

Augustine
United Church

Seeds

encourage | inspire | challenge | No. 98 | October 2020

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Blessing the World and Each Other

By Rev Fiona Bennett

Koinonia is a word which appears 19 times in the New Testament. It is often translated as fellowship, or communion, or participation. It is used to describe the nature of our relationship with God in trinity (e.g. 1 John 1:3-4) and of our relationship as a community of Christians (e.g. Acts 2: 42).



It is a curious word as it suggests that being connected to God and one another as Christians is more than just membership of a group; it is participation in a joint life, and not just any life but the very life of Jesus.

I think Theresa of Avila (who we got to know in *Seeds* back in July) expressed it very clearly when she said:

"Christ has no body now but yours. . . yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on the world. . . Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world."

This is about more than the purpose of life for followers of Jesus; it is about the nature of life. We participate in Jesus's life, as we participate in each other's lives and in the life of the world.

That could all sound very wonderful, but as most of the Bible reveals (especially the letters in the New Testament), being a body of people who participate together in a shared life is often not easy.

Why? Well, because people have a habit of not getting along and not dealing well with conflicts and tensions

Continued on page 2

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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treasurer@augustine.org.uk

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matt.baines@augustine.org.uk

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AUC Volunteering

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rota@augustine.org.uk

Local Community Volunteering

Della Morris

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Continued from page 1

which arise amongst them. If we believe that diversity in all its forms is an intentional gift of God to the world, then working through and with our differences also seems an intentional (if at times annoying) part of God's strategy for wholeness of life for all.

Acknowledging this intention, AUC has spent some time reflecting on how we aspire for our relationships within AUC

to be and we have crafted a set of "Ways of Relating". We hope these Ways will serve as a reminder and inspiration for how we desire to connect with each other. We are not seeking uniformity or even unanimity, but to discover a way to explore our differences as divine gifts and grow together in *koinonia* – that we may be even more able to be the eyes and hands though which Christ blesses all the world.

In This Edition

3. United Reformed Church news
4. Ways of Relating
5. Our Building Needs You
6. Meet your Neighbour
8. Taking Issue With Amazon
9. Side by Side
10. Homeless Approach Reimagined
11. Junior Church
12. What's On(line)?



Pg. 11

Pastoral Care

If you are looking for individual support please contact a minister: Revd Fiona Bennett or Revd Maxwell Reay. As well as offering 1:1 support in the setting which is more appropriate for you, they can link you with the pastoral visiting team, which offers regular support to the housebound.

Prayer requests are welcome. They can be shared with the ministers directly or via the Church Office.

If you would like support due to a mental health issue, you would be welcome at the Mental Health Drop-in, usually held weekly on Tuesdays

10.30am-12pm in the Sanctuary. The drop-in is hosted by AUC and run by the NHS Lothian Spiritual Care team. You can contact them by phoning 0131 537 6516. (Note: meetings are temporarily suspended due to Covid-19 restrictions).

Helplines:

Stand Alone: www.standalone.org.uk
(for those experiencing family estrangement)
LGBT Support: 0300 123 2523
Samaritans: 116 123
Childline: 0800 1111
Rape Crisis: 08088 010 302

Front cover photo: Jara from Pexels, Jasmine Carter from Pexels

Local and Global

News from the
United Reformed Church

AUC Members in New Exhibition

A photographic exhibition called Picturing Health has been opened at Edinburgh Waverley Station. The exhibition is a photovoice project by Media Education and Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership, and features images by Maxwell and Lewis Reay, as well as (our?) David Pickering. You can also see their photos as part of the extensive online gallery. www.picturing-health.com/gallery



valued friends and colleagues would be unable to attend, due to health concerns, possible local lockdowns, and other circumstances, is not in the inclusive spirit of URC Youth."

Plans are being made for the next Youth Assembly, 28-30 January 2022, which will celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the United Reformed Church.



**A SOCIETY WHERE
THE POOREST AND
MOST MARGINALISED
ARE AT THE CENTRE**

Youth Assembly Postponed

Youth Assembly 2021 will not be going ahead as a residential event, the URC Youth Executive has announced.

"Regrettably, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we have reached the sad conclusion that Youth Assembly 2021 must be postponed until the following year. This was a very difficult decision to make and certainly was not taken lightly."

Reuben Watt, Youth Assembly Moderator, and Jo Harris, Moderator Elect, said that the atmosphere of Youth Assembly is so unique it was felt that an online alternative couldn't do it justice. They added that "to continue to plan for a large in-person event where many of our

Keeping Hope Alive

Even in these challenging times, when we need to be responsive and adaptable in a rapidly shifting context, key hopes remain vital, says the ecumenical Joint Public Issues Team.

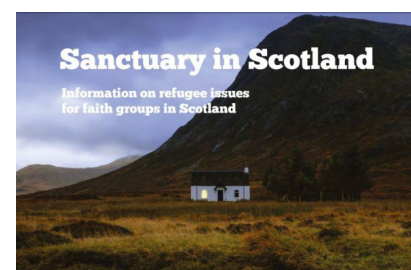
"We believe that our fundamental hopes for God's Kingdom come on earth haven't changed. That's why we're sticking by our Six Hopes for Society".

Recently reviewed, JPIT's "Six Hopes for Society" include: "a planet where our environment is renewed"; "a society where the poorest and most marginalised are at the centre"; "a politics characterised by listening, kindness, and truthfulness".

Explore all JPIT's Six Hopes on their website. www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/sixhopes/

Refugees – Know the Facts

An excellent guide to the realities of refugee life in Scotland has been re-published by Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees. *Sanctuary in Scotland* includes facts and figures, definitions, current issues and ideas for practical action by faith communities in Scotland. It is available for free download. www.sfar.org.uk/resources/



Bible Meditation Competition Announced

The Bible Reading Fellowship has launched a competition for offering aspiring writers to have their work published in *The Upper Room*, a Bible reading guide that is published in 35 languages.

The competition invites writers to submit a short meditation on a Bible verse, rooted in their own experience. The competition's submission deadline is midnight on 31 October.

For more details, including criteria, sample reflections and tips, see www.brfonline.org.uk/pages/the-upper-room-writing-competition.

Ways of Relating

The Church Meeting of Sunday, 9 February accepted a set of "Ways of Relating" - aspirations for the community. (See Fiona's article on the front page.) The Ways are offered here for our reflection.

The AUC Community aspires in all our relationships, in person and through written communication (on and off line), to:

- ✓ **Believe in people as good and hold the best out for each other.**
- ✓ **Be patient and come to relationships from a position of love.**
- ✓ **Create space to listen to each other, asking questions & take an interest in others.**
- ✓ **Try to see another's perspective, listening deeply to other views and experiences.**
- ✓ **Respect different views and see difference as positive.**
- ✓ **Work at being self-aware and care for ourselves.**
- ✓ **Affirm that mistakes are OK and don't seek to blame (others or self).**
- ✓ **Take responsibility for ourselves.**
- ✓ **Be responsible in the ways we portray AUC to the wider community.**
- ✓ **Not talk about others in a derogatory way.**

In formal meetings we will additionally:

- ✓ **Respect time keeping.**
- ✓ **Speak only for ourselves.**
- ✓ **Respect the boundaries of confidentially agree by the meeting.**
- ✓ **Respect different opinions and seek to understand.**
- ✓ **Manage our own air space.**
- ✓ **Have only one voice speaking at a time.**

Living this out is the responsibility of each and all of us.

Our Building Needs You

Could you be our new Volunteer Property Manager?

AUC is seeking a volunteer property manager to help them manage the maintenance and development of our 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.

If you've got a bit of time (perhaps 10-15 hours per month) and would like to use your practical knowledge and experience in a really tangible and satisfying role, we want to hear from you!

Click here for a full role description or get in touch with Rachel Fitzgerald on centre.manager@augustine.org.uk for an informal chat.



Photo: Simon Jones

giftaid it

If you are a UK income taxpayer, Gift Aid your donation 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)

Meet Your Neighbour

Linda Harrison has introduced herself in Seeds before, but as she takes up the role of Church Secretary, this seemed the right moment to chat again.

Linda Harrison



There's something of the serial commuter about Linda.

She began attending AUC back in 2016, while still working in Colchester in Essex. Even now that she's settled in Scotland, she remains one of our further-flung members, committing herself to AUC life from her home in Bo'ness. Before that, Linda grew up in Kilmacolm (west of Glasgow), went to school in Harrogate, college in Dundee, and taught in Leeds.

All set to be a primary teacher, Linda ended up going down a road less travelled, led by a fascination with I.T. She had trained at secretarial college and was asked to stay on to teach, just at the time when electric typewriters and early word processors were coming on the market. Golf ball typewriters, typewriters with window displays, BBC Micros – these were revolutionary, and Linda shared her new enthusiasm in secondary schools in Leeds and, subsequently, for 30 years at the sixth form college in Colchester.

Linda's involvement with church life has been equally busy and varied. She agrees that she is "a doer", taking on the role of assistant secretary at Lion Walk URC in Colchester just as the congregation went into a two-year vacancy. No sooner was that over than Linda was asked if she would become the new District Secretary and, later, a Synod Clerk.

Meanwhile, for around 12 years Linda has also organised the biennial conferences of Free to Believe. FTB is an informal network of progressive Christians "striving for an open, inclusive and thinking church" – which made the choice of AUC as her Scottish church home a natural

one. She identifies "the sense of inclusion and the voice it's got in Edinburgh and beyond: a liberal, progressive outlet, a form of worship I appreciate, and a place where people pick each other up when things go wrong."

So, as AUC's own new Church Secretary, Linda has form! However, she says she has also learned lessons from "not being able to say no". She hopes that, in her new role, she can develop an overview, encourage others to run with things, and not be afraid to pull back if an idea or initiative isn't working. Linda has felt really excited by AUC's recent consultation process, "and the energy that has emerged from that". She senses that we're all in this together and hopes she can help with the steering while allowing others to share their talents.

Her own talents are also used nowadays as administrator for the Scottish Episcopal Institute, which oversees training and formation for ministry and mission. "It's been a great insight into another denomination, and a job that has brought together everything I've done in my career into one role." Unsurprisingly, she's even supporting students with questions about technology. "I feel like I've been directed this way." She may well find that AUC feels the same about her.

Favourite book:

The Last Week by Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan
Linda says it was "a wake-up call" for her.

Favourite place:

"Up a mountain – preferably with snow – preferably with skies." (Easier in Scotland than Essex. . .)

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*AUC has
a voice in
Edinburgh
and beyond...
a place where
people pick
each other up
when things
go wrong.*

Sky Photo (opposite)
by Elia Clerici from Pexels

Not smiling – taking issue with Amazon

AUC's decision to register with Amazon Smile means that we have the opportunity to support AUC each time we order something online from Amazon. Caro Penney asks what this really means for Amazon – and for AUC.



To be honest, I was quite taken aback to read in the June edition of *Seeds* that AUC is registered as a charity with Amazon Smile.

My disagreement is not so much about individuals using Amazon – though it's related and, believe me, I am well aware how often shopping raises dilemmas between our values and our financial situation.

No, my disagreement is about AUC supporting, and encouraging others to support, a business whose practices are known to fly in the face of basic human rights and responsibilities, particularly as an employer and a tax-avoider – in spite of this global multi-national having more than enough money to be a positive trail-blazer for both.

That Amazon has set up Amazon Smile is surely another means for it to enhance its public face by 'giving away' money to charitable organisations, chosen by its customers. In my view, it's just another mask for it to hide behind, using 'charity' as a way of saying 'yes, we do care, really'. If Amazon really cared, it would prioritise the basic wellbeing of its workers, and those in its supply chains, along with meeting its full tax responsibilities – which itself is, after all, about the common good. Now it is luring customers

in by making them feel good about 'loving their neighbour' while propping up a company that does not, unless there are financial or reputational gains for itself. (Even a recent article in *Forbes Magazine* has challenged Amazon's reputation: "Amazon faces a crucible moment with employees".) www.forbes.com/sites/deniselyohn/2020/06/02/amazon-faces-a-crucible-moment-with-employees/

That AUC, the Christian community that first taught me the reasons behind the importance of paying our taxes, of Fair Trade, and of global justice, is now signed up to be one of Amazon Smile's charities doesn't make sense, even when AUC is needing money. Does the end really outweigh the means? In last month's *Seeds*, Fiona rightly challenged us all in her piece 'A Vision of Agape', ending with these words: "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?"

How does that very relevant question help us reflect on the dilemma of using Amazon?

(Ed. A reminder that the church meeting on 4 October will discuss Ethical Shopping.)

Side by side – all in it together

Anne MacKenzie recently turned up a fascinating article from the magazine of Carrs Lane United Reformed Church (now 'The Church at Carrs Lane'), where she and her husband Murdoch worked from 1988-96.

In the congregation's 1989 tercentenary magazine, a list of Trustees (deacons and elders) was included from way back in 1746. See below.

(A little lockdown exercise, perhaps, to discover how some of these folk made a living. . . Cutler, Malster, Edge toolmaker anybody? Ed.)

It's interesting to compare that list with the range of professions recorded for AUC over the years.

Over a century after that Carrs Lane list was compiled, an 1870 Trust Deed for Augustine names a boot and shoe maker and a retired ironmonger amongst its church trustees.

However, the congregation does appear to have been dominated by merchants, company secretaries, politicians and, at that time, the Rector

of the High School (Dr James Donaldson) and the President of the Royal Scottish Academy (Sir George Harvey).

It was a tradition that continued and gave Augustine an 'up-market' reputation.

When Augustine Church united with Bristo Place Church in 1941 (and was renamed Augustine Bristo Congregational Church), Isa Morey was among the members moving from Bristo. Her first impression was that the Augustine members were "a bit snobby" and "just weren't used to our way of life".

On the other hand, Joe Barclay, an RAF-trained engineer, appreciated Augustine for the fact that professional people and 'workers' sat easily side by side. An interesting observation, perhaps, in light of AUC's newly adopted "Ways of Relating" (see p.4).



Occupations of Carrs Lanes Trustees in 1746:

- Cutler (3)
- Maltster
- Stocking weaver
- Sword cutler
- Blade forger (2)
- Threadmaker
- Edge toolmaker
- Grocer
- Ironmaker of Kings Norton
- Toymaker
- Hingemaker
- Shoemaker

Homeless Approach Reimagined

Ahead of this year's Homeless Sunday (11 October), JPIT, the ecumenical peace and justice team, are asking for "lived experiences" of homelessness.

"During the pandemic, homelessness in the UK has changed dramatically. As lockdown began, thousands of rough sleepers were moved into self-contained accommodation. We discovered that it was possible to practically end rough sleeping overnight, if the political will was there.

"As we move forward together, we can't just return to the way things were before, with mass rough sleeping across our cities and towns. It's crucial that we respond now.

"We need to reimagine how we respond to homelessness. As churches, we need to think especially hard. Whilst night shelters and drop in centres are some of the most common forms of social action churches run, they're difficult to run right now because of social distancing.

"That's why we want to start a conversation about what we can do differently to end homelessness. To do this, we need to invite those with lived experiences of homelessness to the centre of our discussions."

Read some of the stories already gathered on the JPIT website – from Gary, Emily, Danny, Mab and others. www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/

Happy Birthday MCC

Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) began life on October 6, 1968. A gathering of 12 people gathered in the living room of the Revd Troy Perry (pictured) in Huntington Park, California.

That first worship service in a Los Angeles suburb in 1968 launched the international movement of Metropolitan Community Churches, which today has grown to 43,000 members and adherents in almost 300 congregations in 22 countries.

Join our own Edinburgh-based MCC community for a birthday party on Sunday 11 October.

our tribe

Celebrates the birthday of MCC
On Sunday 11th October @ 3:30pm

All are Welcome

Listen to music

Hear Stories

The Lord is my Shepherd
and he knows
I am Gay

Celebrate Communion

Have a party

We invite you to bring cake to the Zoom session for celebration.

Ragui Ebnezar

Changing of the Seasons in Junior Church

Junior Church continues in its socially-distanced mode, providing a Seedlings supplement to accompany each week's Sunday service.

The themes reflect those being followed by the rest of the congregation. So, in September, during Creationtide, we have looked at stories relating to parts of trees. After our Harvest service on 4 October, we will be learning about some members of Abram's family tree before moving on to learn about some of the prophets. All this, of course, may change as Covid-19 rules alter, but we will continue to provide an online sheet until we are all able to meet together again.

One of our Seedlings activities was to create the 'Pass the Bread' video, as we learned about the story of the feeding of the five thousand. This gave the children an

opportunity to 'see' each other, and it was lovely to have so many other members of the AUC family join in (cross-continent in some cases!).

Members of Junior Church have passed a number of milestones over the summer: Oliver was 3 on 15th August, Miriam was 6 on 14th September, star of our 'Not Notice' sheet Caleb was 3 on 16th September, and Joseph was 8 on 26th September (see cards below).

Others have passed significant milestones too. Rowan and Euan started in S1 in August (where did the time go?!), and Ozzie has started nursery.

Lots of 'changing of the seasons' in Junior Church but, as always, it's great seeing them grow and flourish.



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	Join services through the zoom link (see Friday emails), AUC website or Facebook page. Junior Church activity sheet on the website.
TLC Youth	Sundays 11th & 25th 1.45 - c.3.00pm	Inclusive youth group for all young people from S1 up. Email Matt for more information.
Our Tribe	Second Sunday of the month, 3.20 - 4.30pm	LGBTQI+ ministry at Augustine United Church. This month: Birthday time! (See pg. 10)
Contextual Bible Studies	Tuesday 12-1pm, Wednesday 7.30-8.30pm, Thursday 12-1pm	Email our minister, Fiona, to join in.
Online Social Gathering	Wednesdays 1-2pm	An open social time - for link, see the Friday email.

Dates for your diary

Harvest Celebration

Sunday 4 October, 11am

Service followed by a church meeting, exploring Ethical Shopping.

'4G' National Online Youth Gathering

Sunday 10 October, 6:30pm

Organised by URC Synod of Scotland Youth.

Creating Sanctuary Conference

Saturday 17 October

"Building healthier and safer churches" with a focus on LGBTQ+ needs and concerns. Tickets available via EventBrite.

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).

See our new "building tour" video, created for this year's Edinburgh Doors Open weekend.

www.augustine.org.uk

**DOORS
OPEN
DAYS** 2020