

Augustine
United Church

Seeds

encourage | inspire | challenge | No. 99 | November 2020

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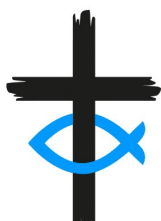
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The
United
Reformed
Church

Sustaining Hope

By Rev Fiona Bennett

In November worship at AUC we mark the Season of Remembrance. This season offers a time to look back at the year past, to give thanks, to acknowledge loss and to learn wisdom to equip us for the year ahead. So what do I remember looking back at this year?

It was pretty familiar from Advent (December) to Epiphany (March) but headed out into uncharted waters in Lent (March) and still seems to be there seven months later.

As I think back over the year, I give thanks for the incredible generosity, support and humour which AUC people have shared in time, talents, and creativity, working out together how to put and share our congregational life online and sustain our building and staff. Next month also marks the 100th edition of Seeds which is a remarkable achievement to look back and celebrate!

Looking back over 2020, I am grateful for the chance to appreciate walks by the sea,

the camaraderie of neighbours, good novels and friendship.

2020 has also been a year of loss for many in our world: loss of loved ones, stable income, security, natural species, special occasions, health. . . to name but a few.

So the past year has offered much to inspire both gratitude and a sense of loss.

This year, like few others, has reminded me of the importance in being able to dig deep to find resilience and sustaining hope. A friend recently shared with me a quote from the writer and campaigner Jim Wallis about hope, which I believe reflects many experiences of 2020 and offers wisdom for our present and future.

Hope means more than just hanging on. It is the conscious decision to see the world in a different way than most others see it. To hope is to look through the eyes of faith to a future not determined by the oppressive circumstances of the present.

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

Tom Murray

treasurer@augustine.org.uk

Children

Kirsty Murray

juniorchurch@augustine.org.uk

Communication

Eilidh Carmichael

eilidh.carmichael@augustine.org.uk

Our Tribe (LGBT Ministry)

Revd Maxwell Reay

associateminister@augustine.org.uk

Peace & Justice

Contact Church Secretary

secretary@augustine.org.uk

Pastoral & Mental Health

Anne MacKenzie

anne.mackenzie@augustine.org.uk

Worship

Revd Fiona Bennett

minister@augustine.org.uk

Young People

Matt Baines

matt.baines@augustine.org.uk

To get involved volunteering within AUC or the local community:

AUC Volunteering

Fiona Somerville

rota@augustine.org.uk

Local Community Volunteering

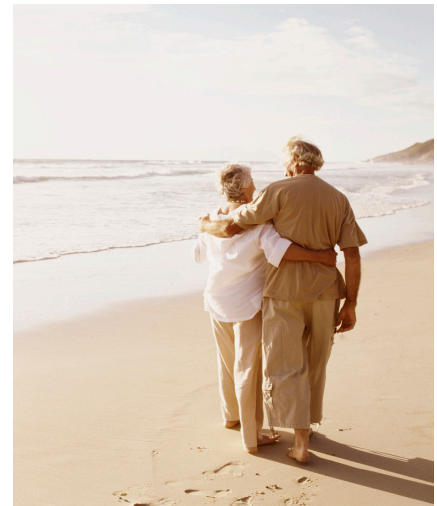
Della Morris

della.morris@augustine.org.uk

Continued from page 1

To hope is to know that the present reality will not have the last word. It is to know, despite the pretensions and cruelties of idolatrous authorities, that God rules. It is God who will have the last word. We need more than resistance; we need hope and a positive vision of where we are going. We begin to live out new possibilities in our daily living.

(Jim Wallis)



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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
Breathing Space: 0800 838587
Edinburgh Crisis Centre: 0808 801 0414

Front cover photo: Blair Fraser from Unsplash

Local and Global

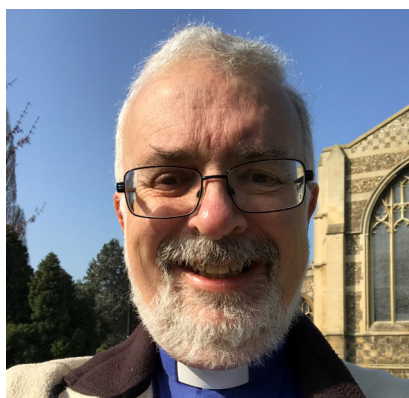
News from the United Reformed Church

On retreat with David

In September, David Coleman marked his 25 years in ministry by spend a couple of "reflective/active days in the landscape of Scotland". Amidst lochs and mountains, David created a video diary that reflects on Scripture (especially the Psalms) in dramatic locations. Now we can too, thanks to the videos David has placed on the Eco congregation Scotland webpage - shorturl.at/uK345

New Moderator for Scotland Synod

The Revd Paul Whittle has been nominated to become Moderator of the United Reformed Church National Synod of Scotland for a three-year term. Since July 2008, Paul has served as the Moderator of the URC's Eastern Synod. "Scotland is, in many ways, home," he says. "I went to school, university, trained for the ministry and had my first pastorate in Scotland ... I look forward to getting alongside the office staff, the Synod officers and the serving ministers as, together, we seek glimpses of the Kingdom."



Reset the debt

Since the beginning of lockdown, an estimated six million people in the UK have fallen behind on one or more household bills, with poorest households hit the hardest. Church Action on Poverty has teamed up with the Methodist, Baptist, and United Reformed Churches and Church of Scotland to ask the Chancellor to create a Jubilee Fund to pay off and cancel unavoidable Covid debt for households in the UK. Find out more at <https://resetthedebt.uk> and consider emailing your MP.

End Child Food Poverty

Church Action on Poverty is also supporting footballer Marcus Rashford's call to ensure children in England don't go hungry during the school holidays. CAP wants the UK Government to take responsibility. The End Child Food Poverty petition, and details of what it calls for, is available online. <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/554276/>. (The situation is different in Scotland where the Scottish Government has agreed to extend its free school meals scheme over the Christmas and Easter holidays.)

Nuclear weapons milestone

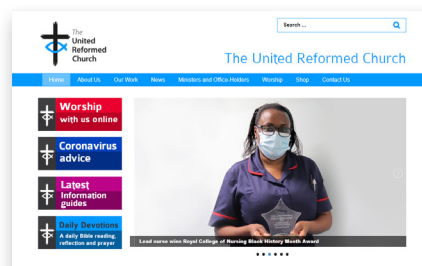
The treaty to ban nuclear weapons (TPNW) has been made official, thanks to a 50th United Nations signatory. Honduras, ratified the treaty last month, one day after Jamaica and Nauru had submitted their ratifications. This means that from

January 2021, the production, use and stockpiling of nuclear weapons will be illegal, even though nuclear-armed states have not signed up. Activists who have pushed for the treaty's enactment hold out hope that it will prove to be more than symbolic and have a gradual deterrent effect.



URC website

The URC website is being transformed to make it easier to use and to look better, and your help is needed for the next stage of that work. A digital research and feedback group has been established for people to inform the look, feel, content and navigation of the new web pages. If you are able to donate some your time to help, please visit the website's focus group registration page.





Christmas Giving

This year, like so much else, we're doing it differently. Discover some options.

In past years, as well as making a collection for Christian Aid in lieu of sending individual Christmas cards to one another, members and friends of AUC have marked the Christmas season by collecting:

- donations of gifts for the Royal Edinburgh Hospital (toiletries etc.)
- necessary goods for Syrian refugees, delivered to them by Edinburgh Direct Aid
- supporting Fresh Start (see p.11)

Aid for Syrian Refugees

Kathleen Ziffo writes:

Previously, AUC members collected warm winter clothes, toiletries and children's educational supplies for Edinburgh Direct Aid (EDA) to deliver to Syrian refugees living high in the mountains in the Lebanese town of Aarsal.

This year, EDA is asking for financial aid instead of collections of goods, which they can no longer deliver in quantity. One EDA lorry which set off from Edinburgh late in 2019 failed to reach Aarsal until August 2020, having to pay the Lebanese government over £11,000 in taxes, which was (and continues to be) slapped on imported goods, including all humanitarian donated items!

Lebanon now has the highest proportion of refugees per head of population of any country in the world! (One to two million, alongside an existing population of five to six million.)

Life has become very difficult for everyone; an inept government, with political and religious infighting, combined with corruption, has led to rampant hyperinflation and a breakdown of much civil society. Add to this, the Covid-19 pandemic which is severely damaging the population's health and provision of healthcare.

Refugees no longer have any savings and cannot afford rents. Most have lost accommodation, living again in makeshift tents with no electricity and little water.

To stave off starvation, the German 'Green Helmet' charity is working alongside EDA to supply food aid, while EDA's existing education and work programmes continue. (They make PPE for local medical staff now!)

The explosions at Beirut docks in August caused catastrophic devastation and loss of life. NGOs bringing aid into Beirut initially encountered no coordination of remedial work, but this is changing.

EDA is now helping make habitable some damaged Beirut homes before winter, by fitting up windows and doors; being aided by some of the Syrian refugees from Aarsal, themselves recipients of help!

For Donations:

Phone 0131 552 1545
OR send a cheque, payable to 'Edinburgh Direct Aid' to: Edinburgh Direct Aid, 29 Starbank Road, Edinburgh, EH5 3BY. Please indicate 'Pandemic' or 'Emergency', etc. If you are eligible, please indicate that you can 'Gift Aid'. (Funds under these headings may be used in Idlib or other areas where Syrian refugees are in need.)

OR Bank Transfer information for EDA (Charity No. SCO21007) is available at:
www.edinburghdirectaid.org
(donations page)

And one other idea that you may come across yourselves.

Reverse Advent Calendar

In the month of November, consider placing a non-perishable item in a box every day (e.g. a tin of soup, a packet of mac cheese, soap, a toothbrush, UHT milk etc.) and then, on 1 December, donate the collection to your local food bank or someone that maybe could use a little extra help at this time of year.

A great way of getting children involved, too, and having fun while chatting about the needs of others.

Photo by Caley Dimmock on Unsplash

Our Building Needs You

Could you be our new Volunteer Property Manager? Or do you know of someone who might be interested? Or somewhere you could share this advertisement?

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!

For a full role description see shorturl.at/rEIPZ 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)

Our Tribe: Transgender Remembrance

At Our Tribe on Sunday 8 November 2020, we will be marking Transgender Remembrance.

As well as taking time to remember all those who have died simply because of their gender identity, we will also share in music and words to explore what it is that makes all life sacred and beautiful. If we all learned to appreciate beauty in one another, then one day no one's life would be taken away from them simply because of who God has created them to be.

We will meet on Zoom, with an option to phone in, from 3.20 pm.

We will share in a simple communion together and enjoy some social time after that. You will be very welcome, whether this is your first time with us or whether you consider yourself to be part of the furniture.

As the song says '...All are welcome in this place.'

Remembering Rita Hester

Transgender Day of Remembrance is held in November to honour Rita Hester, whose murder on 28 November 1998 inspired a candlelight vigil in San Francisco in 1999. Each year since, a list of those killed during the previous 12 months is compiled and their lives recalled. This past year there were at least 380 reported transgender murders worldwide. Although not every person

represented during the Day of Remembrance self-identified as transgender (as a transsexual, crossdresser, or otherwise gender-variant), each was a victim of violence based on bias against transgender people.

According to The Equality Network, crimes aggravated by prejudice against someone's sexual orientation and reported to Scotland's Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service for prosecution have risen from 452 in 2010-11 to 1,486 in 2019-20.

Transphobic hate crimes have gone from a low of 14 to a high of 52 with more than 40 reported in each of the last four years. However, it is estimated that over 70 per cent of LGBTQI people who experienced a hate crime never report it.



Transgender Day of Remembrance is held in November to honour Rita Hester, whose murder on 28 November 1998 inspired a candlelight vigil in San Francisco in 1999.

Meet Your Neighbour: Matt Baines



Matt Baines is known to us at AUC as the gently spoken and committed coordinator of The Local Church's work with young people. But he's someone who gives his time and energy to others in a range of contexts, always working to ensure they feel valued.

Matt is what in America used to be known as "a PK". A Preacher's Kid. That's not a bad thing! But it did mean that growing up, he moved home every four to five years and knew what it meant to feel disconnected. He struggled with this at times. That's why, while living in Blackburn, Lancashire, he found a home in his local Baptist church. Only when his Dad was guest preaching there one day did Matt discover that friends from his youth group – including his best friend – attended the church.

It's an experience reflected in Matt's youth work. He likes to create safe spaces where young people belong. He does this for TLC, but he also works part-time as the Youth Ministry Development Worker for the URC's Scotland Synod. The job draws on his experience of youth work in England where he joined a training scheme for youth and children's work with a Baptist church in Plymouth and completed a diploma in Children's Evangelism and Nurture.

Here in Scotland, Matt encourages congregations to develop youth ministry and supports the Synod's Youth Executive. Larger projects have included helping organise youth gatherings and a pilgrimage to Tiree. That said, Matt has spent half his time in the role responding to the challenges of Coronavirus – helping young

people feel connected but only ever meeting a few of them at a time online. "It's very strange", he says, in an understated way. Sending out postcards to say, "We're thinking of you" seems like a small thing to do – yet it's also very Matt. During the years after he moved to Scotland, back in 2004, he explored the possibilities of ordained ministry, and worked as a ministry intern at Bristo Baptist in Edinburgh. What drew him to that work was "the pastoral side of things – a concern for spiritual wellbeing".

It seems typical of Matt that having written about inclusion and integrity in the life of the church for his degree, he then sought out places to experience this in practice – in particular in his nine years working for CrossReach, the Church of Scotland's social care arm. Currently, Matt is a support worker with key responsibilities for one man in their 60s. "It can be intense but also very relaxed. You get lots of different perspectives on life. I'm supporting people to be independent but often I feel like I'm learning from them."

Matt gives out a lot of himself in all his roles but he says he gets a lot back – interactions with people feed him. He's someone who wants to be in the community, building relationships and helping people – young and old – feel connected.

Favourite book:

Contemplative Youth Ministry by Mark Yaconelli. Matt says young people, "every bit as much as older people, are looking for something real and authentic in amongst all the noise in life".

Favourite place:

During lockdown – the Meggetland playing fields. "I've often come down here for a walk and to talk to the pigs and chickens kept by the new care home."

Black History Month

Launching a dedicated webpage that explores the legacies of slavery (urc.org.uk/legacies-of-slavery.html), Karen Campbell, Secretary for the United Reformed Church's (URC) Global and Intercultural Ministries team, said, "October 2020 is the UK's 33rd occurrence of Black History Month - and is considered by some to be the most important since its inception."

"Why? Because 2020 has been an extraordinary year. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on black communities and has heightened awareness of systemic racial injustice in the UK and globally."

Seeds invited you to share your own reflections and resources.

Photo by
Oladimeji Odunsi
on Unsplash

The British

A poem by Benjamin Zephaniah
(suggested by Mandy Rathjen)



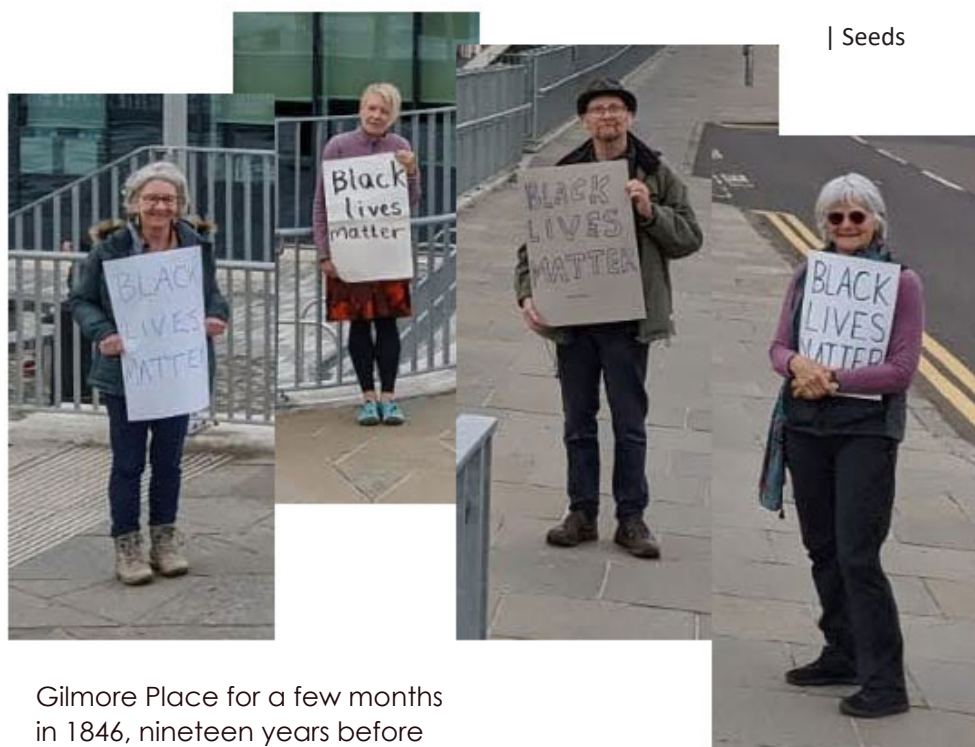
Take some Picts, Celts and Silures
And let them settle,
Then overrun them with Roman conquerors.
Remove the Romans after approximately 400 years
Add lots of Norman French to some
Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Vikings, then stir vigorously.
Mix some hot Chileans, cool Jamaicans, Dominicans,
Trinidadians and Bajans with some Ethiopians, Chinese,
Vietnamese and Sudanese.
Then take a blend of Somalians, Sri Lankans, Nigerians
And Pakistanis,
Combine with some Guyanese and turn up the heat.
Sprinkle some fresh Indians, Malaysians, Bosnians,
Iraqis and Bangladeshis together with some
Afghans, Spanish, Turkish, Kurdish, Japanese
And Palestinians
Then add to the melting pot.
Leave the ingredients to simmer.
As they mix and blend allow their languages to flourish
Binding them together with English.
Allow time to be cool.
Add some unity, understanding, and respect for the future,
Serve with justice
And enjoy.
Note: All the ingredients are equally important. Treating
one ingredient better than another will leave a bitter
unpleasant taste.
Warning: An unequal spread of justice will damage
the people and cause pain. Give justice and
equality to all.

Making connections

Gillian Lawrence has experienced a real sense of community in Gilmore Place during lockdown, and Black Lives Matter offered a particular focus of action in a street that for a short time was home to one of America's most famous slavery abolitionists.

Thanks to a group of young activists living in our street, a neighbours WhatsApp group formed in March at the beginning of the Covid pandemic in order to support each other. It has sustained us and also enabled us to be active for others. More than thirty people joined and we supported a person who sleeps rough locally and a homeless family with three children allocated accommodation lacking furniture, bedding, toys etc. We also shared home grown veg, a couple of spontaneous 'balcony concerts', swapped news of power cuts and lined the street to 'send off' a neighbour who had died. It has been a moving reminder of how a much more intentional neighbourliness can provide care for self and others.

A few of us organised a demonstration of solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement – individuals had posters in our windows and collectively seven of us stood physically distanced in a large local space at Viewforth Bridge for a silent vigil. More recently, in connection with Black History Month, we have shared information and resources about Frederick Douglass, an escaped slave who visited Edinburgh and stayed at 33



Gilmore Place for a few months in 1846, nineteen years before slavery was abolished in the United States. A large new mural covering a whole house wall was painted in August by two artists to celebrate his life and contribution. You can see it on the right hand side going west, opposite the Free Church.

Frederick Douglass is known for his published autobiography, for eloquent speaking tours and particularly for courageously proclaiming 'Send the (bloodstained) money back!'. He wanted the newly formed Free Church of Scotland to return money it had raised in the Southern states of America from rich slave-owning Christians for the purpose of building Free churches in Scotland.

In a talk about Frederick Douglass at the Berwick Literary Festival in October, Brian Ward made a very important point: that we should always link aspects of Slavery/ Black History with local history, and also with modern slavery. For example, in Newcastle Douglass was supported by radical abolitionists (often Quakers) who welcomed many escaped African American slaves, at a time when the port of

Newcastle benefitted from the slave trade. We need to look into these sorts of connections for our own locality.

And in the present, there are media reports that modern slavery in the U.K. has increased, with children, men and women being trafficked for forced labour or sexual exploitation, for example from Eastern Europe and Vietnam. The slave trade was abolished in the United States in 1865, nineteen years after Frederick Douglass stayed in Gilmore Place. Let us hope that modern slavery too can be eradicated.

The Frederick Douglass story

For Black History Month, the African and Caribbean Society of Scotland produced a series of videos celebrating Black Scottish people past and present.

The first YouTube video follows a trip to Auchterarder where comedian Bruce Fummey retells the story of Frederick Douglass. youtu.be/95kLgExJq6I

AUC's church meeting on 4 October took time to share a range of views on the challenges and opportunities of ethical shopping – and in particular our relationships (as individuals and as a community) with Amazon.

Our minister, Fiona, began by noting that online shopping has become more popular since lockdown. Anna Lappe, a writer on the ethics of the food system, says: "Every time you spend money, you're casting a vote for the world you want." This assumes that you have money to spend, and choices. People who live below the poverty line have little choice in how they spend their money.

Amazon offers cheap and convenient buying options but has been criticised for its employment practices, its perceived tax evasion and its dominant power. As a registered charity, AUC has recently registered with Amazon Smile, a scheme whereby the church receives a very small value of cash for every purchase members make. How do we use our privilege as consumers / shoppers, to seek justice and wholeness for all? "Obviously some of us do shop with Amazon", Fiona concluded, but should AUC take funds from them "and be and be seen to be taking funds from them?"

It was agreed that ethical purchasing "often involves a minefield of conflicting arguments." For example, purchasing items produced locally sometimes means that poor individuals in the third world will lose their incomes; but purchasing items produced locally is often better for the

environment. Similarly, the tax affairs of international companies are complex and creating a fair system of allocating profits between countries is not easy either. Amazon employs a large number of individuals in the UK, not least in Edinburgh.

asked one person – "it can open up a minefield."

It was asked: can we assess the benefits/costs of giving up our connection with Amazon?

Easy Fundraising was suggested as an alternative way of

Ethical Shopping - an honest discussion



Photo by Thomas Lefebvre on Unsplash

Some anecdotal information suggests many people enjoy working for Amazon and they're well treated. Other reports argue that the performance of staff is closely monitored by computers.

Regarding Amazon Smile, some members felt the church shouldn't "dictate" how its members donate to it; and what about other online retailers? "At what point does the Church stop policing its suppliers based on ethics?"

donating to AUC via Amazon purchases without the church directly associating itself to Amazon. Easy Fundraising also allows for purchases made through other online retailers to generate funds towards the church's mission.

A decision on whether to continue with the Amazon Smile scheme will be taken at the next church meeting.



Fresh Start - re-open to donations

Although the Fresh Start warehouse at Ferry Road has been closed since March, the staff, based at the Community Hub, have been busy working with the local community serving those in need with food parcels and in many other supportive ways.

The new development of the Shop and Pantry in premises adjoining the warehouse will soon be alive and active.

The warehouse is to re-open as follows:

- From 27 October, on Tuesdays and Thursdays only, donations will be received at the warehouse
- Please 'ring before you bring': 0131 476 7741
- Duvets, pillows, cushions and bric-a-brac cannot be received as there is no space to quarantine them
- All other starter pack items are welcome

So if you have had a major sort-out of your linen, or any other, cupboard during lockdown now is your opportunity to offload goods and help Fresh Start to help folk make a home for themselves. There is a very good website if you want to know more: www.freshstartweb.org.uk

FreshStart



Katniss, a friend of AUC, has found hope and sustenance walking through God's creation, where she is reminded of biblical words: "the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands" (Isaiah 55: 12)

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 8th & 22nd 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: Transgender Remembrance (See pg. 6)
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

Scottish URC youth meeting

Saturday 7 November, 6.30pm

4G – Scottish URC youth meeting in a safe way. For details, email youthsecretary@urcscotland.org.uk.

Seeds deadline

Friday 20 November

The deadline for articles and images for the next edition of *Seeds* is 20 November. This will be the 100th edition of *Seeds*, which has been published in this form for around ten years.

If you have particular thoughts about changes and developments at AUC over that period, we'd love to hear from you.

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.