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Soap and Love, By Rev Fiona Bennett

I cannot remember a time our household has ever used so much soap!



That is perhaps a rather sad reflection of our general domestic hygiene, but I think it might be true to say that currently our hands are at their all-time cleanest!

I am glad our local supermarket has Wright's Coal Tar in stock, so not only have we soap, but the soap I prefer to use; and I am reminded again of how privileged I am.

This may be the strangest May in memory, but it is still a May in which Christian Aid week is going ahead. Their appeal this year involves a lot of soap, as they support refugees in camps in Bangladesh (Rohingya refugees fleeing Myanmar) and elsewhere.

Many are fighting Coronavirus in overcrowded temporary shelters where 80 per cent of families report having at least one person seriously ill and only 67 per cent report having soap. This lock down has had a drastic effect on the health, incomes and security of people across the world.

Christian Aid invite us to support their work this May as we can, in prayer and through online giving. It is at times like these – testing times – that we recognise we are all in this together. Coronavirus impacts all of us, but love unites us all. Love never fails.



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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 email the contact person.

Centre, Property & Finance

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To get involved volunteering within AUC or the local community:

AUC Volunteering

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Local Community Volunteering

Della Morris

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Prayer from Christian Aid

God of heaven and earth,
in these times of isolation –
 apart from loved ones
 distant from friends
 away from neighbours –
thank you that there is nothing
 in all of creation,
 not even coronavirus,
that is able to separate us from your love.
And may your love that never fails
 continue to be shared
 through the kindness of strangers
 looking out for each other,
 for neighbours near and far
all recognising our shared vulnerability,
 each of us grateful for every breath,
 and willing everyone to know the gift
 of a full and healthy life.
Keep us all in your care.
Amen.

Front cover photo: Arno Smit on Unsplash

New Kids on the Block

A few words from the new team behind Seeds.



This month, Eilidh Carmichael steps down as editor of Seeds. We are so grateful for all she has done not only to help us share our news with each other, but to produce magazines that are lovely to look at and hold. Eilidh's "goodbye" thoughts are below, but we don't want to wish her "farewell", only "fare well".

Eilidh will be a hard act to follow – but follow we must. And you will notice that it is taking two of us to do the job that Eilidh did on her own! We are in the learning stages, but this Anglo-Irish team will do its very best to produce a monthly magazine that reflects the remarkable life of Augustine.

Laurence will gather in the words and images. Denis will be making them look beautiful.

This first edition with us at the helm is a little lighter on content than usual. Forgive us if your article hasn't appeared this time (we have it on file) or is shorter than when you last saw it! We hope the mix works for you as in many different ways we all "experience the world differently".

All good wishes,

*Laurence
& Denis*

Handing Over the Baton

Outgoing Seeds editor Eilidh Carmichael reflects on what has struck her most during her time in the role.



Goodness gracious – how quickly three years can go by!

When I was first asked about taking on Seeds, it was because I know a bit about editing and am about as technologically savvy as most my age. Over the last three years I've learnt – and enjoyed learning – so much in the production of the magazine. I'm not a visual person, so making something look appealing hasn't always come easily to me, but the satisfaction when I have managed it has always been high!

The main thing I've taken to heart though has nothing to do with pieces of technical know-how I've figured out at 1am on the day of a deadline.

Instead it has everything to do with our community. It's taken my breath away time and again how many thought-provoking, funny or informative articles are sent my way, often unsolicited. We are an active, passionate, earnest community and helping to bring to life articles which express that has been a privilege.

I look forward to supporting Laurence and Denis as they figure out their own style and ways of working over the coming months. I know the AUC community will show them as much support and appreciation as they have shown me this last wee while.

With thanks, *Eilidh*



Photo by Markus Spiske on Unsplash

'Think Global, Act Local.'

Anne MacKenzie reports on a thought-provoking gathering

Back in March, Mayfield Salisbury Church hosted a very well-attended gathering to consider what we can do to reduce global carbon emissions.

David Bethune, recently retired from his work with Eco-Congregation Scotland, reminded us that 'There is no planet B'. He spoke of the letter to the Colossians in which St Paul reminds us that "all things in heaven and on earth have been created through him and for him". In the book of Genesis we are told of our responsibility to care for creation – it is our job!

As individuals we each contribute about fifteen tons of carbon dioxide a year to the atmosphere, and we need to reduce it to one ton per year! We talk about 'offsetting', but that is only a poor alternative to actually reducing our carbon emissions. Planting four trees represents a one-ton carbon offset and there are plenty of projects where we can do this. One is called 'Trees for Life', based in Moray. (More information at www.treesforlife.org.uk)

Adam McVey, Leader of the Edinburgh City Council, claimed that Edinburgh is the greenest city in the UK, aiming to be carbon zero by the year 2030. Travel and heating account for 60 per cent of Edinburgh's carbon emissions. New Council homes will all have zero carbon footprints, and in the restoration of Saughton Park two ground source heat pumps have been installed, with a micro hydro-electric plant nearby in the Water of Leith providing power in an eco- friendly way. There has also been a decision by all tourism related businesses to work for sustainable management rather than growth.

Edinburgh City Council's City Plan 2030 and City Mobility Plan can both be found online at www.edinburgh.gov.uk/say/city-plan-2030-city-mobility-plan/1

[Ed. What more can we each do? See Jayson's example, p.11]

Covid-19 Update

From the Centre Property and Finance Team

Covid-19 is taking a huge toll on us all. The effects are being felt in every corner of the globe and in every part of society. We understand and share the anxieties and pressure of work our members and friends are experiencing at this time.

In line with government instructions, the church building is closed for the foreseeable future. Our four caretakers are on furlough, which means that they are staying at home and we will get a grant to preserve their jobs. Rachel continues to work from home. All tell us they are well.

As you can understand, our income from letting rooms is under severe pressure at this time, especially as there will be no Fringe this year. No one knows when "normal" will return or what "normal" will look like as the groups who hire our facilities are feeling the pressure too.

AUC is cutting costs where it can but with the loss of rental income we are now more reliant than ever on congregational giving. Recognising that Covid-19 is affecting household incomes and livelihoods, we know that not everyone is in a position to help, and we are grateful to those who have recently increased their Standing Orders. With our worship services currently shared online, Sunday cash offerings are no longer possible. Now is a good time to change how you support AUC. See more details on the right.

If you are a UK income taxpayer, donations can be Gift Aided and AUC will get 25 per cent more at no extra cost to you. Standing Order and Gift Aid forms can be downloaded from our website, and are also available from our Administrator or Treasurer.

The CF&P team is exploring all avenues to shore up AUC's financial position at this time and is open to any bright ideas you may have.

Best wishes to you all,

The CP&F Team

If you are able to, the following are ways you can help financially:

Standing Order

Cheque

Make it payable to AUC and send to the Treasurer's home address (3 Dreghorn Loan, Edinburgh EH13 0DF) or the church administrator - all contact details on front page

Website

You can now pay by PayPal or credit/debit card (you don't need to have a PayPal account to donate)



Music in the Mayhem

The Pianist of Yarmouk reviewed by Leslie Morrison

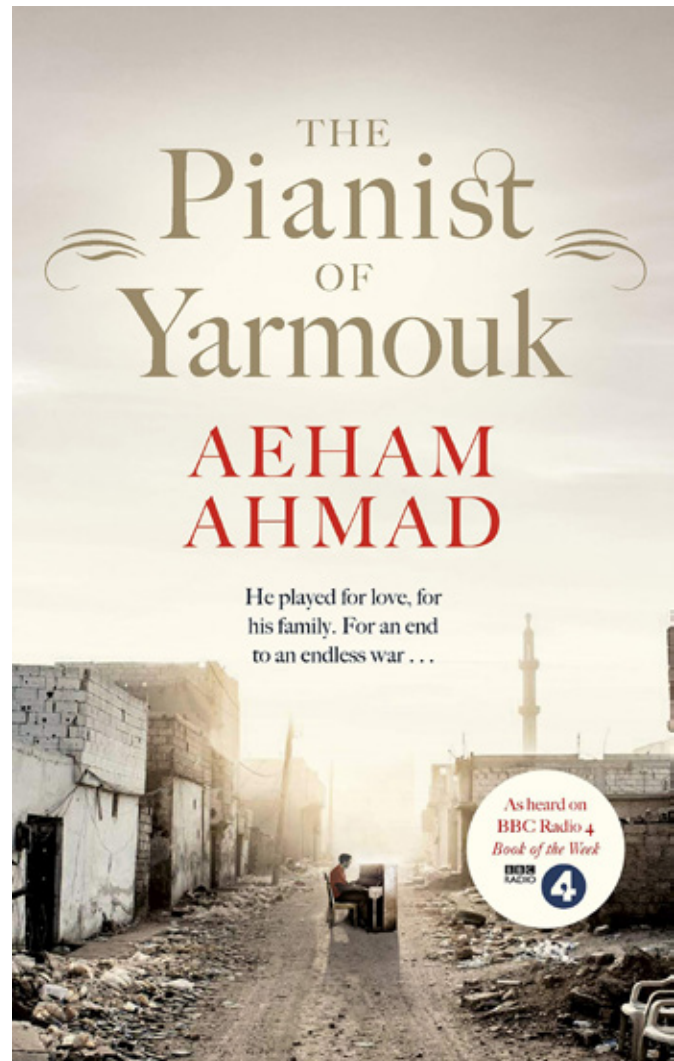
Several months ago, travelling in the car to Glasgow, I was listening to Book of the Week on Radio 4. I was transfixed. Rather than listening to an excerpt from a book, I was listening to an interview with Aehem Ahmad, a young Syrian who had fled from war torn Syria and arrived in Germany, with his young family following him later.

Aehem was born and had spent his early years in Yarmouk, the largest Palestinian refugee camp in Syria until it was destroyed by ISIS fighters in 2013. It lay on the southerly outskirts of Damascus, the capital city of Syria. Reading his story has given me much thought about the will power and the sheer passion and energy of human beings when all around life is broken and lost, and where despair and fear are the order of the day.

Aehem had returned to Yarmouk from Homs in northern Syria where he studied music to find his home town desecrated and wrecked by war and violence. He feared for his family, his friends, his community and himself. In utter despair he turned to the only thing he knew that would give him comfort, and perhaps even joy in all the misery surrounding him. He dragged his upright piano out into the street and played music and sang in the knowledge that he could be killed for this act of defiance.

The Pianist of Yarmouk relates the ups and downs of Aehem's life; the barriers put in his way as he tried to be as good a musician as possible and, it must be said, a good citizen. In a telling phrase, he says, "Hunger makes you moody". One senses that hunger was not only a physical fact of life for Aehem and millions of other Syrians; it is metaphorical too in that he realises there must be more to life than this 'hell on earth' that is present day Syria.

This book is compelling and uplifting. It made me angry, sad, horrified and yet thankful that the human spirit can prevail for good. This is of God, and one can, even in the darkest moments of the human predicament, discern the hand of God at work in humankind.



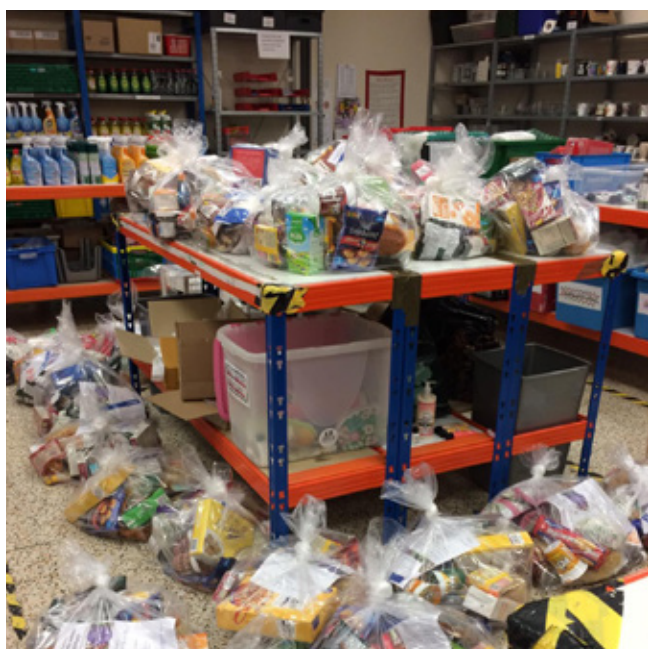
***The Pianist of Yarmouk* by Aehem Ahmad
was published by Michael Joseph in 2019.**

Homelessness in a Time of Coronavirus

Jen McQuistan, from the charity Fresh Start, has been in touch to let us know how they've been responding to the needs of homeless individuals and families during the current pandemic.

It has been a very busy few weeks at Fresh Start. We took the difficult decision to stop accepting all donations of goods and cancel all of our volunteers, but our staff team have been working around the clock to put contingency plans and emergency services in place so we can still support our vulnerable clients throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

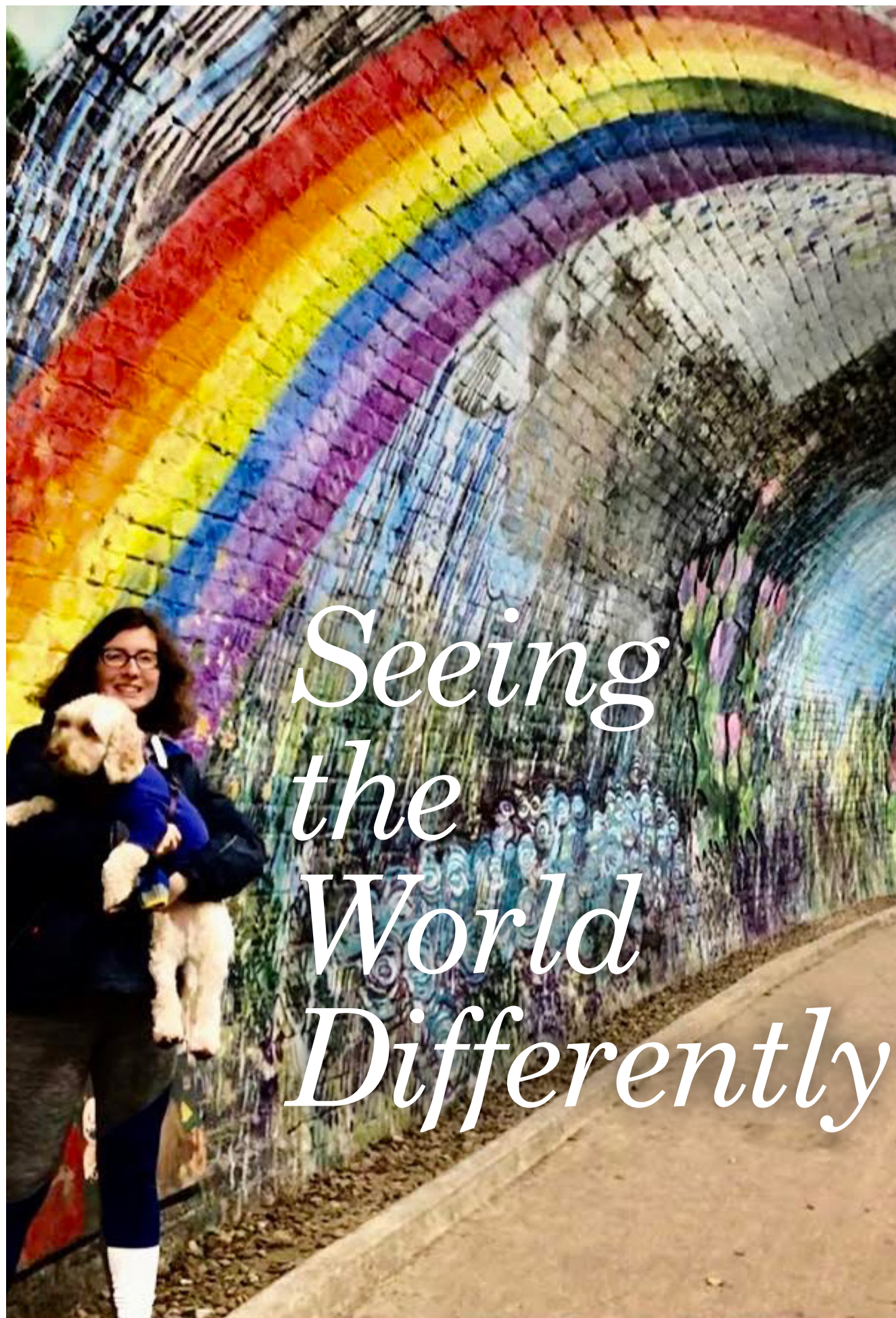
As many of you know, Fresh Start typically supports people who have been homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless, many of whom are unemployed, surviving on low incomes or benefits, have mental and/or physical health conditions, and have limited or no support networks. Sadly, it is these very vulnerable people that will be hit the hardest through the Covid-19 crisis.



Since the end of March, Fresh Start has been delivering Emergency Packs of food, cleaning items and toiletries to some of the most vulnerable people in the Edinburgh community. And I'm delighted to say that in the last few weeks we have been able to send out over 500 Emergency Packs to some of the most vulnerable individuals and families in need. We have also been working very closely with partner organisations to assist in the delivery of hot meals and packed lunches, particularly in North Edinburgh, and have set up a direct phone helpline so we can support and signpost clients with/to whatever services they need.

I would like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you for your continued support during this challenging time.

You can find out more about the work of Fresh Start at www.freshstartweb.org.uk



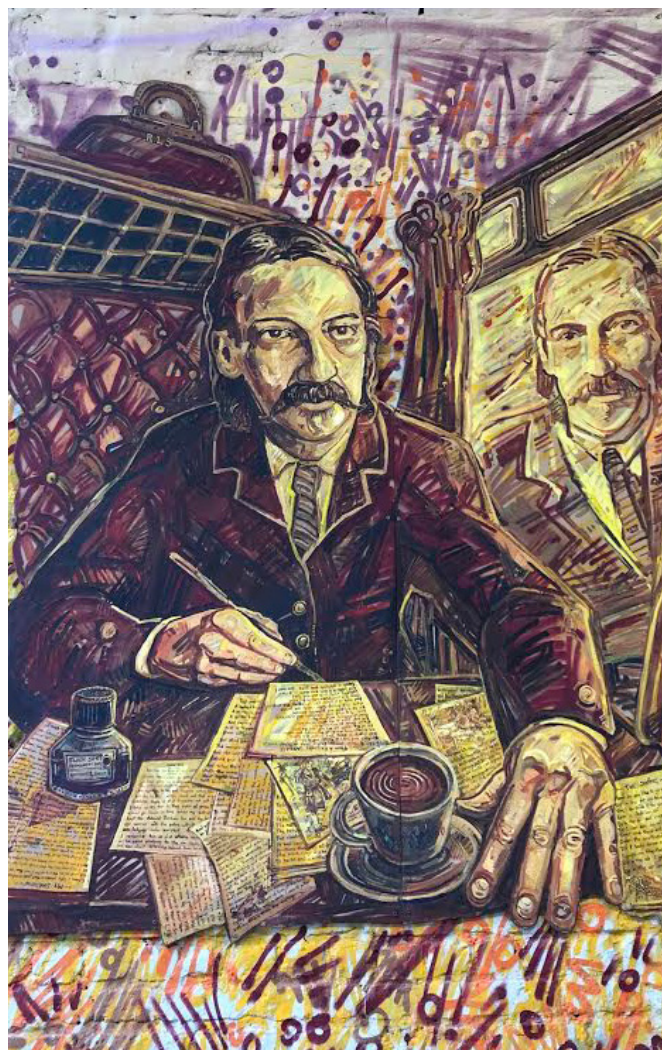
Seeing the World Differently

All of us are experiencing the world in new ways at present. This isn't always easy. We also know that "new normal" – whenever that happens – is likely to be different in many ways too. Here are just two experiences of seeing the world differently, which we hope you will enjoy.

Getting out for a walk, run or cycle has become part of many people's daily routine during the weeks of "lockdown". AUC member Nicola Robinson recently discovered this amazing mural.

"I was walking through woodland beside the Water of Leith near Colinton one morning with my Mum and dog, Maisie, when we came across a tunnel. A tunnel which used to be part of a railway route. A tunnel which is being transformed into a mural by an artist: Chris Rutterford, as well as community groups and schools from across the country. A tunnel which will become Scotland's largest historical mural, based on Robert Louis Stevenson's poem, 'From a Railway Carriage'.

We were so struck by how art and creativity can draw on the vibrant history and heritage of the past to tell new stories as well as lift our moods".



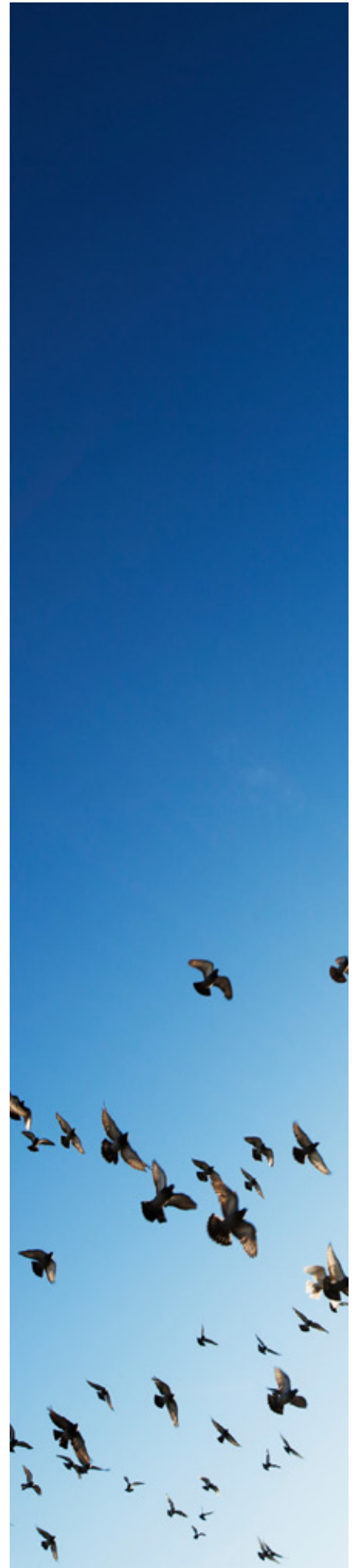
You can find out more about Colinton Tunnel at www.colintontunnel.org.uk. "From a Railway Carriage" by RLS is included in his popular collection *A Child's Garden of Verses*.

Daydream

*One day people will touch and
talk perhaps easily,
And loving be natural as
breathing and warm as sunlight,
And people will untie themselves,
as string is unknotted,
Unfold and yawn and stretch and
spread their fingers,
Unfurl, uncurl like seaweed
returned to the sea,
And work will be simple and swift
as a seagull flying,
And play will be casual and quiet
as a seagull settling,
And the clocks will stop, and no
one will wonder or care or notice,
And people will smile without
reason,
Even in winter, even in the rain.*

(Ed. A poem I recently re-discovered, once used as a gentle evocation of hope during a Good Friday meditation; but somewhat appropriate to our experience of "lockdown". It is by Arthur Seymour John Tessimond and is included in *Not Love Perhaps: selected poems* published by Faber & Faber Ltd.)

Photo by Rowan Heuvel on Unsplash



Pods of protection

Jayson Mannings marked Earth Day this year on behalf of the entire AUC community. Here's how.

As we take measures to address the virus crisis affecting humanity, the planet is still silently waiting for humanity to take permanent measures to address the destruction we are causing it.

Earth Day, marked on 22 April, was a day when people came together around the world to think about how we can reduce, reuse and recycle the resources we have, in order to help protect the planet. We prayed and we took action to replenish and reverse the

damage humanity is doing to the earth. Only by standing together as a global community can we protect all life and shape a better tomorrow.

On behalf of our community of AUC, I spread one hundred seed pods containing at least one hundred Alder Trees. These fast-growing trees, native to Britain, capture carbon and create biodiverse habitats in our city.

What measures can you take to help protect the earth?



What's On(line)?

All our gatherings and resources are currently online.
You can find out details on our website www.augustine.org.uk.

Worship	Sundays 11am	Look out for our Junior Church activity sheet on the website
TLC Youth	Sundays 1.45 - c.3.00pm	Welcoming and inclusive youth group (S1 and Up)
Our Tribe	Sunday (10th only) 3.30 - 4.30pm	LGBTQI+ ministry at Augustine United Church (more details below)
Contextual Bible Studies	Tuesday and Thursday 12 - 1pm	Register your interest to minister@augustine.org.uk

There are also resources coming out a few times a week on the AUC Facebook page, which are then being uploaded to our lovely new website page called "AUC at Home" www.augustine.org.uk/auc-at-home/

Here you'll find Holy Week reflections that you may have missed, Junior Church work sheets, and a selection of meditations with themes ranging from windows to chocolate. (Yes, you read that right!)

Justice and peace with Our Tribe

Our Tribe is the LGBTQI+ ministry at Augustine United Church. It is a joint ministry with the world wide denomination of Metropolitan Community Churches. All LGBTQI+ folks are welcome – friends, families, allies.

We will meet virtually on Sunday 10 May, beginning at 3:30pm. The Zoom room will open at 3:20pm.

During our time together we will be exploring the theme of 'Justice & Peace' in our world today. Communion will be celebrated. You may like to have bread and juice with you. Please bring with you if you can an image, picture, object, book any kind of symbol that represents Justice and Peace for you.

TLC Youth Online in May

for Young People in S1 & Up

Join us via Zoom for fun, friendship
and a look at life's big questions!

TLC Youth Edinburgh is hosted by Augustine United Church (Scottish Charity No. SC000385) as part of The Local Church partnership with Greyfriars' Kirk and St Columba's by the Castle. We aim to offer a safe space for young people of all faiths and of none. Follow us on Facebook fb.me/TLCYouthandStuff or for more information contact Matt Baines on youth@augustine.org.uk

Made, Loved, Kept
Julian of Norwich,
God, & TLC Youth

1.45 pm Sunday 10th May 2020

