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A Vision of Agape

By Rev Fiona Bennett

From the Gospel of Mark,
chapter 12:

'One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these.'"

It might interest you to know that the Greek word for 'love' used in this passage is 'agape', which is the same word used for love in John 3:16 – 'When God so loved (agaped) the world' – and 1 Corinthians, 13 – 'The greatest of these is love (agape)'. In his book *The Four Loves*, C.S. Lewis defines agape as: a selfless love that is passionately committed to the wellbeing of others.

So, in this time of pandemic, what does it mean for us to passionately commit our whole selves to the wellbeing of God and how does this connect with our passionate commitment to the wellbeing of the earth?



What does it mean for us to passionately commit to the wellbeing of our neighbour? What does it mean for us to passionately commit to our own wellbeing?

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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.

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AUC Volunteering

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Local Community Volunteering

Della Morris

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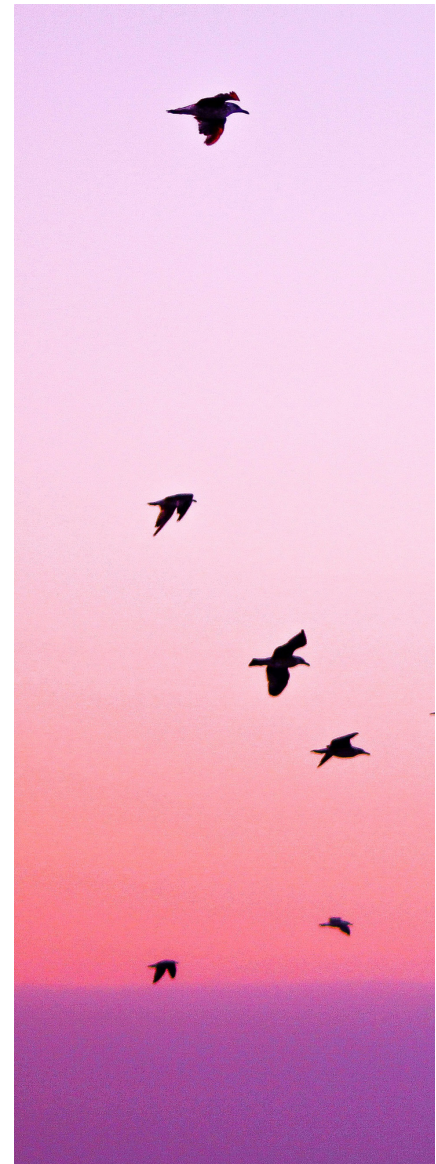
Continued from page 1

Wellbeing is perhaps helpful to think about in the Hebrew term 'Shalom', which we translate as peace, but implies 'wholeness' in the sense of integrity, peace, completeness. To passionately commit to seeking this shalom wholeness for God, the earth, our neighbours and ourselves, are the greatest commandments.

This commitment is not to either God / earth / neighbour / self – all are interconnected as Martin Luther King described: "caught in the inescapable web of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny".

As we live through this time of pandemic, when life can seem so out of kilter, it can be helpful to remind ourselves of what is core, what is 'most important', as the teacher asked Jesus. It is to love, agape style, God, the earth, others and self.

So, today, amidst crisis and celebrations nearby and far away, how will I passionately commit to the wellbeing / wholeness / peace of God, the earth, other and myself?



Adrianna Calvo on Pexels

Front cover photos: Simon Migaj, Thgusstavo Santana from Pexels

Local and Global

News from the
United Reformed Church

Bethlehem Pilgrimage, virtually

Join a pilgrimage to Palestine on 22 September. Because Bethlehem is so heavily dependent on tourism, locals have suffered enormously because of the lockdown. Emma Clare Nutbrown-Hughes from Christian Aid, and a student for the URC ministry, had the idea of a 'virtual pilgrimage to Bethlehem' to support members of the Christmas Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bethlehem. An ideal way to conclude World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel (14-21 September). Email kevin.snyman@urc.org.uk for more information.



Pilgrims in Bethlehem square

Lift the Ban

The ecumenical Joint Public Issues Team is promoting a new report from the Lift the Ban coalition. It provides new evidence of the benefits of ending the ban on asylum seekers working in the UK. The report claims that a change in policy could bring net gains for the UK Government of £97.8 million per year, and that it is supported by 71% of the public. Find out more at www.lifttheban.co.uk

Interfaith Scotland

Interfaith Scotland is hosting its annual Interfaith Lecture at 4pm on Monday 14 September. Professor Jason Leitch CBE, National Clinical Director, will deliver the lecture on the topic of 'Science and Religion: my personal approach to the pandemic'. A time for Q & A and an opportunity for dialogue will be included. To register please email admin@interfaithscotland.org

David moves on

Our Scotland Synod Moderator, David Pickering, has received a call to a return to a pastoral ministry. He will be moving to Emmanuel URC, West Wickham and Elmers End Free Church in the Bristol area. David's final day as Moderator will be the Autumn Synod, which is planned for Saturday 19 September, online. Transition arrangements for after David departs will be announced as soon as they are in place.

A new face at Christian Aid

After seven years in post, Mary Mulligan has retired from her role as Church Relations Officer for Christian Aid Scotland. Mary is known to many at AUC and she has occasionally participated in our services. The new Church Relations Officer, Charlie Meiklejohn, originally from California, has been with the Christian Aid Scotland team for the past year as Community and Events Fundraising Officer.

Greyfriars: Gearing up for the big 400

The 400th year of Greyfriars

Kirk commences on Christmas Day 2020. Following a Covid-pause, the congregation is looking forward to events and activities next year instead. These will include a Festival of Science, "Wisdom and Faith", and an exhibition that pays respect to our experiences of 2020. This will include photos, stories and works of art inspired by the "Lockdown Bobby" project, which you can still get involved in. Learn to sculpt your own Greyfriars Bobby (or other animal) in three short web tutorials, with sculptor and conservationist Mark Coreth: www.greyfriarskirk.com/lockdown-bobby-project/.

Susan welcomed to Inverclyde

On 5 August, Susan Henderson – who spent time with AUC during her final year of training – was ordained and inducted at Port Glasgow United Reformed Church to the URC's Inverclyde Cluster. The service was attended by a small number of representatives from the Inverclyde Cluster Churches – while many more joined online. This was also the first time that Susan had been with family members since Christmas, and celebrating her birthday on this special ordination day made it doubly special.



Online Harvest – Sunday, 4 October

We will be celebrating Harvest this year in our online worship on 4th October. Fiona shares her plans.

Harvest Photos

To help shape our worship, I would be grateful if anyone who wishes to could send in pictures of food you have grown this year in a garden or pots, and I will make a photo collage of our crops! Alternatively, if you have no room to grow anything yourself, why not send in a picture of some kind of food you enjoy and are grateful for? Please email them to me (minister@augustine.org.uk) by Wednesday, 30 September.



Harvest Offering

Also as part of our Harvest, we will be raising funds for the work of Christian Aid.

On our behalf they are supporting people in Lebanon who have lost everything,

farmers in Nicaragua affected by climate change, and transpeople in Myanmar experiencing exclusion, to name but a few examples. Christian Aid invites us to remember that 'when ordinary neighbours come together, they can create lasting change. Keep the spirit of togetherness going by supporting our global neighbours still facing crisis.' You can learn more about the work Christian Aid does on our behalf, and how to donate, through their website: www.christianaid.org.uk

Christian Aid Prayer

Loving God,
Come now and make us into a
global neighbourhood,
Looking out for each other
Through struggle and crisis,
Reaching out to strangers
Who became sisters and
brothers.
Shape us into a caring
community,
Strengthening each other
Through every challenge,
Standing together
Until justice comes for all.
In your name we pray.
Amen.

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.

If you are able to, the following are ways you can help AUC 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)

A Pleasure and a Privilege

Over nine years, Kathleen Ziffo has become a familiar face to worshippers at AUC on a Sunday morning.



As Church Secretary, she has stepped up to the front most weeks to encourage, remind and, above all, welcome us. As she always said, “whether you’re new or a regular, it doesn’t matter.”

Kathleen was already a well-known face before she volunteered to succeed Doris Caldwell as Church Secretary back in 2011. She had been attending AUC since the early 1970s, when she moved to Edinburgh to work as a physiotherapist. She had a good idea of what would be involved (“plenty of Minutes and correspondence”), not least because her own Mum had also been a Church Secretary. But even she couldn’t possibly have foreseen all the developments that would take place during her term of office.

From the very beginning, Kathleen was conscious of altering ministry priorities. Fiona Bennett had become the church’s minister a couple of years earlier and the joining together of Edinburgh’s Metropolitan Community Church with AUC had also recently taken place. Also around this time, the embryonic “church life working groups” (nowadays, the Church Life Ministry Teams) were an important step in encouraging greater involvement by church members in AUC’s life and ministry.

The 2015-17 project to re-roof the church and develop its heritage story-telling was a significant event in Kathleen’s time as Secretary, as has been the more recent Healthy Future review. A continuing thread throughout has been the emphasis on what Kathleen

calls “radical welcome”. For her this has been reflected in the importance of one to one communication, responding to the needs and concerns of individuals and making sure these were shared in the right places. The role of Secretary, as Kathleen has lived it, has been very much a pastoral one as well as administrative.

In recent years, a proportion of the administration has been taken on by Rachel, our church administrator and now Centre Manager. This has been a bit of a relief to Kathleen who admits that “I.T. isn’t really my thing!” This has freed her up a little to help, for example, drive the congregation towards gaining its Silver Eco Award in 2018 – a project close to her heart.

As Kathleen hands over the reins to Linda Harrison, she says she will miss her close working relationship with Fiona, and even “poking my nose into everything!” Being Church Secretary, she says, has been “a pleasure and a privilege”. But she knows that it’s time to step back (partly because her wonderfully supportive husband Stephen tells her so!) and she is looking forward to pursuing a few more interests of her own.

Such is Kathleen’s infectious energy and enthusiasm, though, and her passion for peace and justice, the environment, and AUC’s heritage, that even as she “steps down”, we can be absolutely sure she’ll be stepping up again wherever she feels she can make a difference. That’s just who Kathleen is – and we’re immensely grateful.

Meet Your Neighbour

Reviving the Seeds tradition of asking AUC members and visitors to tell us a little bit more about themselves – and what drew them to AUC in the first place. Plus, for fun: a favourite book and a favourite place.



Kate Owens

Kate's journey to Edinburgh began in Coventry. Yes, from Coventry in England!

That was where Kate was born, but her family moved for her Dad's job to near Atlanta, Georgia, when Kate was 11. It wasn't an easy move for her at that age, but she now regards it as a "net positive". "So many things happened because of the move that made me better as a person. I wouldn't be married to Andrew!"

They met at Georgia Institute of Technology, where Kate went to major in engineering. It was while she was having a wobble over that subject choice (she shifted to Industrial Design) that a student friend, a member of the campus ministry group, appeared unexpectedly one day with a Georgia Tech teddy and a card of encouragement. Kate realised that her friend was putting into action her values and belief: "Instead of just saying it, she was doing it. Her faith in Jesus led her to love people in such a tangible way, which really impacted the way I viewed my own faith."

"Doing" faith is important to Kate. She got involved in the student Christian group and immediately set her sights on working for Globalscope, an umbrella organisation for campus ministry opportunities. A three-month exchange semester in Chile was an important stepping stone.

Inspired by similar exchanges, she and others (including Andrew) began researching what they could do for students in another place. As a team-in-the-making, they interned with Christian Campus Fellowship, studied at seminary in Tennessee, then fundraised

together in preparation for establishing Roots in Edinburgh in 2013: in all, a three-year journey.

Kate describes Roots as "a grace-driven community for all students, offering life and faith together in whatever way they want it." It is in large part their commitment to the diversity and inclusion that Roots fosters for mainly international students that drew Kate and Andrew to AUC.

They wanted a place where they could be themselves and where their children – Ozzie and, later, Max – could also find a home. She remembers on their first Sunday being approached by an older church member, John Miller, and being so struck by the interest demonstrated by him and others. The acceptance of Ozzie in junior church was important too. "So many churches say everyone matters and has a place. . . but you're a child. Here, children are part of what matters too."

The intergenerational nature of AUC is important to Kate. Without it, she says, "you're missing so much in terms of what makes community and of explaining how God is." She also knows that she could bring any student here without stress. As for herself, AUC quickly became a focal point for living like Jesus. She says: "I've never cared about going to a church before."

Favourite book

Homegoing by Yaa Gyasi, a Ghanaian writer who explores the impact of slavery down the generations.

Favourite place

"Eating a takeaway (Thai) on the couch with Andrew."

"faith in Jesus led her to love people in such a tangible way, which really impacted the way I viewed my own faith"

Memories of Brian Bailey

The Revd Brian Hudson Bailey, OBE, our minister from 1984 to 1996, was English by birth, Scots by adoption, and Afrikan at heart.



Born in Ashton-under-Lyne, Brian trained in industrial chemistry, but it was not long before he chose to enter Congregational Ministry, having already met his future wife Elly, who shared so much of his Christian belief.

Brian ministered in Stockport before he began a 21 year connection with the London Missionary Society, which later became the Council for World Mission (CWM).

After children John and Catherine arrived, the Baileys set off for what is now Botswana. Brian had a real rapport with Africa and its people; he was kind, humble and always took time to listen, and recognised the value of the contributions 'ordinary' local people made as Christians – whether to church life, the local community, their country's government. He was embraced by the local indigenous community, accepting the duties and honour of becoming the first Mayor of Francistown. His OBE in 1973 was for 'services to the Church and the community'.

Returning to London after 11 years, Brian joined the CWM Secretariat, helping CWM become a mission organisation in which reciprocal ministry is practised – not just 'us' 'going to them'. Already known to members of this congregation, Brian succeeded Norman McPherson as minister in August 1984.

So many of Augustine's major changes took place during his ministry, including the union with Dalkeith Road URC in 1992 to form Augustine United Church. Money from the sale of the Dalkeith Road building enabled our second radical building development, managed by Mollie Glen's husband,

Jackie. Pews and pulpit were removed, new stairs and a lift to 'the Studio' installed, and the church was opened out to allow those outside the building to look in, and for us to engage better with the outside world.

'Shared' is a word much associated with Brian. He and his family energised us, sharing their experience of how church and community might be. Manse gatherings in home or garden brought much laughter and helped all ages within the congregation 'gel'.

Brian knew, too, the value of sharing ecumenically – from closer working with neighbouring Old Town churches to developing closer ties with Christian Aid staff in our building and reviewing mission together in our locality. . . at the Sailors Ark and at the L'Arche community.

All this time, along with Charlie Somerville and the Revd Bob Waters, Brian worked tirelessly to bring Scottish Congregationalists together following the failure to unite with the URC in the late eighties. As Congregational Union of Scotland President 1992-3, Brian brought key initiatives ahead of the eventual union with the URC in 2000. While Bob led from the front, Brian's was the quiet voice of reason. A tremendous legacy.

In 1996 Brian and Elly retired to Coldingham, until Elly's death. Brian married again and spent eight happy years with Anne until his death on 21 August 2020, aged 89.

Reflections contributed by Caro Penney, Patrick Smyth and Kathleen Ziffo.

Bob Waters: a Driving Force

**Patrick Smyth remembers
the Revd Robert Waters,
MBE, MA (1930-2020),
minister of Augustine Bristo
Congregational Church (ABC)
from 1968 to 1971**



Robert Waters, normally called Bob, was a passionate preacher, mover-shaker, painter and trout fisherman.

A coalminer after leaving school, Bob was converted to Christianity at an evangelical rally in Musselburgh, led by the Revd Dr Charles Duthie. Arriving at Augustine with wife Mags and children Derek and Nicola from East Kilbride Church, Bob was inducted on 6 September 1968, succeeding the Revd Dr Erik Routley.

Bob threw himself into working with young people and the first Augustine building development to form a city centre hub.

With an electrifying ability to communicate with young people, Bob founded the ABC youth group for local communities and churches. It met in the downstairs hall, accessed by the then cast-iron external stair from street level. This hot new happening drew bikes and scooters from miles around on a Friday night onto the Bridge. Some not only became church members but also attended another big initiative of Bob's, youth camps at Aberfoyle.

With Dr John Oldfield, Bob drove the contract for the building refurbishment. While Augustine worshipped with Morningside Congregational at Holy Corner, the sanctuary was re-configured, with new partitions under the balcony in an unforgettable tomato red, forming offices to include the Christian Aid Scotland HQ. Importantly, the new internal stairs down to the hall brought descenders in out of the rain!

Augustine was but a glimpse of Bob's very full ministry. After a mere three years, he was called to be General Secretary of the Congregational Union of Scotland (1971- 1995). In that role, with Ina Durrant, Bob played a key part in the re-formation of the London Missionary Society into the Council for World Mission. With Charlie Somerville and the Revd Brian Bailey, Bob was the catalyst in the formation of the Scottish Congregational Church, which led to eventual union with the United Reformed Church in 2000.

Bob died peacefully on 3 July; his funeral took place at Falkirk Crematorium on 16 July.



Climate Commitment: Christians Taking a Stand

How to be Christian and act radically on climate issues? Katrina Tweedie has been researching options and was introduced to Rachie, an eco-theologian from Christian Climate Action. This was what Rachie told her about one group putting their faith in the environment into action.

Christian Climate Action (CCA) is a community of prayer, preaching and protesting, agitation, training and teaching for climate justice. It is the tribe I run with, my clan, a place I can breathe. We are a group of Christians who understand eco grief, sadness and fear but also have a view of God as close and interested and with us no matter what.

CCA was founded about eight years ago by a few long-standing climate and peace movement activists who felt they had to do more to wake the Church up and to lead on God's call for us all to act justly and to speak truth to power.

Since the first Extinction Rebellion (XR) in 2019 our membership has boomed. We sit very comfortably within XR and have led on interfaith collaboration, regularly standing alongside our XR Muslim, Jewish and Buddhist rebels, praying together and holding sacred spaces. We hold a wide faith stream (Franciscans, Catholics, Baptists, Free, Contemplatives, Quakers etc.) and many are simply drawn to the love and the courage despite their own poor experiences of church before, and past hurt.

We find ourselves in a true sweet spot: bringing the love of God to XR in tangible ways and bringing the message of XR to the Church globally. We place a major emphasis on prayer and repentance and lament alongside nonviolent direct action, all underpinned with theological and biblical debate and prayer. We are truly all-age; those in their 80s are often the ones game-on for arrest! As a growing group we want to see more of God's diverse nature reflected in his people. There genuinely is a role for all.

Climate breakdown didn't pause for Covid-19. The earth is the Lord's and everything in it. This is an emergency of the highest magnitude; we need you. You can find us at christianclimateaction.org and we also have a book published called *Time to Act*, a resource book that Rowan Williams has described as "timely, moving and highly motivating". You can also see me leading on Exodus 1 and 2 and the Biblical call for NVDA on the following link: youtu.be/s7N11-fcITE.

Online Ethical Shopping

The chance to “give to AUC” when shopping on Amazon has opened up a handy option in the task of supporting our life and mission. But it has also raised some serious questions about supporting the all-pervasive online shopping brand.

Back in June, the Centre Finance and Property team announced that Augustine United Church has registered as a charity with Amazon. We will receive 0.5 per cent of supporters' spending with Amazon. This is, as the team said, “a completely painless way of raising a little money if you shop at Amazon.” All you have to do is initiate your purchases through Amazon Smile via the link: smile.amazon.co.uk/ch/SC000385.



Ethical Revolution

Talking of books. . . Have you tried [Hive.co.uk](https://hive.co.uk) – an online network of independent bookstores where one per cent of the profits go back into your nearest independent bookshop every time you make a purchase (or you can select your “favourite” bookshop to benefit instead). Or there's, [Wordery.com](https://wordery.com), founded in 2012 as an alternative to Amazon. In both cases, delivery is free.

ethical
consumer

But a number of AUC individuals are, at best, ambivalent about Amazon and its ethics – for example, as a tax payer (or not) and as an employer. No doubt these issues will be aired in our church meeting discussion on 4 October, when the theme will be Ethical Shopping.

In the meantime, when Covid has pushed online shopping to the fore even more than previously (witness recent statements about job cuts by Marks & Spencer and other high street retailers), what are some alternatives to Amazon for our online purchases?

Here are some thoughts. Do you have more?

Ethical Revolution has set up in opposition to Amazon, describing it as “one of the least ethical companies on the planet”. (A debating point for 4 October perhaps?) Its website, www.ethicalrevolution.co.uk/amazon-alternatives/ lists a range of alternative places to buy online – from Oxfam to www.ethicalsuperstore.com and Better World Books.

hive.co.uk

wordery

Finally, a broad, Which?-style guide to shopping is Ethical Consumer operating since 1989. It offers reports on a wide range of products – including plastic free ones – and will point you in directions you've not yet thought of: www.ethicalconsumer.org/food-drink/food-plastic-news.

But that's not “Finally” at all, is it? Because you'll have other ideas, experiences and views on this subject. Let us know – and join in the discussion on 4 October. It will follow on from the social time after worship that day.

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	Marking the Season of Creationtide on with a Junior Church activity sheet on the website. Join services through the zoom link (see Friday emails), AUC website or Facebook page.
TLC Youth	Sundays 13th & 27th 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, 3.20 - 4.30pm	LGBTQI+ ministry at Augustine United Church. Fiona Bennett leads an exploration of our connection to "the web of life".
Contextual Bible Studies	Tuesday 12-1pm, Wednesday 7.30-8.30pm, Thursday 12-1pm	Email our minister, Fiona, to register interest (minister@augustine.org.uk)
Online Social Gathering	Wednesdays 1-2pm	An open social time - for link, see the Friday email.

Dates for your diary

Church Meeting

Sunday 6 September, 12.15pm

25th anniversary of the Revd David Coleman's ordination

Sunday 13 September

Harvest Celebration

4 October

Service followed by a church meeting, exploring Ethical Shopping. (see Fiona's article on p.11)

Staying in Touch

If you wish to receive weekly updates of AUC events please register to receive the Friday email by contacting our Centre Manager Rachel (centre.manager@augustine.org.uk)

Find us on 

Check our daily posts on the AUC Facebook page.

AUC @Home

Explore new resources on AUC's Facebook page and

www.augustine.org.uk/auc-at-home/