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## *Don't Forget the Treasure*

**By Rev Fiona Bennett**

The process of “unlocking” life seems much more complicated than when we went into lockdown. It is harder to work out what is permitted and what is not as things keep shifting. It is hard to plan for the future when we are not sure what will be allowed at given points in time.

One of my concerns of “unlocking” is how and if, in our drive to get back to normal, we will remember any of the treasure we have discovered during lockdown.

One of the treasures which has been revealed for me through lockdown is the strength of our community at AUC and the strength of our bonds with our TLC partners, the wider URC and the global Church. Members of the Church community locally and across the world have made great efforts to keep in touch with each other and offer support throughout this crisis. Many people have worked together to get meetings and worship services online and printed into letters, so that everyone who wishes can join in in some way. I think this has revealed the depth

of commitment we have to each other as a community. The strength of our bonds as a church community (locally and globally) is true treasure.



I have been reflecting on this while slowly reading Rowan Williams' book *The Way of St Benedict*. In one section, he considers what the Benedictine Rule has to teach us about what the church community is. He suggests that it teaches that the Body of Christ stands in opposition to anything that looks like a “tribal church”. It is a Body which looks beyond the natural affinity of ethnicity, politics, language, family, to sustained bonds that are, in their way, as strong as those of kinship or marriage.

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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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### Children

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### Communication

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### Young People

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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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What unites this body is our calling by God to be the Body of Christ on earth.

St Teresa of Avila was a Carmelite nun who was unhappy about the religious community in which she was living.

The community had settled into habits of convenience that meant everyone joining came from similar backgrounds and class. Teresa felt called to create a community of people who left their status behind and became part of the Body of Christ. One of her better-known quotes is:

*"Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours."*

She, like Benedict, saw the community of the church not as an elite club but as a community called with purpose, a purpose which was enacted in how its members existed and treated each other, and in doing so shone a light of hope into the world.

The phone calls, emails, cards, events shared across the URC, events shared from MCC, news and stories of care and support offered from across the world. . . they all represent the bonds of kinship and common purpose we hold as the Body of Christ, which the Covid crisis has starkly revealed.

I believe we are called not to forget this true treasure as we forge a new normal, but set it at the heart of what we honour, hold in high regard and invest in.



**St Teresa of Avila By Peter Paul Rubens - Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien**

Front cover photos: Photo by K B on Unsplash

# Local and Global

News from the  
United Reformed Church

## URC's call to weekly prayer

A weekly prayer initiative launched in June invites people to pray about the challenging situations many United Reformed Church congregations, Synods and central staff are facing. Created by the Group for Evangelism and Renewal, Pray4URC has set up an online prayer gathering, daily at 8.15pm. The prayer meeting lasts for just 20 minutes. [www.gear.org.uk/Pray4URC](http://www.gear.org.uk/Pray4URC)

## Assembly cancellation is a URC first

For the first time since the United Reformed Church was founded in 1972, the annual General Assembly has had to be cancelled due to the ongoing threat of coronavirus to health and safety. Inductions and some business of the General Assembly were carried out online on 10 and 11 July.

## We must all be "anti-racist"

In response to the killing of George Floyd, a black American man, in Minnesota on 25 May, a joint statement has been issued by Karen Campbell, the United Reformed Church's Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries, and the outgoing Moderators of the URC General Assembly, the Revd Nigel Uden and Derek Estill.

They note that Mr Floyd's killing "is one more in a catalogue of deaths of black people at the hands of white individuals,

in what the United Church of Christ described as a 'modern-day lynching'.

"Together with our sister Churches in the USA, the United Reformed Church declares that racism – in any form – is a sin against humanity, and a sin against God, who created all people in God's own image and likeness. We recognise this violence as just one symptom of a deeply rooted issue impacting black communities and people of colour right across the globe."

Systemic racism is prevalent in the UK as well, the statement continues. "So, it is not enough that we are 'not racist', we must be anti-racist - actively working to recognise and address bigotry in our own lives, and then to dismantle the structures of racism and injustice in our world."

The statement is available in full on the URC's website. Further reflections on racism and black lives can be found on pg. 6.

## Threatened Annexation of Palestine

The URC's "Commitment for Life" Global Justice Programme is asking us speak out against the threat by Israel to annex large portions of the West Bank.

This move has challenged the international consensus for a two-state solution, and would render UN Resolution 2334, which affirms the illegality of settlements and calls for

differentiation between them and Israel, meaningless.

The URC's Mission Committee has strongly endorsed a motion tabled in the UK parliament on 11 May, and supported by MPs from across all parties. The MPs argue that any such annexation of territory occupied in 1967 is a breach of international law, which rejects any acquisition of territory through force, and that it would be a major threat to peace. They also note that when Russia illegally annexed the Crimea in 2014, the UK joined EU partners in imposing sanctions on that country.

You can support the parliamentary "Early Day Motion #464" by writing to your MP. If you don't know who that is, check out <https://www.writetothem.com>. Put in your postcode, and scroll down to 'MP.'

## Revd Bob Waters

A former minister of Augustine, the Revd Bob Walters, died on 3 July, just a few days short of his 90th birthday. Bob Waters was minister of AUC (Augustine Bristo as it was then) from 1968 until 1971. As Chairman and then General Secretary of the Congregational Union Scotland, he was an influential figure in the development of the denomination and eventual establishment of the United Reformed Church in Scotland. More about Bob will be included in the next edition of Seeds.



# Coping With Covid-19

**An update from AUC's  
Centre, Finance and  
Property Team**



**In June we wrote about the work of keeping the finances afloat and progressing the recommendations of the "Shaping a Healthy Future" consultation, which Augustine has adopted.**

Since then, Ewen Harley has agreed to become our next Treasurer and will take over on 1 January. Many of you will know Ewen who has been a member of the CFP team for some time. He is a retired GP who was formerly Treasurer of the URC church at Selkirk, and he has already begun to shadow Tom as part of the transition.

Rachel Fitzgerald has now begun work in her Centre Manager position with enthusiasm from 1 July and will be working very hard in the coming months to reopen the building and revive the letting. Wish her well!

That leaves the Building Manager voluntary position and, coming soon, the assistant Treasurer post. Please think about what you may have to offer. Sharing in these congregational roles, and acquiring unfamiliar skills to do so, is part of our tradition and is essential for the long-term future.

## **Keeping the finances afloat**

We have come through the first six months of 2020 on an even keel. We have had drastic reductions in our rental income, with large reductions of expenditure and investment. Government employment support grants have enabled us to remain supportive of our staff without depleting our resources. We remain grateful to those of you who have kept up and increased your Freewill Offerings but ask you all to keep your

giving under review. People who previously contributed through the Sunday morning collections or envelopes can contact the Treasurer for advice on how to keep up regular giving. A return to some kind of normality will involve increasing our spending again long before the rental income will recover, and will place more strain on our resources. We are confident that our reserves are adequate to cover this in the short term but anything we can do to bolster congregational giving will preserve resources for our future development.

## **Sharing our worship**

It is hard to know when we will be able to worship as we would like, but in the meantime, an exciting example of imagination at work has been a project to enhance our ability to stream meetings and services from the building.

We are fortunate to have superb lighting and audio facilities in the Sanctuary, which means that modest investment in new equipment will give us the ability to broadcast to a very good standard. We have agreed to spend just over £3,000 on buying new equipment, which we hope to have in use for reopening. This is a small fraction of the cost of starting from scratch. We are also exploring whether we can site audio visual and streaming equipment together more conveniently than at present; this will undoubtedly increase the costs if we go ahead.

More than half the initial cost of equipment has already been raised by unsolicited anonymous donations. If you would like to contribute to this exciting project please contact the Treasurer.

# Returning to the Building



Rachel writes about the work that is going into making the building a place of meeting once more. If you haven't received a survey about your own thoughts on this, contact her at the address below.

Rachel Fitzgerald  
Centre Manager  
0131 2201677  
centre.manager@augustine.org.uk

**After more than three months away from the building, the concept of reopening and returning feels daunting to all of us, I suspect. Rest assured that both the church council and the building staff are taking their responsibilities seriously in thinking through the risk assessments, systems and policies that we'll need in place before we can safely bring people back into the building.**

You should all have received a survey recently asking for your thoughts and feelings about returning to the building (if you haven't received it, please contact me on the details below and I will send you a copy!). I would urge you to fill this in if you haven't already done so as it will really help to inform our plans, particularly with reference to worship in the building.

Worship and church activities will continue online for the foreseeable future, until a plan for returning can be drawn up that suits the majority of our needs. It has been wonderful to hear of how many people have been able to access the Augustine community online and been so enriched by it – a real bonus of lockdown that we will take with us into the new normal.

We are, of course, also in touch with our wider community of regular hirers too, many of whom are (thankfully!) keen to return to us. Based on a very small number of direct requests, our current aspiration (Government guidance allowing) is to open in mid-August for external groups to use our rooms in much reduced numbers and with various restrictions in place. This will allow us to test gently the new ways of working we will have established. Although the building will technically be open at this point, all event attendees will have to pre-book and we won't be able to operate in our usual 'drop in' way. I know this will be a disappointment for some but know that we'll be doing our level best to get things back to normal as soon as we can.

Feeling our way back into the physical closeness of community that we experienced in pre-pandemic times is going to take time, patience and understanding on all our parts. We all have such a different approach to risk and for such different reasons. Trying to find a middle ground that works for everyone right now is hard but I know we're all doing our best to forge the path ahead with grace.

## giftaid it

If you are a UK income taxpayer, the above 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.

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 Centre Manager – 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)



## *Black Lives Matter: one father's fear*

**Iain Stewart, Executive Director of the Edinburgh Interfaith Association, offered a very personal response via video blog to the killing of George Floyd in America.**

"The tragic killing of George Floyd has shaken me personally and, I know, members of the Edinburgh Interfaith Association. As a father of a mixed-race child and a person of faith I identify strongly with the cause of Black Lives Matter.

"Racism is antithetical to the main Faith traditions, sacred texts and historic teachings. Many of the main world religions talk about how the human race is a special creation. For some there is the notion that all life is interconnected and that there is no separation between us. There is no faith that teaches the superiority of one race over another. Across all traditions there is a strong emphasis on welcoming, showing hospitality to the stranger, to the other, recognising that we ourselves were once strangers.

"My hero Martin Luther King had a dream that he would one day live in a nation where people were not judged by the colour of their skin but the content of their character. My fear for my daughter growing up is that no

matter how smart she might be, she will not be judged for her talent or character, as Martin Luther King said, but for her skin colour.

"I fear that, like many black people, she might forever feel that knee on her neck. That it might start with name calling and racism in schools to her adult life when she feels her skin colour is holding her back from attaining the job her hard work and talent deserve.

"If we are not examining our hearts and consciences and how we might contribute to or break down racial divisions, intolerance and discrimination then our silence makes us complicit. Don't be silent if you believe children like my daughter Iona deserve a better future. Her life matters. All Black Lives Matter.

"To conclude with the words of Desmond Tutu: 'If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.'"

# *We Need to Talk About Race*

***We Need to Talk About Race. Understanding the Black Experience in White Majority UK Churches* by Ben Lindsay: Review by Ian Johnson**



Are you prepared to be disturbed?

This is a book that Justin Welby said is “a must read for the UK Church. This book is shaped deeply by the gospel call for transformation: of individuals, of communities, of society at large.”

As I started to read the first chapter, I found it challenging so put the book down because it made me angry that here was someone who was suggesting that I was a racist. I left it for a couple of weeks but then, when the present racial tensions erupted, I felt drawn to find out why anyone should say these things about me without knowing me. I had to find out why the author felt he had a right to speak to the readers in this way and very quickly found that he was not making such statements without reason.

*Ben Lindsay* (left) is a pastor at Emmanuel Church in London. He explained how he had grown up in the church and had wanted to do more but found his way blocked. Our church would love to find volunteers who wanted to do more. At the end of each chapter he asks questions that make Black and White, individually and together, consider what they have read.

I found it a thought provoking read in these times and is book of today. It made me question:

- Is our Church racist?
- Why is BAME underrepresented in our Church?
- Do I want my church to change?

A hard-hitting book that will challenge its readers but also has the power to transform.

**Eternal God,  
in our praying,  
let us not just talk to you,  
but yield to your love;  
in our anger,  
let us not just rail against injustice,  
but manifest your love;  
in our actions,  
let us not just flail about aimlessly,  
but build the civilisation of love.  
Until none of us are disregarded for who we are  
nor any diminished by what we fail to be,  
we keep on praying in the name of Jesus Christ,  
Amen**

(extract from statement and prayer offered by the URC in response to George Floyd's death – see p.3)

Photo by rupixen.com on Unsplash



# God-stuff and Creation

**Kathleen Ziffo reports on the 2020 Eco-congregation Annual Gathering. With over 100 participants, the Eco-congregation Annual Gathering in April became, perhaps, the first ecumenical meeting Zoom meeting in Scotland**

See the Marine Conservation Society's Good Fish Guide at <https://www.mcsuk.org/goodfishguide/search>



Photo by Tobias Tullius on Unsplash

Alastair Seaman (Keep Scotland Beautiful) helped us consider why, as Christians, we should care about environmental issues. They are bound up with the core elements of our faith: we can express appreciation for what God has made, follow the commandment to take care of the planet, and show how Joy, Peace and Fulfilment can be found. "God-stuff happens when we care for creation", he said.

Alastair said that we need to respond in a number of ways:

- Enjoy this gift of nature (and not become separated from it again)
- Give a voice to the voiceless (Many are blind to the impact of climate change. Remember tobacco companies seemingly blind to concerns in health campaigns!)
- Be prophetic ("Be a Godly nuisance!")
- Walk the talk (Churches have led on issues such as Third World Debt, Fairtrade, and now on Climate Change.)
- Use the weapon of prayer (Join prayer groups for e.g. the Cop26 conference to be held in Glasgow, now rearranged for November 2021.)
- Be a People of Hope (Use hopeful activism, knowing how it all ends, in the "new creation" of the book of Revelation.)

## Care for the Oceans

"Take only photos; Leave only footprints", was the message from Esther Brooker of Scottish Environmental Link (Marine Group). This year is Scotland's Year of Coasts and Waters. We need to encourage responsible behaviour around the coasts with low impact activities.

Responsible consumption is required in sourcing sea food and producing medicine from ocean-derived products.

We have over 40,000 marine species in Scottish waters. Seafood is Scotland's second largest export after whisky; 25 per cent Europe's Renewable Energy is now generated off our shores; marine tourism (whale and dolphin watching) is big business.

However, many concerns exist around our coasts, with no pristine sea conditions left. Sharks in our waters are declining; kittiwake numbers are 50 per cent down; skuas are down in number; harbour seals are down 80 per cent in some parts. Increased sea temperature and rise in sea level have resulted in degradation of shellfish and our corals, as have changes in commercial fishing or overfishing, and increased sea acidity (absorbing more CO<sub>2</sub>).

So, we need political will, with improved scientific advice and increased public awareness of these issues. Without the sea we would be in an even worse position globally! Fortunately, we do have a buffer, so-called "Blue Carbon", which has accumulated in habitats such as mangrove swamps, sea grasses, salt marshes, sea kelp and within naturally occurring sea loch sediment (which can be better than peatland for retaining CO<sub>2</sub>). We need to protect many areas from sea bottom trawling along with dredging, and close off industrial fishing areas (at least for periods) to allow regeneration. Scotland, Esther concluded, can also do better in its response to the UN Sustainable Development Goals!



# Radical ideas from a manifesto on Climate Change

**John Miller offers his own proposals as part of a plea on behalf of God's world. Do they inspire you to suggest others?**

In war-time (if my memory serves me right) taxis were powered by gas (hydrogen? helium?) stored in a bag on the car roof. Research is needed into alternative fuels, not only for taxis but into all forms of public transport. Private cars burning fossil fuels could be heavily taxed, or indeed banned completely (our family car spent the war years locked in the garage).

For centuries wind power drove all maritime trade. Greta Thunberg has crossed the Atlantic in a wind-powered yacht with a solar panel to provide cooking and cabin light.

We could be talking now about equipping every merchant ship with at least one mast on which to hoist sails, thus saving fuel. As for flying, unless and until an acceptable electric aircraft engine can be developed, there should be strict controls on flight: by permit only.

[Covid-19 has made its own impact in this area, and may result in a different approach to flying in the future. Though what of the thousands who will lose their jobs as a result? Ed.]

Ed. In our next issue, learn about Christian Climate Action – an organisation taking a stand for the environment.



# Bible Journaling through troubling times

**During lockdown, Jayson Mannings has re-discovered “scripture-led art”. He gives us some tips for getting creative ourselves.**

Many hand written Bibles were illustrated throughout history, the Book of Kells being one of the earliest surviving illuminated book of the Gospels we have. With the advent of the printing press, Bibles became text based due to the ease of reproduction; any illuminations would have had to be done by hand, so within about 100 years of the first printed copies this custom had all but died out. Now fast-forward just over three hundred years and we have the new scripture-led art form that is going on all around the world, Bible Journaling.

I know for many (including myself), the thought of doing anything to a Bible makes us feel a little uncomfortable, but there have been note-taking Bibles around for quite some time, consisting of wider margins and a single column of scripture. Today you can buy Bibles with pages to colour or with even wider columns to draw and paint your own illuminations in.

Over the last few weeks, with lockdown I have felt very low. Remembering how much joy

creating art brings me, I got out my crafting box, and sitting down with my laptop I Googled ‘Bible Journaling’ – and, boy, are there a lot of videos! You will never be lacking for inspiration trust me, but here are some of my starter tips.

For me, it is all about the scripture. I wanted to use my work to enhance my Bible and also help me to see new things in it. My main tip would be: don’t start with your favourite passage; use this to discover new things.

If, like me, you have a low budget this doesn’t mean you can’t get creative. All you need is some paper, a pen and a little time. You can copy scripture down and then do some illustrations around that. Don’t get caught up in buying expensive things. Let your inspiration flow, the rest will follow. If you do want to get a journaling Bible, they range in price a lot, so read reviews; join a Facebook group for others doing it and ask them, or me.

Because I don’t want to mess up my Bible, I create my art on some art paper and then cut it to size and paste into my Bible. I like to live with it a few days before I make it permanent – some pieces I have gone back to and recreated because I have been inspired by re-reading the scripture.

I have a notebook now that I have on me all the time so I can make notes of ideas that come to me. I sometimes get expressions or, while watching TV, I have heard quotes from biblical passages then gone and found them and read them for inspiration. You would be truly amazed at how many times in a day people use Bible

passages or lines.

If you don’t feel you are artistic then why not cut out pictures in magazines or use old Christmas cards; that and some glue and you are on your way to creating something that is about your connection with the Word of God. I didn’t start this to be perfect; I started this to take my mind off of what was going on in the world at the moment and it helps to block out my fear and anxiety of how life has changed.

So what are you waiting for, pick up your Bible and start to read, see what happens. It may not be today but if you do it often enough you will start to fill your head with ideas and images that may help you get closer to God and see God is here with you always when times are at their hardest.



# *Bobby is a lockdown inspiration*



Photo by Simon Jones

For another fun and creative project-for-all-ages, Greyfriars Kirk, one of our ecumenical partners, has enlisted help from sculptor Mark Coreth.

In a series of online tutorials, Mark will encourage participants to produce their own 3D doggy designs. Using materials such as garden wire and plasticine, the aim will be to make sculptures of Bobby, the world's most famous Skye Terrier, who guarded his master's grave for 14 years in the Kirkyard.

Mr Coreth, who is based in Wiltshire and is particularly known for his impressive life-size statues of animals, says: "The Greyfriars Bobby story is a story not just of a small dog but also of a community of people who came together through compassion and sympathy for the animal who had elected to lockdown for his human companion and to guard his grave."

Each week, Mark will introduce a new technique use affordable and accessible materials. Those taking part can upload photos of their creations for the 'Lockdown Bobby Project' via the Greyfriars Kirk website. Some of the finished pieces may form a special exhibition at Greyfriars later in the year.

The weekly tutorials are appearing on the Greyfriars Kirk's YouTube channel starting from 2pm on Monday 6 July, running until Monday 20 July. They will then be available on Greyfriars' Lockdown Bobby Project webpage.



# What's On(line)?

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 (not July 26th) 1.45 - c.3.00pm	Welcoming and inclusive youth group (\$1 and Up) - email Matt for more information
Our Tribe	Second Sunday of the month, 3.30 - 4.30pm	LGBTQI+ ministry at Augustine United Church, including open Mic online social led by Maxwell Reay and Suzanne Dyson (9 August)
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)

## Dates for your diary

### The Big Speak Out Stays In

Friday 24 – Sunday 26 July

UK Wide Youth Event (If you've not signed up, contact Matt for more details.)

### The Big Speak Out Worship Service

Sunday 26 July

'The Big Speak Out Worship Service' will be the URC Synod of Scotland nominated service. Led by URC Youth.



## 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

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