food of their sacrifice and discarding left-overs!) Having a turkey curry in February can be a change from regular winter fare!

There is no plan B – there is only 1 Earth. We need to encourage as many members and friends as possible to be more environmentally aware and friendly – at home, going to work, in leisure activities, as well as at church.

Thanks,

Kathleen Ziffo





It won't come as a surprise to many of you to find out that when not working on Seeds, playing with her cat or diving in at the deep end of political geekery, your editor can often be found trying to be as active a campaigner for change as I can. One of the ways I, and other members of AUC, do so is as active members of Amnesty International.

Just the other week I had the privilege of attending Amnesty's Scottish Activist Conference. I got lucky, the event was only 15 minute walk from our flat! But even so, it was with a little bit of apprehension that I headed out on a cold Saturday morning...I needn't have been worried, despite being on my own I was made to feel welcome and had a great day.

We heard an incredibly moving speech from Boniface Massah, who had travelled from his home in Malawi to talk about his work defending the rights of those who, like him, were born with albinism. In Malawi, we heard, the bones of children with albinism sell for

extraordinary prices because of harmful beliefs that their bones hold healing properties.

Boniface empowered us by speaking about the power of the letters Amnesty supporters had sent to the Malawian Government which, alongside his follow-up work, resulted in a change in the law to ensure better protection for those hunted for their bones.

It was deeply moving to hear his story and also deeply uncomfortable.

However, I felt invigorated by the power our letters and actions can have and hope you'll join me in signing a card or sending a letter after our service on Sunday 3rd December. The actions will be simple and help will be on hand if you aren't sure what to write!

See you there!

Eilidh Carmichael

Could you help to move a mountain?

Can you talk about the Christian faith and what it means to you? Can you offer 4 days in March? Would you like to experience being part of a mission?

'Moving Mountains' is an ecumenical mission to Cumbria from Thursday 8th- Sunday 11th March. Churches across Cumbria are working together in mission, outreach and evangelism together with 30+ teams led by Methodist District Chairs, URC Moderators, Bishops and Salvation Army District Commanders. Five URC Moderators have agreed to participate including David Pickering, who is hoping to take a wee team from the Synod of Scotland. You can read more at www.godforall.org.uk/moving-mountains.

The Synod's assigned area is around Gosforth and the theme is 'pilgrimage'. Travel and accommodation costs will be met. For more info or to express an interest please get in touch with David:

dpickering@urcscotland.org.uk



Sunday 10th Dec 2017

3-5pm

Music, Poetry, Xmas Jokes,

Tea and Mince Pies.

Retiring collection for AUC.

All welcome!



Helplines:

Trauma Counselling Line Scotland: 08088 02 04 06 (M-W 5-8pm; Th-F 9am-2pm; 24/7 answerphone; www.survivorscotland.org.uk)

LGBT Support: 0300 123 2523

Samaritans: 116 123

Childline: 0800 1111

Silver Line: 0800 4 70 80 90

Rape Crisis: 8088 010 302

Breathing Space: 0800 838587

Edinburgh Crisis Centre: 0808 8010414



GODLY PLAY RETREAT



We hear from Fiona Macdonald, one of the fabulous team behind Junior Church, on her recent Godly Play Retreat...

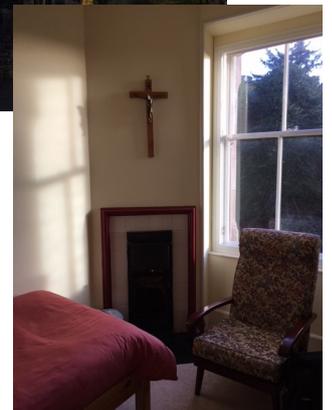
Thank you Augustine friends for supporting me to go on a Godly Play Retreat followed by training for Godly Play Advocates (people involved in supporting Godly Play in Scotland).

I stayed at St Mary's Monastery in Perth and the weather was autumnal and beautiful. I got to hear lots of stories and had time for reflection, which is a luxury.

Scotland now has two more folk becoming Godly Play trainers and we have set up an online group to keep in touch, as there are people spread out across the country – in Shetland, Aberdeen, Inverness, and the Island of Seil to name a few places!

It was great to get the chance to make links with others doing Godly Play in different contexts. And now I know what a WhatsApp group is all about!

Fiona Macdonald



Junior Church welcomes families in all their wonderful diversity. We do our best to offer a safe and nurturing space for families and their friends. We have varied activities each week, from storytelling, to crafts, games and video making. We have a crèche for little ones and baby changing facilities are available. We use materials to appeal to children's different learning styles using the PowerXpress curriculum, and also use Godly Play (www.godlyplay.org.uk).

Children at Augustine are welcome to receive communion and to fully participate in the life of the church. Children regularly help during services, and sometimes serve communion to the wider church community.

Please feel free to contact us using the details on p.2 of Seeds if you have any questions.

Annual Theme: “Beginning and Belonging – Stories of Faith and Life”.

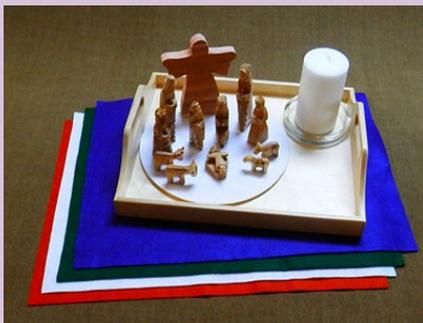
Module for December: “Advent”

3rd December - We are deep in the business of making gifts for some folk in the Congregation. We can't tell you any more than that!

10th December - We will be preparing something musical for our Nativity this year. Watch this space!

17th December - Our All Age Service will have our Nativity, with the children (and Karl!) working hard to involve everyone in the music.

24th December – We will have a Godly Play story “The Holy Family” and share some Wondering Questions and a Feast afterwards.



“One day they saw a wild star. The Magi knew where all the stars were supposed to be in the sky. But this star was new, and it moved...”



Words – Volume 2 of The Complete Guide to Godly Play by Jerome Berryman; Image – from www.godlyplayresources.com

Up next...

We will meet after the holidays to plan our next term at Junior Church. We'd love to hear from anyone with suggestions, ideas, or feedback on what we are doing here at Augustine, as we continue supporting our children on their journeys. Contact details at the front of Seeds.

Calendar—cont. from p.12

Thursday 25 th	1.30-3pm	Coffee, Cake & Conversation
Sunday 28 th	11am	Morning Worship with the Ordination and Induction of New Elders
	12.30-2pm	Church Burns Lunch, with entertainment
Monday 29 th	2pm	Women's Union at Saughtonhall URC, with Alistair MacNeill
Tuesday 30 th	7.30pm	Spirituality Book Group: 'How do we think about the Bible stories of Creation?'
February		
Sunday 4 th	11am	Morning Worship with Communion, Preacher Rev Leslie Morrison
	12.30pm	Coffee & Cake Stall, with proceeds towards Scottish Churches Housing Action
	1-3pm	Door Stewards Training Session (for meeter/greeters, readers and fire officers)

Calendar

AUC Worship Services at 11am on Sundays at AUC, George IV Bridge. (All events at AUC, unless otherwise stated. Later updates on website/notice sheet)

December		Season of Advent
Saturday 2 nd	2-4pm	Augustine Assignments (Youth Group)
Sunday 3 rd	11am	Morning Worship with Communion, led by Rev Fiona Bennett, preacher Rev Trevor Jamison
	12.30pm	Church Lunch, with advent making, dressing the tree and Amnesty International letter writing (see p.3/9)
	2.30-4.30pm	'Come Out' with Our Tribe at Starbucks on Middle Meadow Walk
Monday 4 th	2pm	Women's Union at Saughtonhall URC, with Christmas Lunch (must be pre-booked)
Tuesday 5 th	7.30pm	Contextual Bible Study, Mark 1: 1-13 'Beginning'
Sunday 10 th	11am	All-Age Morning Worship, Nativity and Gift Sunday (see p.3)
	2-4pm	AUC Christmas Concert (see p.9)
	2.30pm	Last Service at Selkirk URC
Tuesday 12 th	7.30pm	Spirituality Book Group
Saturday 16 th	10am-12.30pm	Carol Singing at the Castle Terrace Farmers' Market (see p.3)
	2-4pm	Augustine Assignments (Youth Group)
Sunday 17 th	11am	Morning Worship with Communion, Infant Baptism and reception of new Church Members (see p.3)
	6-8.30pm	Greyfriars Carol Ceilidh (see p.3)
Sunday 24 th	11am	Morning Worship, led by Linda Harrison and Mike Holroyd
	2pm	Service of the Longest Night: remembering those we miss at Christmas (see p.2)
		Season of Christmas
Monday 25 th	10.30am	Christmas Day Family Worship Service, followed by a short time of fellowship
Thursday 28 th	5.30-8pm	Carol Singing 'At Home' with Anne MacKenzie (see p.3)
Sunday 31 st	11am	Morning Worship, led by Nicola Robinson
January		Season of Epiphany
Sunday 7 th	11am	Morning Worship, led by Rev Fiona Bennett
	2.30-4.30pm	'Come Out' with Our Tribe at Starbucks on Middle Meadow Walk
Monday 8 th	2pm	Women's Union at Saughtonhall URC, with George Banks
Friday 12 th	10am	'Walk & Talk', leaving from AUC
Sunday 14 th	11am	Morning Worship, led by Rev Fiona Bennett, preacher Mike Holroyd
Monday 15 th	2pm	Women's Union at Saughtonhall URC, with Currie Singers
Tuesday 16 th	7.30pm	Contextual Bible Study, Rev 21: 1-6 'New Heaven & Earth'
Sunday 21 st	11am	Morning Worship with Communion, led by Rev Richard Frazer
	1-3pm	Communications Review
Monday 22 nd	2pm	Women's Union at Saughtonhall URC, on Saughton Park
Tuesday 23 rd	7.30-9pm	Coffee, Cake & Conversation

Calendar—cont. on p.11

Please note the deadline for material for the February issue is Sunday 28th January.

You can send your material to newsletter.auc@gmail.com or via the church office.

DISCLAIMER: Although we check all information in the newsletter, as ever with these things we can give no warranties as to accuracy or relevance and encourage active checking before you make any decisions. The views expressed in our newsletter are those of the individual contributor, they are not necessarily those of AUC or the editor.