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Scottish Charity no. SC00385

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## Who are we? Who will we be?

By Rev Fiona Bennett

The URC has published a paper called "Ready for the new normal" (<https://urc.org.uk/new-normal.html>) in which it invites churches to think through, and make preparations for, lockdown gradually lifting, and how we wish to shape our church life in the future. Please read it if you can.

The pandemic, amidst all the loss, anxiety and strain, has created a unique opportunity for us to consider what being Church is all about and what seems important for the future.

We have had two months of being a people outside of our building and regular routines. So, who are we? What has this time revealed is important to us about being part of AUC? Why are we together? How are we being called to love, grow and to serve together, now and into the future? What are our priorities?

Big questions, and yet an opportunity such as this has never appeared in my life time (and I hope will not again in the same guise), so it seems important to grasp it.

The same situation is true of our lives and society in general. There has been a great acknowledgment of the treasure and significance that front line care workers offer in our society.



How will we carry this perception into the future? Will the pay and conditions of care home staff and hospital domestics improve? Will the care and companionship we have shown to our neighbours and the mass volunteering to support the vulnerable evaporate in the importance of "being busy"? How do we ensure this does not happen?

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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

**Tom Murray**

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### Children

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### Communication

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### Our Tribe (LGBT Ministry)

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### Peace & Justice

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### Pastoral & Mental Health

**Anne MacKenzie**

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### Worship

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### Young People

**Matt Baines**

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To get involved volunteering within AUC or the local community:

### AUC Volunteering

**Fiona Somerville**

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### Local Community Volunteering

**Della Morris**

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*I have been reading a very inspiring book called *Reconcile: Conflict Transformation For Ordinary Christians* by John Paul Lederach (a globally respected mediator and peace builder).*

He writes about Dreaming and the conflict between Realism and the Prophetic Eye and Voice. Writing from the context of the USA, he notes that in the first two months of the Gulf War the billions spent by the USA would have funded the annual budget of the World Food Program of the UN for the next 200 years. 200 years' worth of feeding the most vulnerable in our world, blown in two months.

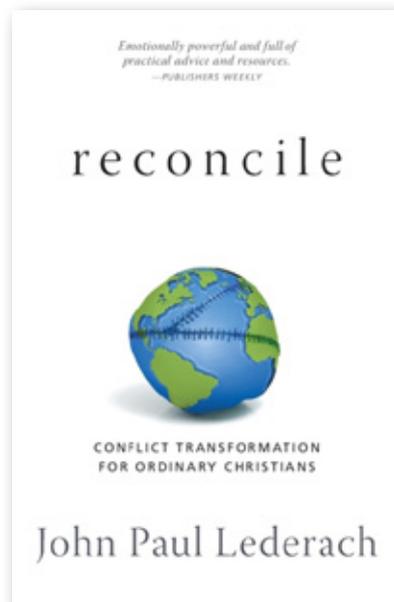
We could draw similar parallels and questions in the UK. In response to a BBC article about how to address the UK's costs associated with Covid (estimated at around £337 billion), our own Leslie Morrison commented on Facebook:

"And so, what would you wish or do? The bill has to be paid somehow. Suggestions? I would 1) Cancel renewal of Trident at a cost of c.£250 billion. 2) Cancel HS2, which is estimated at £105 billion. 3) Give HMRC extra powers to recoup tax from tax evaders whose estimated cost to the UK is £70 billion each year. TOTAL = £425 billion. Does the government need to borrow money? I think not – it's simply got its priorities wrong."

Leslie is raising the same point as Lederach: we invest (in both resource and time) in our priorities.

Emerging from this extraordinary, almost Lenten, experience of the Covid Pandemic, what has been revealed to us about what are our priorities are? How do we as individuals, as a church community and as a wider society, grasp this unique opportunity, and use these Covid-revealed priorities to reshape our lives, our church and our world for now and for the future? What shape of "new normal" are we readying ourselves for?

Our insights have been hard earned, through isolation, death and the self-sacrifice of many, many people. Let us not waste such a costly gift.



*Reconcile: Conflict Transformation for Ordinary Christians*, by John Paul Lederach, is available now.

Front cover photos: Jonne Huotari, Red Dot on Unsplash

# Seedlings supplement



Photo by Arren Mills on Unsplash

During the time that AUC has been holding its church services online, Junior Church has provided a Seedlings Supplement each week in the form of an activity sheet to go alongside the service material. It has been designed with our own Junior Church in mind whilst remembering that others who discover AUC might like to take part as well. The aim therefore is to provide activities that complement the online service but can also stand on their own.

The idea is to be relevant, fun and informative, so each week there is a mixture of videos, text, pictures, puzzles, "I wonder" questions, science, games, baking and an activity that can be done on a Sunday or later in the week. Sometimes there is a challenge in the Supplement for everyone in the congregation to try. When we asked for illustrations of

"Cornerstones" we had all kinds of creative responses which made a collage of photos for the congregation to see the following week. At Pentecost, wind was the inspiration for all generations.

Jess Poole, who is the Development Worker in the Children's Ministry URC Scotland, circulates the Seedlings Supplement to the URC churches in Scotland each week. Seedlings has also found its way to a Church of Scotland congregation.

It is possible we will never know how many have or will see the Supplement, but we hope it will convey something of Augustine to visitors.

Seedlings Supplement will continue just now so do take a look and see if anything strikes your interest and maybe try one of the activities!

## Unfortunate announcements

**Ian Rathjen has been smiling to himself recently as he has read through some unfortunate announcements from church notices. (Not AUC's!)**

The Fasting and Prayer Conference includes meals.

The sermon this morning: "Jesus Walks on the Water".

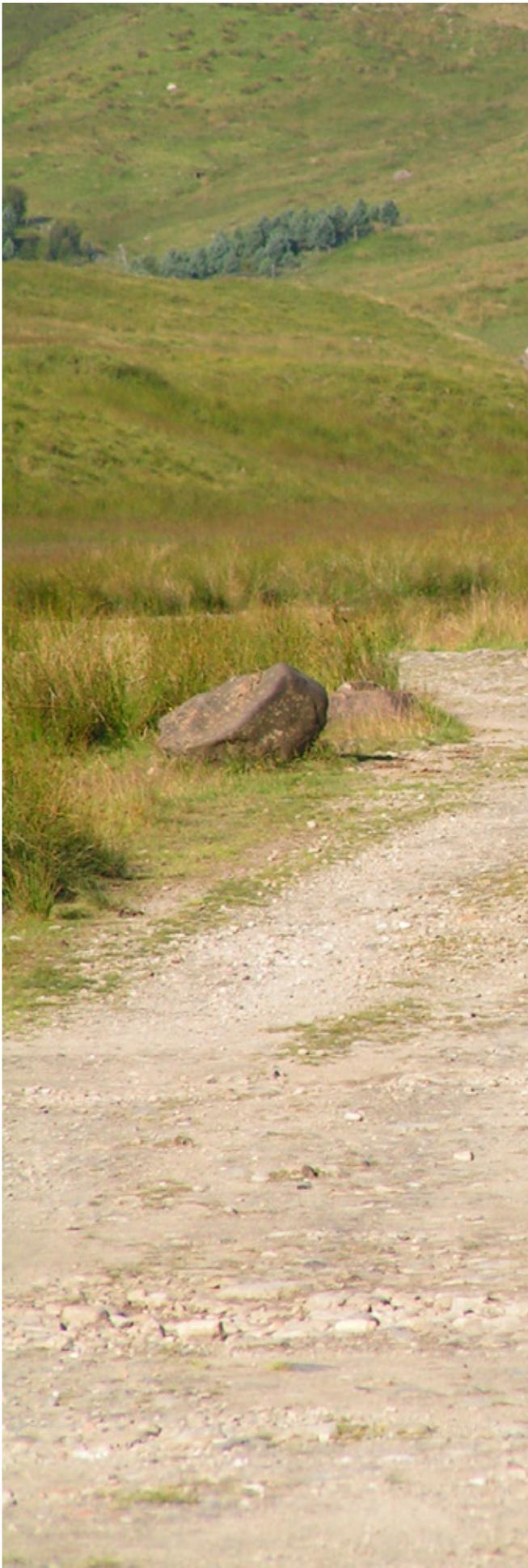
The sermon tonight: "Searching for Jesus".

Potluck supper Sunday at 5:00 pm. Prayer and medication to follow.

The church will host an evening of fine dining, super entertainment and gracious hostility.

At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be "What Is Hell?"

Come early and listen to our choir practice.



## *A time to move on*

A number of young people in our Augustine and wider TLC family are preparing to move on, whether from high school into university or life-at-large, or from nursery and primary school onto the next stage of schooling. But they won't be able to celebrate moving on or graduate (at least for now) in the way they would have hoped to.

Matt Baines offers the following exercise as a way to mark the changes with family and friends, over Zoom or in person. It begins with a passage from the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes: chapter 3, vv.1-8, which we are invited to read together.

There is a time for everything,  
and a season for every activity under the heavens:

a time to be born and a time to die,  
a time to plant and a time to uproot,

a time to kill and a time to heal,  
a time to tear down and a time to build,

a time to weep and a time to laugh,  
a time to mourn and a time to dance,

a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,  
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from  
embracing,

a time to search and a time to give up,  
a time to keep and a time to throw away,

a time to tear and a time to mend,  
a time to be silent and a time to speak,

a time to love and a time to hate,  
a time for war and a time for peace.

These are fairly odd times we're living through. Many of the daily touchstones we are used to are gone or have been put on hold, but life still moves on and the old saying is true: "Change is constant".

The seasons still turn, baby teeth give way to full-grown pearly whites, and young people grow up and move on from the old to the new.

"There is a time for everything" and an opportunity to be creative! How would you act out or draw an illustration for each "time to"? Take a moment to consider what kind of "time to" you are living in at the moment? You might want to pick a few of the examples from the passage. How does it feel to be moving from one thing to another at such an uncertain time?

### Questions for young people about to "move on":

Name one thing that you are grateful for about the time in Primary/High School you are just leaving. (There may be more than one thing!) What are you glad to be leaving behind?

### Questions for family and friends:

From your own experience, what is the most important thing that you would want a school leaver to know? If there was one thing you could tell your school leaver about themselves, what would it be?

"A time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing."

If you can, why not go out to a garden or park together and gather up stones. You can then scatter them (carefully!) while thinking about the way in which you are moving from one place to another. You might want to share a hug or a familiar pat on the back. Think also about those people who you can't be with at this time, especially those who have played a meaningful part in your journey through school (teachers, friends, even the lunchtime staff!)

"God has made everything beautiful in its time." (Ecclesiastes 3: 11)

#### A Prayer of Moving On

Lord, I will trust You,  
 help me to journey beyond the familiar  
 and into the unknown.  
 Give me faith to leave the old ways  
 and break fresh ground with you.  
 Christ of the mysteries, can I trust You  
 to be stronger than each storm within me?  
 I believe You will make a way for me  
 and provide for me,  
 if only I trust You  
 (from *The Northumbria Community*)



# Coping with Covid 19

## From AUC's Centre Finance and Property Team

We are more than aware of how trying this period of lockdown has been for all of you and the entire community. The financial impact on Augustine continues to be severe and the CF&P Team has continued to meet regularly to protect the finances in this stressful period, prepare for the changes which will be necessary when we reopen, and to plan for the longer term future of Augustine in light of the "Shaping a Healthy Future" report recommendations.

### Keeping the Finances afloat

It will be many months before our letting income recovers and in the meantime we are heavily dependent on congregational giving and gifts. Our heartfelt thanks to all of you who have responded generously by increasing your standing orders and Gift Aid, sending your regular giving to the Treasurer or using the Paypal button on the website. We encourage everyone to keep their giving under review and to do what you can to make up for the disappearance of cash offerings and letting income. You will see that we have added our bank details to the box below for those of you who want to donate direct. You may also like to hear of two other developments.

### Amazon Smile

Augustine United Church has registered as a charity with Amazon and we will receive 0.5% of supporters' spending with Amazon. This is a completely painless way of raising a little money if you shop at Amazon. To obtain the donation for Augustine you need to initiate your purchases through Amazon Smile via the link: <https://smile.amazon.co.uk/ch/SC000385>. Happy shopping!

### Tap to give

When the building reopens, we will have the equipment to enable contactless giving by members and visitors.

## Preparing for reopening

Inevitably, it will be many months before church activities and letting recover from the current lockdown. However, we are preparing for the return by keeping in touch with our regular users and planning for the changes which will be necessary to maintain social distancing, improve hygiene and equip our spaces for safe use once people are able to resume something like normal activity. We are grateful to staff and volunteers for their contributions to planning and preparation.

## The Longer Term

You will be aware that the recommendations of the "Shaping a Healthy Future" consultation included both long term financial targets and a reform of our financial function that involves splitting the current Treasurer role into three distinct positions. We have begun by focusing on these new roles because of their importance in the longer term and for the recovery from the Covid 19 emergency.

**Centre Manager** - Our new Centre Manager will be Rachel Fitzgerald with effect from 1 July. Many of you will know Rachel who has been our very capable administrator for 6 ½ years. We wish her success in running the Centre.

**Building Manager** - This is a completely new voluntary position with responsibility for the upkeep of our listed building. It will be advertised within sister churches and voluntary organisations. Please see the advertisement opposite. If interested, please contact the Treasurer.

**Treasurer** - We are once again seeking a new Treasurer from within the congregation to work with the Centre and Building Managers and the Centre Finance and Property Team. If you are interested in talking about what is involved or in recommending someone for the position, please contact the Treasurer.

How to help financially:

#### Standing Order

Augustine United Church (Bank of Scotland)  
Sort Code: 80-02-24 / Account No: 00139118

#### 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)

## Join the Team: Volunteer Property Manager

Augustine United Church (AUC) is an active, inclusive Christian community based in the heart of Edinburgh city centre. At AUC we celebrate the Christian Story, welcome and affirm people of all races, genders, sexualities, ages, faiths and abilities and work to promote justice and wellbeing locally and globally.

AUC is seeking a volunteer property manager to help them manage the maintenance and development of their well-used and recognised building in the centre of Edinburgh's historic old town to ensure this wonderful community asset is preserved for the future.

To informally discuss this opportunity, contact Rachel Fitzgerald  
[administrator@augustine.org.uk](mailto:administrator@augustine.org.uk)

### The Role

You will plan and supervise maintenance of the building within agreed budgets and develop, with the support of the Centre Property and Finance team and the church's architects, a rolling five-year plan of repairs and enhancements for the building.

### What we're looking for

- Some practical understanding of building issues
- Some experience of co-ordinating and supervising building work
- Ability to work with professionals and building tradespeople
- Approximately 10-15 hours p/m on a voluntary basis
- Some business hours availability for site meetings with church staff, advisers and contractors

### Support

You will receive support from and work closely with the Centre Manager (who manages the church's lettings business) and the church Treasurer, as part of a small management team for the building. This team is a key component of the church Centre Finance and Property team who meet regularly throughout the year for discussion and decision making on building issues. The previous Property Manager will also be available for handover and advice.

### What's in it for you?

You will have the satisfaction of using your life skills and time to develop and realise the potential of a well-recognised historic listed building in the centre of Edinburgh. Your role will be fundamental in working with the congregation to secure the long term sustainability of the building as a Church and as a venue for hire/office space for the wide range of community groups and charity tenants who use it on a daily basis.

"I am really thankful for your online services each week. I am an elder at Oldfallings URC in Wolverhampton, which is too far from Edinburgh to travel for a Sunday morning service normally. But now I can access your life-giving inclusive worship every Sunday. I have been sharing the link with my fellow URC congregants who also really look forward to joining you live each Sunday morning. I used to be a musician on Iona so I particularly enjoy the hymn choices!

I hope you will continue to live stream/record worship after lockdown as I feel very much included in your services even with 300 miles of separation."

## Worship feedback

There has been much appreciation of the way AUC's online worship has evolved during our time away from our church building. Services are viewed via Zoom or Facebook far and wide. This message came from one viewer in Wolverhampton.

# Christian Aid Update 2020

**Christian Aid is one of AUC's key partners in mission, as well as being a valued AUC tenant. Jayson Mannings, the Chair of AUC's Peace and Justice Ministry team, brings up to date with the charity's news.**



Like so many things, this year's Christian Aid Week moved online – at a time when the charity sector in the UK and around the world is facing an uncertain future. Covid-19 is impacting not only service delivery but also fundraising.

Just before lockdown, I attended the launch of Christian Aid's Lent campaign in Glasgow. At the time, Christian Aid had announced that it was reducing the amount of staff based in England, with a review also happening in Scotland. It was seen as the way to reduce overheads and staffing costs and focus more on overseas work.

On Thursday 7 May, some of AUC's Peace and Justice team took part in an online meeting of AUC and Christian Aid staff to update us on their work during lockdown. With a number of UK-based Christian Aid staff being furloughed and an anticipated drop in income of £6 million in this financial year, their priority was to protect as much overseas work as they could, and support vulnerable communities through the Covid-19 crisis. So, non-furloughed staff had gone on to reduced hours for three months.

Christian Aid also announced that they were scaling back on the number of projects that they lead to let them focus on five key countries. However, this didn't mean scaling back on the support that they were giving to other projects.

One of Christian Aid's key aims is to encourage people to be in control of their own lives by giving them the tools to support themselves. This can be on many levels and work includes

training, better infrastructure building, community support, and much else, but all with an emphasis on work being led by the community and materials being locally sourced where possible. The scaling back of work for Christian Aid in the UK means handing over a lot of the organisational work to local communities, which is in line with their aims anyway.

## Two Particular Initiatives

Christian Aid's campaign to close loopholes in HSBC funding of new coal power stations in vulnerable countries like Bangladesh, Indonesia and Vietnam, has finally made an impact with a resolution to this effect passed by shareholders at HSBC AGM on 24 April.

A new appeal has been launched to help millions of people who have had to be evacuated from their homes in India and Bangladesh due to Super-cyclone Amphan. Not only have people lost all their belongings and homes but they are also having to take shelter in over-crowded government shelters in the midst of the Covid-19 outbreak. Please take time to read more at [www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/](http://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/)

*[Note that in June, we mark Tax Justice Sunday (14th) and Refugee Week (15th-21st). More information at [https://www.catj.org.uk/tax\\_justice\\_sunday.html](https://www.catj.org.uk/tax_justice_sunday.html) and <https://refugeeweek.org.uk/> ED.]*

# Online shopping

**Shopping is complicated, says Fiona Bennett. Especially online.**

Imagine what the experience of this COVID lockdown would have been like without online shopping.

Over the past two months our family has celebrated six birthdays, broken the door of our cooker, and run out of printer ink several times, all of which have been provided for through online shopping. However, with online shopping, as with any shopping, comes ethical dilemmas, one of which is Amazon.

Amazon has been boycotted by many shoppers due to their poor treatment of staff and tax avoidance. (Some groups are raising awareness of Amazon alternatives (<https://www.ethicalconsumer.org>)).

I would include myself in the people who have campaigned for Amazon to reform their tax and employment practices. But while I shop with a number of different companies online, I also still use Amazon in some instances for basic convenience. It is not an ideal choice on my part, but is part of my dilemma of living and coping in the complex global trade world we live in.

Only recently, I discovered that Amazon has a set up whereby, if you do your shopping with them through smile.amazon.uk, they will donate 0.5 per cent of your payment towards a nominated charity. We have registered AUC as a charity with them, so if you do shop with Amazon (and don't already have a nominated charity) you can pick AUC: <https://smile.amazon.co.uk/ch/SC000385>.

This is not an outright endorsement for the company's conduct but a pragmatic approach to something which is happening. However, it would be good to hear and share how other AUCers live with the dilemmas of shopping ethics (online and otherwise), what alternatives to Amazon people have found effective, and to share information about research and campaigns which help us build more just trade throughout our world.

*[We will share your suggestions in the next edition of Seeds ED.]*

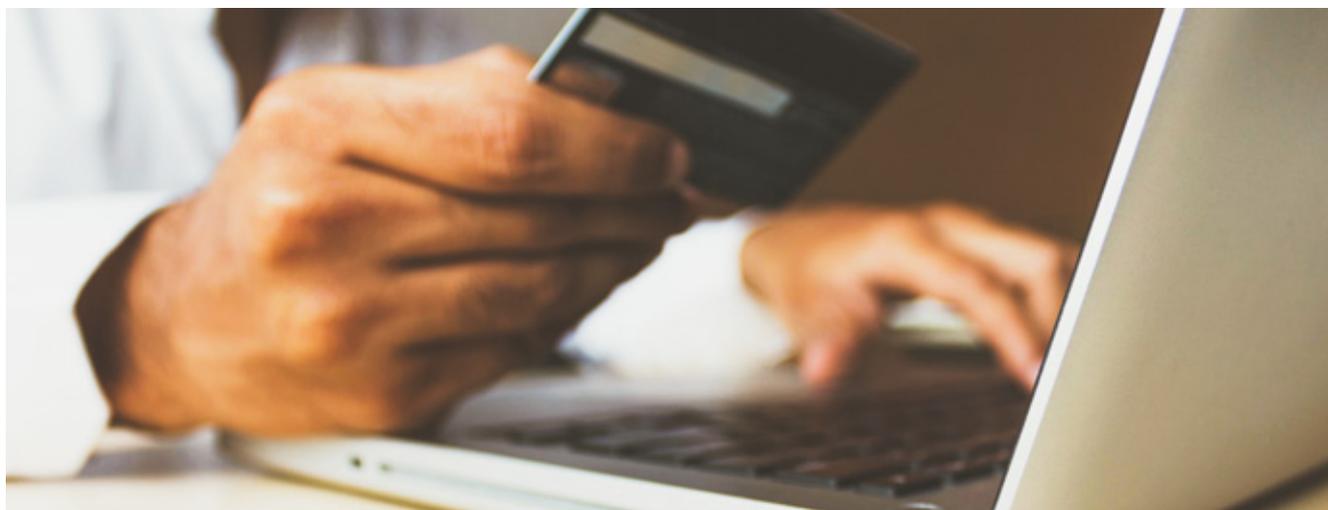


Photo by rupixen.com on Unsplash

# *New blessings from Jesus, Queen of Heaven*

## **Jo Clifford writes of rage, reflection and new films**

I have spent so much time this week caught up in hatred and judgement and rage. Perhaps you have too.

How could they do that? How could they tell such lies? It's all justified, I'd say, and nothing wrong with it. Only it just keeps going round and round and round and round and doesn't really seem to get anywhere.

It certainly doesn't make for a happy life, and I'm not really sure it helps us in the end. But what does? And how can I help write it?

I was going to perform my play *The Gospel According to Jesus Queen of Heaven* in all kinds of places since we came back from our last trip to Brazil in March, just before the lockdown. And I was really looking forward to being back in Summerhall for the first two weeks of the Fringe. But that's all gone now, and we've been trying to think, my sisters and I, as to how *Queen Jesus* can help in this situation.

We've started to make short (60 second) films which reflect truly on where we are and include a

blessing. They're hard to write. So often I find myself unable to bless anybody and just want to curse people instead.

But I think it's important to try. We release a film every Sunday at midday. There's only two so far – but, like *Seeds*, they'll be growing. . .

Find the films on [facebook.com/JesusQueenofHeaven](https://www.facebook.com/JesusQueenofHeaven) and [www.queenjesusproductions.com/a-space-to-bless](http://www.queenjesusproductions.com/a-space-to-bless)

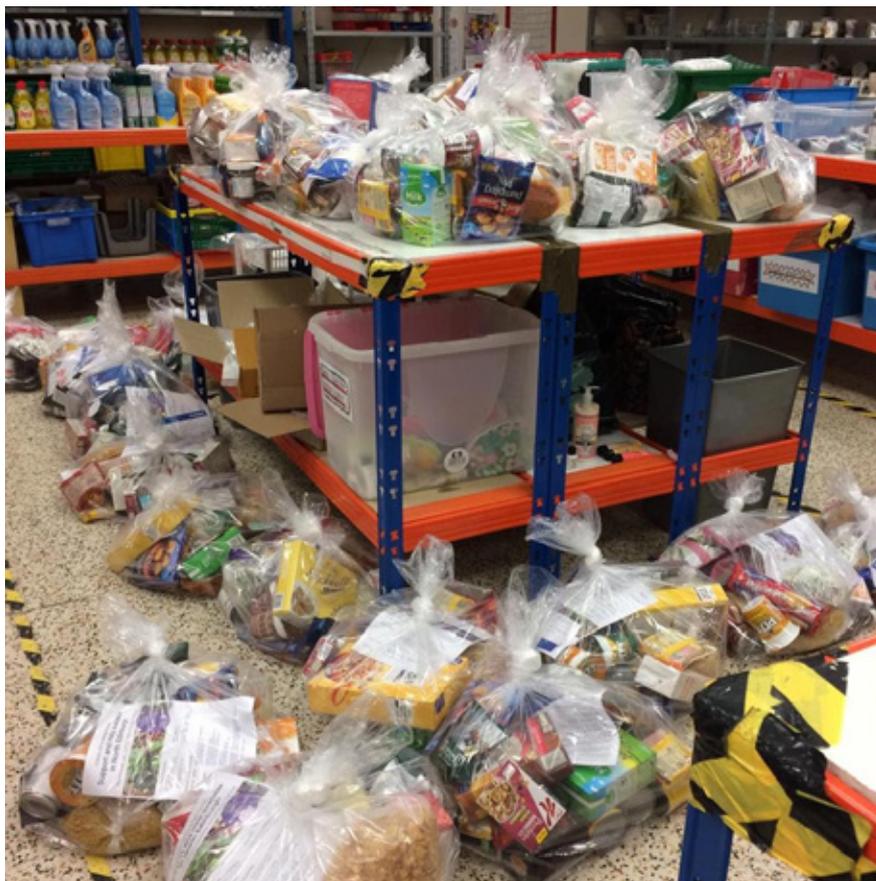


## Lockdown clean-out?

**If you have been spending some of this lockdown time clearing out your cupboards – think about supporting Fresh Start. They write:**

“Once things settle down and we are able to reopen our warehouse doors again to the public we will need items for Starter Packs more than ever before! With many people losing jobs and sources of income over the coming weeks and months we anticipate that our services will be needed more than ever.

So please keep Fresh Start in mind when you're having your Spring clear out, hold on to any of the essential household items on our starter pack list and we will let you know as soon as we are able to accept these donations at our warehouse again. Thank You!”



## It's OK to See Me

See Me is Scotland's Programme to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination. They have recently launched a new resource for young people titled "It's Okay".

The resource includes:

- video
- downloadable "What's on your mind" card for young people, suggesting ways to explain how they're feeling and places can turn for help, plus tips to identify good listeners to approach for help
- resources for adults
- links to the national Curriculum for Excellence



# What's On(online)?

All our gatherings and resources are currently online. You can find out details on our website [www.augustine.org.uk](http://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) - email Matt for more information
Our Tribe	Second Sunday of the month, 3.30 - 4.30pm	LGBTQI+ ministry at Augustine United Church
Contextual Bible Studies	Tuesday and Thursday 12 - 1pm	Email our minister, Fiona, to register interest ( <a href="mailto:minister@augustine.org.uk">minister@augustine.org.uk</a> )
Lunch Date	Wednesdays 12noon	An open social time on with Fiona (to participate, email her as above)"

Other dates for your diary

## AUC Special Church Meeting

*Sunday 7 June, 12.15pm-12.45pm*

To consider constitutional changes. Please stay on in the post-service social space to hear an update on church news and help us consider some AUC constitutional changes.

## Scottish United Reformed & Congregational College Valedictory Service

*Sunday 14 June*

Susan Henderson, who has been part of AUC's community over the past few months, will be commended by the Church for ordination as Minister of Word and Sacrament. The service will be streamed live via the College's Facebook page.

## AUC AGM

*Sunday 28 June*

Via Zoom, after the service. At our AGM we will review the 2019 Trustees Report with accounts and consider plans for the future. Timings and papers will be sent out in the next few weeks.

You may also be interested in

## Church on the Margins Discussion

*Thursday 2-3pm*

Join Urzula from Greyfriars, who shares regularly in this discussion (email [Urzula /Greyfriars](mailto:Urzula@Greyfriars) for information).

## Poetry Evening with Richard Frazer from Greyfriars

*Dates tbc - email [Richard/Greyfriars](mailto:Richard@Greyfriars) for information*

Also explore new resources on AUC's Facebook page and [www.augustine.org.uk/auc-at-home/](http://www.augustine.org.uk/auc-at-home/).