

# The Augustine Windows

*a short pilgrimage*



*Five years of window design  
by members of  
the NHS Lothian Department of Spiritual Care  
"Community Mental Health Drop-in"*

## **Making windows**

The NHS Lothian Department of Spiritual Care "Community Mental Health Drop-in" has been taking place for over twenty years, meeting weekly at Augustine United Church on George IV Bridge.

Each year, from 2014 onwards, members of the drop-in have created sets of painted panels reflecting the different themes of the Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival – three panels per year. The panels (paint on Perspex) have been placed in the glass doors that look out on to George IV Bridge, offering a bright interpretation of the theme for passers-by to enjoy and think about.

Between 2014 and 2018, the themes were:

- Power (2014)
- Passion (2015)
- Time (2016)
- Reclaim (2017)
- Beginnings (2018)

## **Preparing for pilgrimage**

Our short pilgrimage uses images of the 15 windows to form a journey, stepping back through the years and through the themes, tracing a pattern of hopefulness.

Pilgrimages usually have a shared end-point – a special place or milestone – but it is the travelling there that is so important: the journey itself.



*The drop-in's 2017 windows on display at Augustine United*

Often, pilgrims make that journey with others – sometimes talking with fellow travellers and those they meet on the way; sometimes simply sharing the silence of walking and good companionship.

We invite you to make this pilgrimage in whatever way is helpful for you: by "walking the windows" on your own or as part of a group; or by using this booklet quietly on your own in a favourite space.

However you use this resource, we offer you companionship by sharing the voices of drop-in users who themselves continue to make their own pilgrimage – one marked by resilience, difficult times, fresh starts and, above all, hope.

***Members of NHS Lothian Department of Spiritual Care  
"Community Mental Health Drop-in"***

### Windows 1-3

- Begin with light
- Begin with love
- Begin with laughter

Our journey begins by asking what we most hope for. These windows offer suggestions of what is best about our lives and our world. They recall stories of creation and the goodness that marks new beginnings.



We notice that in the first window (“Begin with light”), light is shone onto our world. When that happens, it may reveal the magical and wonderful where perhaps we least expect it. But the light may also create shadows and dark corners – those places on earth that seem very far from our ideals or best memories.

Thomas Traherne lived through the English Civil War, a time of great unrest and fear. He imagined the moment when he was born, when everything was right with the world:

“I was a stranger, which at my entrance into the world was saluted and surrounded with innumerable joys. . . I was entertained like an angel. . . All tears and quarrels were hidden from mine eyes.”



The personal reflection of one drop-in member

*“My honesty is like a necklace made of gold and lapis lazuli and set with all the fine treasures of the world*

*My humility is like that of a broken and contrite heart, I am chaff who bends down low by the wind when humbled, corrected, and rebuked*

*I am moulded for a higher purpose  
A higher calling*

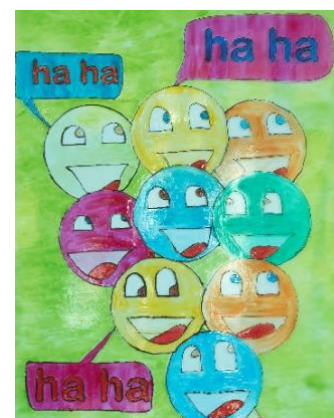
*For we are all but dust  
And we will all return to dust  
So that we can boast of nothing*

*Am I better than you?  
Or are you better than me?*

*We are all equal under God  
And he is the creator of us all”*

**Q.** What do you think Thomas Traherne meant when he remembered being “entertained like an angel”?

**Q.** Do you have an image of the world at its best? Try to name those things that make it good – relationships, sounds, activities, goals. . .



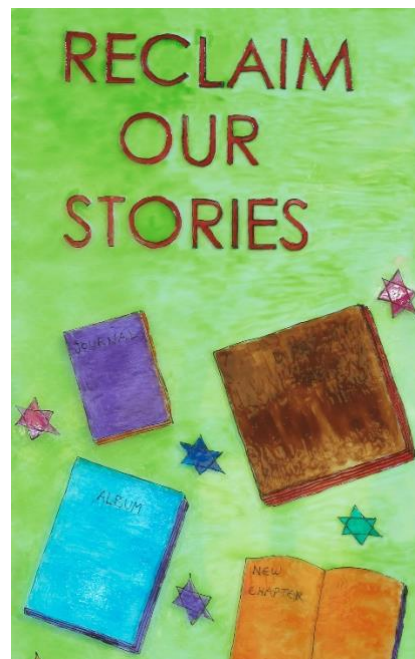
## Windows 4-6

- Reclaim our space
- Reclaim our stories
- Reclaim our future

What if some of the goodness in our lives becomes lost?  
What if our memories become darkened by sadness or confusion or isolation?  
What if we no longer feel as one with ourselves and those around us as we would wish?

Each week, at the Edinburgh Mental Health Drop-in, we create a space where we can be ourselves and share our stories if we want to.

One member has written about some of the drop-in's qualities and the way these help them reclaim something of who they truly are:



“The drop-in is really helpful for my mental health.  
It makes my week better.

It helps with my routine. It helps me to be consistent. . .  
it’s really a haven.

You can be yourself – there’s no-one having a go at you.

There’s a lot of stigma attached to mental health.  
I’d rather just be myself.

My mum won’t let me be.

I’m transgender but here people are

respectful – and it’s peaceful.

Together they make it a  
safe place.”



**Q.** Are there parts of your life that you would like to reclaim? . . . Things you believe to be good about yourself, and that you wish others to experience?

**Q.** Is there a space where you can truly be yourself? (An actual place, or maybe a relationship, or when doing something you love. . .) If not, think about how you might start looking for such a space.



## Windows 7-9

- Time for friendship
- Time for talking
- Time for hope

*“We are looking out from our cage, we  
feel as if we are  
exhibits in a museum, or in a display  
cabinet, waiting for people to see us*

*When we are sitting in a bus, or  
walking in the streets, or shopping*

*Are we the exhibits? Or are the  
spectators the exhibits?*

*Will people approve, or will people  
object?*

*To a little or large extent, their  
reaction will affect us,  
for the better, or for the worse,  
whether we choose to accept it or not*

...

*The more stress, noise, activity, there  
is going on round us, the higher our  
stress levels go up, and the more  
annoyed and agitated we feel*

*We are like yo-yos going up and down*

...

*In an unperfect world it is difficult to  
find peace, in one’s life  
and to find peace of mind*

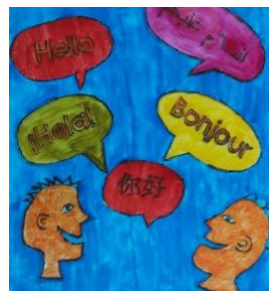
*However, do not let that stop you  
from searching,  
for your peace of mind, in your space,  
and in your life*

*You will find it in your own time”*



The lines on the left are from a poem written by a member of the drop-in. They express a feeling that most of us have at different times – the sense of being trapped. Trapped by our fears, our voices, our work, our confusions, the expectations of others. . .

One of the gifts that the drop-in offers is time to think about why we feel trapped, and time to explore possible ways of easing the sense of being in “our cage”. One drop-in member wrote this just a few weeks after they’d begun visiting the group:



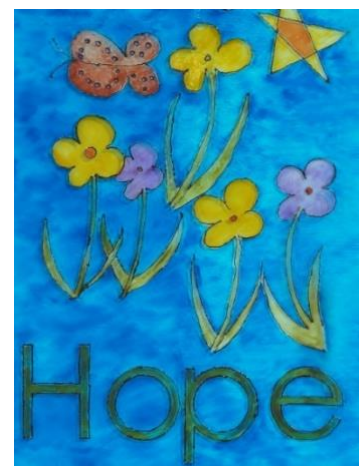
“I have the same interests as other people. . .

It’s good to meet everybody. I’m just spreading my wings. . .”

The drop-in offers a space to “spread our wings”, to reclaim our best selves and create space for others. We begin by making *time* – for friendship, talking, and hope.

**Q.** What are the things that you like to make time for? Are there people you would like to make more time for?

**Q.** If you find the time, what helps you “spread your wings”? If there isn’t as much time as you’d like, how might you begin to make more of it?



## Windows 10-12

- Passionate about music
- Passionate about art
- Passionate about writing



There's a lot of passion about in our world – from the passion groups express when challenging the decisions of governments or courts through to the passion individuals claim when pleading for their place in a television competition.

We each talk passionately about different things – about our love of family, about injustices we see, or about skills we are developing. In many cases, our passion builds a much-needed sense of focus in our day.

Music, art, writing. . . these are all obvious areas of creativity that many of us are passionate about – but is there a sense in which *all* passion has the potential to inspire creative activity?

**Q.** A famous poet once said: “After all, we were put on this earth to *make* things.” Do you think that’s true?

Can we be passionate about activities that are not just about *making* things?



**Q.** Is there something that you are passionate about?

If so, what or who encourages that passion? How or where do you express it?

## Windows 13-15

- The Circle of Life
- Sunny one day
- People power

These final windows were actually the first we made at the drop-in. They were designed in 2014 to reflect the theme of “Power”. The three images express the idea of power in very different ways.



1. “The Circle of Life” suggests the abundance of good resources to be found within nature.
2. We often experience the powerful effects of the weather. “Sunny one day” suggests that we need a balance of weathers to create good environments in which to live; and that we need to create balance in our *human* environments to ensure that the climate is not adversely affected by our activities and priorities.
3. Our final window, “People power”, suggests that a lot of qualities go to making a community that can live in its best way: empathy – compassion – appreciation – inclusion – caring – friendship. . .

One member of the drop-in wrote this definition of “the power of community”

- I. *Salvation. . . a place to feel safe*
- II. *Conversation. . . somewhere to have a chat with people*
- III. *Spiritual. . . a feeling of closeness and empathy*
- IV. *Nourishment. . . well fed and watered*

**Q.** How would *you* define a powerful community?

**Q.** Thinking about the world’s environment, in what ways do you think we can use our human power to ensure that all aspects of the “circle of life” are best supported to flourish?

**In a way this final window brings us full circle; back to the hopes with which our short pilgrimage began. With this leaflet, you may wish to begin the journey all over again, either re-walking the exhibition or later, in a private place of your own.**





**NHS Lothian Department of Spiritual Care**  
**"Community Mental Health Drop-in"** meets every Tuesday morning from 10.30am at Augustine United Church (*details below*)  
Tel: 0131 537 6516 for the Community Mental Health Spiritual Care Team

**Augustine United Church (AUC)**  
[www.augustine.org.uk](http://www.augustine.org.uk)

41 George IV Bridge  
Edinburgh  
EH1 1EL

Tel: 0131 220 1677

Sunday worship is at 11am

**Our Tribe** (LGBTQI Ministry@AUC) meets at AUC on 2nd Sunday of each month at 3pm

**Credits:** *Window panel photos by Jon Davey*  
[www.jondaveyphotography.co.uk](http://www.jondaveyphotography.co.uk); *poems and quotations from members of the Community Mental Health Drop-in*



*Details from 2017 windows, with George IV Bridge reflected in glass*