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The
**United
Reformed
Church**

In this edition

2. New faces and members
3. Diana Butlet Bass event
4. Christian Aid Week
5. SMHAF
6. Brian Teyhan
7. Our Mission & Ministry Part 2
8. Book Review
9. Eco-Congregation AGM
10. Recipe
11. Seedlings
12. Calendar

The Realm of God

By Rev Fiona Bennett

At the beginning of May 2018 there is a conference of URC ministers down near Stoke. As part of one of the workshops there I was invited to think and share what I understand evangelism to be.

My thinking about evangelism has changed and evolved over the years (and I hope will continue to do so), but for the moment my definition is: an awakening to and a co-creating of the Realm of God.

The Realm of God (also referred to as the Kingdom of God or abundant life for all) is this life lived in God's way. It is open to all and has unlimited potential. This life lived in God's Way (as Jesus showed us) is this life lived in love and grace, justice and joy, which has the ability to transform us, to transform the whole world and create healthy life for all earth.

Living in the Realm of God is not being super pious in an aloof way, it is working to be

as loving and grace-filled and God trusting as we can be in the little and the big things of life.

Does living in God's Realm mean all pain and struggle goes away? Nope. But it does mean that we do not struggle alone and if more and more people were to live this way much of our world would be changed so that many of the injustices which cause suffering would be alleviated. Living in God's Realm means that conflicts become opportunities, weaknesses become strengths, and endings can become the seeds of new possibility.

May is also the month we mark Christian Aid week and I was reading a story from Christian Aid about a family in Haiti whose home (and many friends and family) was destroyed by the 2010 earthquake. The family are rebuilding their lives. The story said: "The family are not just survivors they are fighters, but they are

Getting Involved

Within AUC there are 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.

Centre, Property & Finance

Tom Murray

murray.tom@blueyonder.co.uk

Children & Young People

Kirsty Murray

kirsty.murray@ed.ac.uk

Communication

Eilidh Carmichael

ecarmichael02@hotmail.co.uk

Our Tribe (LGBTI Ministry)

Rev Maxwell Reay

revmaxwell.auc@gmail.com

Peace & Justice

Harriet Davidson

harrietdavidson@hotmail.com

Pastoral & Mental Health

Anne MacKenzie

mackenziema@gmail.com

Worship

Rev Fiona Bennett

minister.auc@gmail.com

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

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only so strong they need us in their corner." This made me think so clearly on what the Realm of God is: it is not a magic end to earthquakes, it is standing together with those who are fighting pain. Standing in their corner and offering them our strength and solidarity. (You can read more about Christian Aid week on p.4).

Whether we are fighting illness or low self esteem or prejudice or the demands of unhealthy expectation, or we are fighting to forge a new life from loss, or to build more just systems and laws in our world, standing with each other and offering each other our strength is a taste and reality of the Realm of God in our midst. It is a taste of how God aspires for the world to be at its best: interdependent and diverse, seeking the justice and joy of abundant life for all.

May this May be an opportunity for us to further awaken and co-create the Realm of God in our lives and world.

It is with very great delight that we share the news that Kate & Andrew welcomed the birth of their second boy in March. Little Max joined the world on the 19th and joined us in church as little as two weeks later. Weren't we lucky?!

We welcomed four new members in April as well. Thomas McPolin, Jayson Mannings and Darius Wedge took up full membership and Matt Baines joined us as an associate member.

Welcome one and all!



Euan (10) and Ozzie (3) shared a birthday earlier this month.

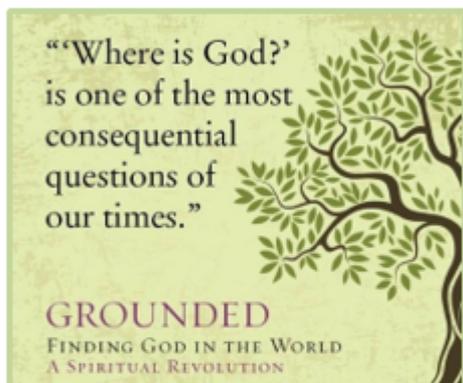
Frazer will be 14 later this month.



A Regional Conference in Edinburgh
Saturday 12th May 2018

10am – 12.30pm

(refreshments served at 9.30, bring your lunch and stay for fellowship)



"Gratitude is what Moses taught, what the prophets proclaimed, what Jesus practiced, what enlightened the Buddha, what Native elders and medieval saints knew, what meditation reveals, what human arts and sciences point toward, and what, if you are anything like me, you dream of. A pro bono world, all invited to a table to feast.

Gratitude is right here, right now."

—DIANA BUTLER BASS



**GROUNDING AND GRATEFUL:
AN EXPLORATION OF AND REFLECTION ON
THE WORK OF DIANA BUTLER BASS**

Interested in exploring progressive Christianity
and meeting others who are interested in exploring
an open, inclusive and thinking church?
Then this is for you!

Admission: £5 including refreshments

To help with arrangements, please contact Linda Harrison in advance at:
conferences@freetobelieve.org.uk

This is one of four regional conferences so please state that
you are booking for the Edinburgh conference.

In the middle of May 2016, Diana Butler Bass introduced her recently published book "*Grounded: Finding God in the World — A Spiritual Revolution*" to a group of progressive Christians in Birmingham. Her most recent book "*Grateful: The Transformative Power of Giving Thanks*" was published on the 3rd April this year. This conference offers an opportunity to reflect on both books at AUC.

The Daily Devotions from the URC is currently a series on the story of Joseph in the Book of Genesis. Recently in this series Rev Dave Coaker, Editor of the PCN magazine "Progressive Voices", wrote: "*The circle of favours and obligations, of scratching backs, is how things get done. I help you, so in turn you help me. Sometimes it can be incredibly transactional, but often it is just how we naturally engage with each other. Showing gratitude is a way in which we build relationships, we build trust, and create community.*" Through our grounded faith, how often do we give thought to the gratitude that 'empowers us' and 'like love, multiplies through giving and receiving'?

Take some time out with others to reflect on transformational gratitude on Saturday 12th May.

Linda Harrison

(If you would like to read online or subscribe to receive by email the Daily Devotions, please see devotions.urch.org.uk)

Christian Aid Week

Sunday 13th-Saturday 19th May



#StandTogether

For dignity.

For equality.

For justice.

Poverty is an outrage against humanity. It robs people of their dignity and lets injustice thrive. But together we have the power to transform lives.



Here is just one inspiring story from this year's Christian Aid Week literature.

Vilia lost her mum and her home when the earthquake struck Port-au-Prince in 2010. Bereaved and homeless, she went back to her

home town with her husband and children. But life was a struggle and they had nowhere safe to live. Christian Aid partner KORAL built her a new home that was strong enough to stand up to natural disasters.

On the terrifying night when Hurricane Matthew hit, Vilia's neighbours fled to shelter with her. As the storm raged, she shared her home with more than 50 of her neighbours for several days. Despite the ferocity of the hurricane, which swept away surrounding homes, her house was barely damaged.

Vilia allowed her home to become an emergency shelter when Hurricane Matthew struck Haiti. She is incredibly grateful for the help

she's received but worries about those without a secure home. It can be done – of the 700 houses KORAL and Christian Aid built after the 2010 earthquake, just one needed to be repaired after Hurricane Matthew. But they rely on the kindness of people like you to be able to do more, and reach more of our global neighbours in their hour of need.

Will you #StandTogether with us this Christian Aid Week to help families like those of Vilia and her neighbours live full lives, free from poverty?

We'll be celebrating Christian Aid week at our service on Sunday 13th May.

Harriet Davidson

Book Sale

The Christian Aid Book Sales will no doubt be familiar to many Seeds readers. Books and other ephemera for the sale are being collected from:

Mon 7th-Wed 9th, 9am-9pm at St Andrews & St George's West Church, 13 George Street.

The sale itself takes place on Sat 12th and then from Mon 14th to Fri 18th May at three venues:

- St Andrew's and St George's West Church, 13 George Street
- Morningside United Church, 15 Chamberlain Road
- City of Edinburgh Methodist Church, 25 Nicolson Square

Mark the week in your calendar for a visit. I'm confident you won't regret it!

AUC Prepares for SMHAF



Ahead of SMHAF, busy bands of volunteers (pictured above!) took part in a series of workshops to make windows for AUC that incorporated this year's theme of 'beginnings'. The three windows are:

Begin with Light

Begin with Love

Begin with Laughter



A night of disco. featuring everything from classic disco. 80's pop. Hi-NRG to the present day. giving people within the mental health community a safe place to dance and have a fun night out.

Open to all and LGBTQI inclusive
Changing Space Available
Wheelchair Accessible
FREE ENTRY
BYOB

in the beginning

Saturday 26th May

7 - 10pm

Augustine United Church

41 George IV Bridge

Edinburgh EH1 1EL

there was DISCO

Contact: Maxwell Reay, Chaplain, NHS Lothian
0131 537 6734

Joint event with NHS Lothian, LGBT Health and Wellbeing and Augustine United Church
Part of the Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival



It is with sadness we report the death of Brian Teyhan.

His funeral took place on Friday 4th May at Mortonhall.

We'll be taking time to remember him in our next edition of Seeds.

He will be missed.

Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival



In the Beginning Café

Drop in café with free tea, coffee and biscuits. Each café will focus on art, poetry or music created by service users, volunteers and staff who access NHS Lothian's Department of Spiritual Care's Community Mental Health provision.

Dates 2018

Thursday 10th May from 1.30 - 3pm
 Thursday 17th May from 1.30 - 3pm
 Thursday 24th May from 1.30 - 3pm
 Thursday 31st May from 1.30 - 3pm

All welcome

at Augustine United Church
 41 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1EL
 Tea and coffee provided
 For further information contact
 Maxwell Reay, Chaplain 0131 537 6734
maxwell.reay@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk

How is the Spirit calling us to develop our ministry and mission?

In the March edition of Seeds we looked at some of the structural changes we were making to develop our ministry and mission and promised to return to our finances and future.

Priority B: To enable our membership to collectively address financial self-sufficiency.

Over the past year whilst giving to the roof project has remained strong, our regular giving by standing order has dropped. This is mainly due to the deaths of several members who offered faithful financial giving (alongside much else). Currently our free will offering does not cover the costs of our mission & ministry. We are subsidised by the letting income. This is not a sustainable model.

Our Goals

- **Over 2 years:** to strengthen the membership of the Centre, Property & Finance Team, adopting an apprenticeship model.
- **Over 3 years:** to increase our freewill offering to cover the costs of Ministry & Mission.

- **Over 4 years:** to re-establish a Fabric Fund capable of caring for the building

Our Strategy

To enable our membership to collectively address financial self-sufficiency we hope to:

- Increase our membership (a responsibility of all members)
- encourage supporters to regularly review their giving, and ensure ease and opportunity for donating to AUC
- review AUC's expenses, encouraging all Ministry Teams to work to a budget and explore grant funding to cover the costs of projects whenever possible

Top Tip

If you don't already know, it's simple to set up a standing order for regular giving to church. The church's bank details are:

Bank of Scotland
Sort Code: 80-02-24
Account Number: 00139118

If you need help with this or would want to discuss it further please speak to our Treasurer, Tom (murray.tom@blueyonder.co.uk)

Priority C: To identify patterns of deployed Ministry of Word & Sacrament and potential partners.

Our theology, perception and organisational life are constantly evolving. In our considerations we have clearly identified our need for Ministers of Word & Sacrament (MWS) who have the theological and pastoral skills to support and enable us in our evolution and journey.

We need to think about our future. Currently we are scoped at 100% and we have the significant additional services of a Non-Stipendiary Minister in specialised areas (mental health, pastoral & LGBTQI support).

In many respects, we feel we are on the cusp of new life as a congregation and wonder if there might be the possibility of more resource in skilled staff to let us exploit the potential - and need - we see? If we are to further develop our mission and ministry as we believe the Spirit is calling us to do, additional MWS hours will be crucial to enable us to build our worship, education & training, pastoral and organisational life, and engage more fully with the diverse range of outreach opportunities with which we are already involved within the city.

Aware of the shortage of MWS within the URC, we must remain actively in discussion, both with other URCs in Edinburgh and with our local ecumenical partners, to see if we can identify sources of MWS which will address our needs and best enable the evolving ministry and mission we have identified. We are also considering if there are broader sources of MWS to draw upon effectively.

WE are the church together. Your contributions as members, associates and friends shape who we are as a congregation and who we have the capacity to become, so please let us know your ideas, hopes and visions of our future.

Harriet Davidson

Pastoral Care

“...bearing with one another in love...”

(Ephesians 4:2)

At AUC, we aim to provide a web of care which promotes growth in relationships and good spiritual/mental health, through both informal and formal contacts.

If you are looking for individual support please contact a minister: **Rev Fiona Bennett (minister.auc@gmail.com)** or **Rev Maxwell Reay (revmaxwell.auc@gmail.com)**.

As well as offering 1:1 support in the setting which is most appropriate for you, they can link you with the pastoral visiting team which offers regular support to the housebound.

Prayer requests are welcomed. They can be shared with the ministers either directly or via Nicola in the Church Office.

If you would like support due to a mental health issue, you would be welcome at the Mental Health Drop-in, held weekly on Tuesdays 10.30am-12pm in the Sanctuary (followed by a Time for Reflection). This is hosted by AUC and run by the NHS Lothian Spiritual Care team. Further details are available on the 'Tenants and Room Users' noticeboard, or speak to Maxwell.

Full contact details for Fiona/Maxwell and the office are on the cover of Seeds.

Book Review

Transforming: the Bible and the Lives of Transgender Christians by Austen Hartke is essential reading for inclusive, affirming churches. While plenty of books have been written in recent years by gay Christians, being trans in the church is often a very different experience, as Hartke details in this book.

For such a slim volume, Transforming covers a lot of ground. The first section details exactly why churches need to make more of an effort to understand the struggles facing transgender people, with statistics on the rates of abuse and suicide, as well as a breakdown of the damaging theology that has often been spoken over trans Christians. For those new to understanding gender identity, Hartke includes a helpful Beginner's Guide to Gender, and discusses the different frameworks that have previously been used to understand transgender people and gender dysphoria.

The second section of the book delves into the depictions of non-gender conforming people in the Bible, along with interviews with various transgender Christians. It's clear that Austen has been intentional about not leaning on his own experiences too heavily and acknowledging the different perspectives that transgender Christians of colour, those of differing denominational backgrounds, those in ministry and those who define themselves as non-binary can bring to the table. These interviewees include the Reverend M Barclay (a non-binary minister), Aidan Wang (a Taiwanese trans man), Lawrence Richardson (a black trans pastor), Nicole Garcia (a Latina trans woman who grew up Catholic), and Lynn Young (a two-spirit Native American).

These interviews are woven through examinations of scripture, different historical approaches to understanding gender, and discussions of the difficulties facing trans people - including mental health struggles, finding acceptance from family, choosing pronouns and a new name, and finding an affirming church. While this is a lot of ground to cover in less than 200 pages, the book

manages not to skim over topics or get too academic. For those who want to explore specific ideas in more detail, there are plenty of footnotes and a further reading section.

Transforming concludes with a Trans-Affirming Toolbox full of ideas on how to make your church and ministry more trans-inclusive, or if you're not currently part of a church, how to educate yourself further so that you can support trans friends and family. This section also includes suggestions and resources for trans Christians on how to take care of themselves and find support.

I would recommend Transforming to both trans Christians in need of affirmation and support, and allies who wish to educate themselves further on the experiences of their trans siblings and understand how they can make their churches safe, affirming spaces.

Rachel Brand



Eco-Congregation AGM



The Annual Gathering and AGM took place last Saturday in AUC, when over 100 people from churches around Scotland gathered to hear how we might "Pass the Planet" to future generations.

We also heard an update on the mechanics: the organisation is to change from being a company to become a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation; Rev Trevor Jamison was thanked for his considerable work over the last 5 years as Chaplain; the URC will continue to fund an Eco-Congregation Chaplain for the next 5 years, with that person to be responsible for giving ecology training to Ministers!

Speaker Ruth Valerio of Tearfund reminded us that God spoke of his Creation not only as being "good", but "VERY GOOD" – in other words "wonderful, fabulous"! She said that we are not just existing and passing through life on earth to reach a spiritual heaven, but that Christians should realise that there is not a dichotomy between the physical, material, earthiness of life on earth and a spiritual, ethereal heaven. We need to value God's Creation, our lives on this good earth and our inter-relationship with the planet and all that is in it. Hannah-Mary Goodlad, previously the Church of Scotland Youth Moderator, spoke of now working in the oil and gas industry. She felt that these energy sources were necessary but we just need to use them in cleaner ways, which technology can provide. (Not everyone present was totally convinced, however.)

The most valuable contribution of the day (or so most of the 11 Augustinians present thought!) came from Scotland's youngest MSP, Ross Greer

of the Green Party. Ross explained that his Christian faith is what has led him to 'speak out' for this planet in a holistic way; and in a different way from humanists. We are stewards and definitely not owners of the earth and he feels that it is important that we work with those of other faiths (particularly Jewish and Muslim neighbours) in speaking this truth.

He spoke about climate crisis (rather than climate change) and feels this wording emphasises the urgency of the changes occurring. If a 4°C rise in average temperature occurs - as is likely the way things are continuing - human life as we know it will not continue! Actual numbers of climate refugees could readily top 50 million by 2050. This is why so many are trying to keep rises in temperature to no more than 2 degrees over the next 5 years.

The churches need to lead, to speak and shout this message NOW! We have had the warnings, in the same way as the trumpets blew in Old Testament days to warn of catastrophe ahead. Indeed now is time for real action; we cannot leave it till later to change our ways. Sally Foster-Fulton led our closing worship with a really pertinent consideration of how we need to speak up and take action now, as Christians.

Kathleen Ziffo

(By the way, of the 10 photo competition winners from over 170 entries, David Coleman won three categories and Sue Kirkbride one. Both are from fellow URC churches. 'Better luck next time' to our Jayson Mannings who did not win - this time round!)

Easy Vegan Chocolate Pots

Serves: 4

Prep: 15 minutes

Chilling: 1 hour

Ingredients

2 large ripe avocados

25g unsweetened cocoa powder

4 tsp maple or agave syrup

1/4 tsp salt

100g of 70% dark chocolate

Method

1. Brake up the chocolate into chunks and put into a pyrex bowl resting on a pan of boiling water. Don't let the water touch the bottom of the bowl as this will burn the chocolate. You can also melt the chocolate in a microwave but I find the stove top method more controlled. once melted set aside to cool a little.
2. If you have a blender place all of the other ingredients into it and blend till there are no chunks of avocado left. If you are using a hand blender this process may take a little longer but the smoother the mix the better the end result will be.
3. Now add the cooled melted chocolate to the mix and blend again. Now I tend to use teacups to set my chocolate mix in as it looks nice, but feel free to use any small container you have to hand. Ramekins work well and will look good on a serving plate.
4. Now place the chocolate pots into the fridge to cool down and set up. I recommend an hour but it does depend on how hot your kitchen is and the weather outside. If you can give them longer it will taste so much better.
5. As this is using avocados the shelf life on this is quite short and it should be eaten within 12 hours of being made.
6. If you want to make it look stunning serve with some fresh strawberries and some grated chocolate on top.

I tend not to tell people that the main ingredients is avocados in this dish until after they have asked for more. I do love the shocked look on their faces!

Jayson Mannings



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

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

In May, we will be working through our new modules – Road to Emmaus and Fruits of the Spirit.

We will also hear a Godly Play story called 'Paul's Travels and Letters'.

"Saul prayed. He watched the empty desert, and listened to its silence. He came so close to God, and God came so close to him, that he knew what God wanted him to do...."

Words from Volume 4 - The Complete Guide to Godly Play

Images from – www.godlyplayfoundation.org



From the Wall of the Junior Church Room



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.

Calendar

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

May		Season of Easter
Sunday 6 th	11am	Morning Worship and Communion, with the induction of new members and preacher Mike Holroyd
	12.45pm	Church Annual General Meeting
Monday 7 th	2pm	Women's Union at Saughtonhall URC 'Bring & Buy'
Tuesday 8 th	7.30pm	Contextual Bible Study – Acts 10:34-48 'The Gospel for All'
Wednesday 9 th	8.30-10.30am	Christian Aid Big Brekkie. RSVP to 240 1523 or mmulligan@christian-aid.org
Thursday 10 th	1.30-3pm	In the Beginning Café as part of SMHAF (see p.6)
Friday 11 th	2.30pm	Walk & Talk
Saturday 12 th	2-4pm	Augustine Assignments (Youth Group)
Saturday 12 th – Friday 18 th		Christian Aid Book Sale (see p.4)
Sunday 13 th	11am	Morning Worship for Christian Aid Sunday, led by Fiona Bennett and Harriet Davidson
	3pm	Our Tribe: Harvey Milk
Tuesday 15 th	7.30pm	Spirituality Book Group – What can Salvation mean for us and our world?
Thursday 17 th	1.30-3pm	In the Beginning Café as part of SMHAF
		Season of Pentecost
Sunday 20 th	11am	Morning Worship with Communion for Pentecost and Mental Health Sunday, led by Fiona Bennett and Maxwell Reay
Wednesday 23 rd	11-3pm	Crochet Making Session with Elizabeth Bay
Thursday 24 th	1.30-3pm	In the Beginning Café as part of SMHAF
Saturday 26 th	2-4pm	Augustine Assignments (Youth Group)
	7-10pm	In the Beginning There Was Disco as part of SMHAF (see p.5)
Sunday 27 th	*12-1pm*	Afternoon Worship, with tea and coffee before the service
Tuesday 29 th	7.30-9pm	Coffee, Cake & Conversation
Wednesday 30 th	11-3pm	Crochet Making Session with Elizabeth Bay
Thursday 31 st	1.30-3pm	Coffee, Cake & Conversation and In the Beginning Café
June		
Saturday 2 nd	11-3pm	Crochet Making Session with Elizabeth Bay
Sunday 3 rd	11am	Morning Worship with Communion
	11am	Youth Meeting in the Studio
	12.45pm	Church Discussion Meeting – Education for All Ages Planning Session with Junior Church, Augustine Assignment, Justice & Peace and Worship Teams and anyone else who'd like to join
Monday 4 th	2pm	Women's Union at Saughtonhall URC 'Bring & Buy'

The marathon takes place on Sunday 27th May. The TLC joint service will no longer go ahead and instead AUC will hold a service at 12pm. Please see later updates to keep you up-to-speed on transport arrangements etc.

Please note the deadline for material for the June issue is Sunday 27th May.

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