

# Seeds

March 2021

encourage - inspire - challenge

Augustine  
United Church



## Preparing for new life

Revd Fiona  
Bennett



**J**ust as Advent prepares for the coming of Emmanuel (“God with us”), so Lent prepares for Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection – new life which is born from the death of the old.

Lent is an opportunity to strip back to Jesus’ call to us and re-orientate our lives once again by that call.

It is a time to consider: What is the Holy One calling me to do with my life? How can I use all that I have and am to serve and build God’s Realm on Earth?

How can I best love this planet, neighbours near and far, and myself? What is the Spirit beckoning me to do which may involve the risk of moving from the familiar into the unknown?

All of these questions are different ways of asking the same thing: As a follower of Jesus, how is God calling me to serve in this world today?

Responding to God’s call may mean continuing to do what we do but with new perspective, or it might mean a radical shift in some of our life. Whatever it is, it always means change in some form and the start of something new born from the old.

For many, this Lent, as with all of lockdown, may feel like life is on pause and somewhat empty. For others it will continue to be filled with the overwhelming demands of lockdown life.

**“Responding to God’s call . . . always means change in some form and the start of something new born from the old”**

Whatever situation we find ourselves in, there is an invitation in the Season of Lent to strip back to Jesus’ calling to us, to make time to consider how we can re-orientate our lives to live out that call and to prepare for the new life that God is waiting for us to

### This Month

#### JUNIOR CHURCH AT LENT

A dozen good reasons to celebrate during Lent



#### MEET OUR NEW TREASURER

Getting to know Dr Ewen Harley



#### THE ROUTE TO COP26

A “five-point rant” from Revd David Coleman



#### FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT

Exploring Climate Change in the Global South





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# Local and Global

News from the United Reformed Church

## DEAR GREYFRIARS...

On AUC's behalf, Fiona Bennett wrote a letter to go in a buried time capsule marking the 400th anniversary of Greyfriars Kirk. The capsule will be opened when the Kirk's community reaches its 500th year. Fiona wrote about partnership, the importance of inclusion, and hopes for a united Church. She also offered this apology for the condition of our planet: "I am sorry we have not acted more vigorously to change our ways and hope that humanity in 100 years' time will be more generous and rational in the sharing of resources and the tending of life in all its forms."



## CELEBRATE 75 YEARS OF CHRISTIAN AID

Marking its 75th anniversary, Christian Aid has placed climate change at the forefront of its present campaigning strategy.

"Ending apartheid seemed a distant dream. Not to us. Fair trade? We fought for it when people thought it would be impossible. Our broken climate? It's almost as if everything we've achieved over the past 75 years has been preparing us for this greatest of challenges."

As the world prepares for COP26 to come to Glasgow in November,

the charity has created a variety of resources and partnered with organisations across Scotland to co-host events you can get involved in. [www.christianaid.org.uk/campaigns](http://www.christianaid.org.uk/campaigns) (Also see David Coleman's comments about COP26 on p.8)



## LIGHT FOR LIVES

Tuesday 23 March will mark a year since the UK entered the first lockdown. Over 120,000 people have died of Covid-related causes in the UK, with thousands more from other causes, all of whose funerals have taken place in very restricted circumstances. We can join others in lighting a light at 7pm that day to remember all those lives lost and to stand with those who grieve.



## MAKE TAX FAIR

A recent report from Church Action for Tax Justice (CATJ) highlights Jo

a nurse in the NHS who, along with her colleagues, is struggling with the impact of Covid. While nurses like Jo put themselves on the line for the rest of us, they are taxed at a higher rate than the average person earning £10 million per year. Read the report at [catj.org.uk](http://catj.org.uk) and find out how CATJ is seeking to raise awareness in churches and faith communities of the relationship between taxation, equality and public services, and the urgent need for tax justice at national and international level.

## SAVE KHAN AL-AHMAR IN PALESTINE

The United Reformed Church's Commitment for Life group is calling on us to protest about the planned demolition of a Bedouin village in Palestine.

The Israeli High Court has accepted a petition calling for the demolition of Khan al-Ahmar and its celebrated "car tyres" school. The court imposed a delay on the demolition, but with no injunction actually stopping it, the bulldozers may move in at any moment.

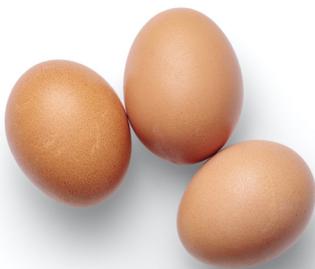
We are invited to sign an online petition set up by Jahalin ([www.icc.jahalin.org](http://www.icc.jahalin.org)), calling on ICC judges to uphold Palestinian rights and prevent "a war crime".



Photo: Peter Biro via Flickr

# Eggciting wait for Junior Church!

**Tamsin Kilgour has a dozen good reasons to be celebrating Junior Church activities during Lent.**



**T**he children continue to be an integral part of our church family, contributing regularly to our weekly online service.

As well as the Junior Church team providing weekly activities for the children to explore at home (and, where necessary, Covid-safe sets of materials), the weekly 'Not Notice' sheet includes a link to the URC's weekly 'Families on Faith Adventures' materials.

During 'Time for All Ages' in Sunday 14 February's service, Fiona talked about entering the season of Lent; Lent being a time of waiting and preparing for Easter, when people often put away things to not have again until Easter Sunday. She explained that the children's activity that day was to make banners that would help AUC with our season of waiting and be revealed on Easter Sunday.

The children may have used eggs to make pancakes on Shrove Tuesday,

and now be waiting with anticipation for the arrival of chocolate eggs at Easter, but they won't be giving up eggs for Lent!

Instead, they have each received a box of 12 eggs to work through from Ash Wednesday to Easter Monday. Each egg contains an activity for them to do, linked to a bible reading and collect.

**"their fresh eyes often give me new insights into familiar stories"**

Part of my Lenten waiting will be waiting to see what the eggs reveal. Knowing our children's creativity, I'm looking forward to seeing their banners and egg activities at Easter; their fresh eyes often giving me new insights into familiar stories.

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY MAX

In other Junior Church news, all good wishes to Max for a very a happy third birthday on 19 March. We hope you have a very special day, Max!

## WELCOME EMERALD

And a huge welcome to Emerald Yasmin Mallon, daughter to Denis and Yasmin. "Emmy" was born on 3 February, all 56cm of her, and weighing in at 9lb 8oz. Such lovely news – we look forward very much to meeting her in person.



Photo: Mockup Graphics via Unsplash

# Meet Your Neighbour

Getting to know members and friends of the AUC community

## Dr Ewen Harley



### FAVORITE PLACE

Carcant

### FAVORITE BOOK

Currently, *Norwegian Wood* by Lars Mytting, "a guide to chopping, stacking and drying wood the Scandinavian way"

**E**wen Harley is not where he expected to be when he took over the role of AUC treasurer at the start of the year.

Currently, he's one of our farthest flung members, living in Galashiels in the Borders with his wife, Elspeth. A planned move to their home in Edinburgh has been delayed by the pandemic – not least because Elspeth, a recently-retired Church of Scotland minister, felt she could not leave her congregations at this time.

Ewen met Elspeth Somerville back in the 1970s, during medical studies in Edinburgh, and his long association with Augustine began. After they married in 1976, they moved to Glasgow, set up their first home and started a family.

However, they were both drawn to mission work in Africa. (Ewen had spent time there as a student and Elspeth had heard about her aunt's work as a midwife in Kenya.) So, in 1982 the young family moved to Botswana under the auspices of a German Lutheran mission organisation. It was, Ewen says, "one of those little things that God arranges".

His work was "a bit like being a GP, but running a hospital", and he and Elspeth became committed to life there: an initial three-year term became seven years.

As part of an international community (both patients and hospital staff), Ewen says he learnt a lot about how faith impacts everyday life and work, affecting the way you do your job. He feels his subsequent career as a GP was strongly informed by the experience – in more ways than one.

His first appointment back in Scotland was in the hugely deprived area of Possilpark in Glasgow. The advertisement for the post said it would "suit somebody who has worked abroad in difficult circumstances".

Ewen thrived being part of a community, in Glasgow and, more recently, in Galashiels. Though returning to be part of AUC's gathered congregation is very different, he is enjoying reconnecting with old friends, and finds meeting new people every time he attends worship an exciting experience.

**"AUC ... is such an important place in the city centre because of the inclusive role it fills and the fantastic welcome it gives."**

"I still feel the URC has something important to offer the wider Christian community. And AUC, too, is such an important place in the city centre because of the inclusive role it fills and the fantastic welcome it gives."

After the move to Edinburgh, Ewen will still be within easy reach of Carcant, the Somerville family's hill farm, where the art of woodland conservation has become an important part of his life. A long-time walker, preserving the environment he loves to explore has become a developing passion.

It will provide a parallel experience to helping conserve the values AUC embodies and the building its people inhabit.

# An invitation to give

**O**n Sunday 7 March, AUC is holding its annual Gift Day. This is a day on which we invite the AUC community to make, if they are able, an extra financial contribution toward the Mission and Ministry of AUC. These donations are always vital to our annual budget but after a year with no income from room rental, they are even more critical.

For many people, this past year has meant reduced income through furlough or redundancy, so, for many, extra financial gifts will not be possible. However, if you are in a position to offer extra financial support, please consider doing so. Donations can be made directly through the Paypal button on the website or by posting cheques to the church office marked "AUC Gift Day".

The mission and ministry of AUC happens through many people sharing our gifts of time, talent, hard work, prayer, creativity and also financial resources. If you are not able to offer extra financial support at this time, please do consider other ways in which you can share in our mission and ministry.

## How you can help

If you are able to, there are a number of 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 Centre Manager (Augustine Church, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh, EH1 1EL)

### Website

You can now pay by PayPal or credit/debit card (no PayPal account required)

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.



# Love = persistent campaigning

As COP26 approaches later this year (see p.8), *Seeds* offers some reflections and suggestions to help us all think about our environment and our responses to the Earth's needs.

**M**iriam Stoate is a Pioneer Minister in the Leicester Anglican Diocese. She recently reflected on the question "What if Love ruled the world?" for the Wild Christian email, 'Nature and Action'.

The question is a paraphrase of the words "Your kingdom come", from the Lord's Prayer (Jesus Prayer).

## What if Love Ruled the World?

*Love of every living thing*

*For this dream to become real*

*We need questioning, listening hearts*

*Searching with humility for God's truth and wisdom*

*Open to new ideas and understandings*

*Inspired by those who live simply.*

*First, still – watching, listening because God in nature teaches and inspires*

*Seeking a shared vision*

*Journeying cooperatively to illuminate and build on the good in all*

*Creative, honest, sacrificial*

*Grounded in love and care*

*With rest, prayer and reflection*

*Not succumbing to negativity*

*But empowered by a desire for love*

*Patiently, persistently, determinedly*

*Listening to the voiceless and reflecting their wisdom*

*Using our anger and unease positively*

*Radiating a beautiful vision of hope and healing*

*Remembering the abundance of energy, blessings and love*

*And the capacity of creation and ourselves, as the children of God, to creatively restore and recreate.*

Miriam was inspired by Jesus' parable of a persistent widow who keeps on asking a judge for legal protection from an opponent. She won't take no for an answer and eventually the judge says: "I'd better give her the protection she seeks, or she'll keep coming and wear me out!" (Luke 18: 1-8).

Miriam writes:

"Like the woman in the parable of the persistent widow, we need to find the right people to approach. And, like this woman, often we need to do this persistently, knowing what 'rights' we should be asking for – and that's where the question of love ruling the world comes in.

"Whatever your gift, wherever your campaign and whoever your companions are, my wish and prayer for you is that of loving persistence and a shared vision of God's love for the earth."



# Five-point route to COP26

With COP26 (“conference of the parties”) coming to Glasgow in November, the Revd David Coleman – chaplain to Eco-Congregations Scotland – puts the event in context with a five-point rant, “offered with love”.



**1** If you’re a church committed to environmental speech action and prayer, don’t forget it. The Bible is absolutely bursting with a consciousness of partnership with the Earth, and subversive critique of Empire. Injustice and environmental devastation so frequently occur together that we realise they’re part and parcel of the same situation.

Don’t ever leave the stage clear for Scripture to be annexed and monopolised by conservative and right wing interests, or you’ll be aiding and abetting the impression that they’re the real thing. Recommended reading therefore: the Bible *with* an inclusive awareness of our context of climate crisis.

Learn from the spiritualities of liberation movements: you have permission for hope, even when the outlook seems grim. Every day, say ‘Hallelujah anyway!’ – with eyes wide open!

**2** This year, in a huge cloud of greenhouse gases, the great circus of COP, the United Nations Climate Conference, should descend on Scotland. This is hosted (and will be exploited) by the UK government, but Scotland can certainly contribute goodwill, welcome and more.

For Scotland as a whole, the challenge is fully to recycle and repurpose any past experience, and learn something new on top.

COP is an opportunity to speed up the reshaping of our way of life towards less environmental impact and more resilience for the huge and possibly brutal changes that do lie ahead. Whatever progress made, or not, on the ‘floor’ of the conference, it shouldn’t be the case that it “leaves not a trace left behind”. Avoid any arrogant talk of “world-beating” climate ambition. What we need is “world-helping”.

**3** Give up putting up with climate denial. You do your neighbour (or the Earth) no favour letting them be taken in by the ridiculous pseudo-science they’ve dug up on the internet. Be kind and disagree.

If anyone accuses you of being “woke”, plead guilty and wear it on your sleeve as a badge of pride. But work to convince, not to defeat.

**4** Stop beating about the bush with the small, easy stuff. No more single-use plastic in hospitality of any kind. By the end of the year, the trees of environmental action should be stripped bare of “low-hanging fruit”, the easy stuff.

It might be that your progress then slows down; or perhaps, since you’ve gained momentum, you can face the more difficult stuff. If you calculate your carbon footprint, don’t worry which system you use, just stick to one, as long as it encourages you to keep going. Think clean air. Better health. Birdsong you can hear.

**5** Get on with it! Stop sacrificing on the altar of procrastination. Think hard, but not long. And finally: Do not worry about tomorrow. To draw on Matthew 6: 24, we’re up to our eyes in the *kakia* (malignancy and misfortune) today.

# Lockdown observations



**N**ew life and surprised cats are being enjoyed by AUC's new Peace & Justice coordinator, Katrina Tweedie, in her "lockdown observations".

Our second floor flat in Aberdour is at just the right height. And our kitchen window is in just the right place. Almost in the cotoneaster tree.

It is bejewelled with red berries glistening with frost. The first visitors are a flock of redwings, eager for breakfast, followed by a solitary fieldfare who takes advantage of his larger size to chase the redwings down to the lower branches.

Then come the blue tits and great tits who ignore the berries in favour of food on the leaves (grubs, insects at this time of year?).

A blackbird or two slip in between the redwings. Keeping an eye on it all from the top of the tree are the jackdaws. They harass the neighbour's huge cat, screeching and swooping until it looks for a quieter spot elsewhere. A moving dab of red, half hidden in the leaves, signals one of my favourite birds, a goldfinch.

Still, in this time of lockdown, I miss the goosanders on the Water of Leith.

# Choose the world you want

Fairtrade Fortnight 22nd February – 7th March



**A**s Seeds goes to print, we are half way through Fairtrade Fortnight. This year, its theme is climate change – a phenomenon that is hitting farmers and communities in the Global South particularly badly. Even more reason for Fairtrade!

In lockdown, AUC will still be able to honour Fairtrade Fortnight by becoming better informed. There is something for everyone on the Fairtrade website ([fairtrade.org.uk](http://fairtrade.org.uk)). Here are some suggestions to get you started:

## Guardians of the Rainforest

[Guardians of the Rainforest | Fairtrade Schools](#) is a short film about a boy in Sierra Leone whose family are cocoa farmers. Ideal for (approximately) 7- to 12-year-olds.

## The Story of Chocolate

[The Story of Chocolate: Unwrapping the Bar | Fairtrade Schools](#) is more appropriate for 12-year-olds up.

16- to 30-year-olds may be interested in joining Youth for Fairtrade.

And for everyone, at [www.fairtrade.org.uk/farmers-and-workers/](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/farmers-and-workers/) there are videos and information about farmers in different countries producing a variety of Fairtrade goods.

Did you know that there is Fairtrade gold, vanilla, grapes...? The website, besides its informative videos, also lists companies where you can find Fairtrade products.

If you do not have access to a computer, do get in touch with Katrina through the minister and she will gladly print off some materials to be sent to you in the post.

# Quiz success

Last month's online quiz organised by TLC Youth received a really positive response from around 45 people from AUC, St Columba's and Morningside United Church.

**Y**outh Coordinator Matt Baines says: "We received lots of kind words of thanks from our guests in the days following, including one enquiry as to when the next one will be!"

One keen quizzier wrote: "Thank you for a great afternoon. The questions were much better than TV's "The Chase". Nothing about TV programmes that I never watch or films I have never heard of."

"The questions were good and we enjoyed spending time together", another participant wrote.

A third added: "It was great that so many of us could come together from around the world and have a laugh! It

was a fun time, thanks to you and TLC (Youth)".

The quiz, devised by Siân, produced three winners.

## ROUND 1

The Squirrel Feeders

## ROUND 2

The Fool Stops

## BEST TEAM NAME

The Ladies who Lockdown

It was great that so many of us could come together from around the world and have a laugh! It was a fun time thanks to you and the TLC (Youth).



# Walk for Water campaign

This Lent, Walk for Water with CAFOD and TLC Youth!

**E**ach day around the world, young people like Abdella have to walk hours to fetch water for their families.

Your steps can make a difference in their lives. You can be sponsored to walk 10,000 steps a day, every day for 40 days to raise money to buy water pumps for families like Abdella's.

Be as creative as you like – walk, skip, dance or play football! To help you think about what you can do, you can reach 10,000 steps with:

- a 90-minute walk
- one hour of cycling
- 53 minutes of playing football
- an hour and ten minutes of an exercise class.

You can ask your sponsors to donate at [walk.cafod.org.uk/teams/tlc-youth](http://walk.cafod.org.uk/teams/tlc-youth).

Email Matt for more ideas on [youth@augustine.org.uk](mailto:youth@augustine.org.uk) or visit [walk.cafod.org.uk/faqs](http://walk.cafod.org.uk/faqs).

Watch Abdella's Story at [walk.cafod.org.uk/about](http://walk.cafod.org.uk/about) and Walk for Water so others don't have to!



## TLC YOUTH IN MARCH

- 14th Walking into the Wilderness Part 2 (includes Minecraft session!)
- 21st March Movie Afternoon
- 28th Walking into the Wilderness Part 3

# Our Tribe: Choosing to challenge

**O**ur Tribe is moving to an exciting new time slot. From March 2021 we will be meeting on the **FIRST Thursday of every month at 7.30pm.** Zoom room will open at **7.20pm.**

We hope this new time will encourage folks to join us who in the past could not make Sunday afternoons.

The first of our new sessions is on Thursday 4 March 2021 when we will be celebrating the run up to International Women's Day on 8 March 2021.

This year's campaign theme is #ChooseToChallenge. A challenged world is an alert world.

Individually, we're all responsible for our own thoughts and actions – all day, every day. We can all choose to challenge and call out gender bias and inequality. We can all choose to seek out and celebrate women's

achievements. Collectively, we can all help create an inclusive world. From challenge comes change, so let's all choose to challenge.

How will you help forge a more inclusive world? Find out more at [www.internationalwomensday.com](http://www.internationalwomensday.com)

To help us celebrate we have two guest speakers:

- Dr Nicola Robinson** – URC Ministry Student
- Ms Katrina Tweedie** – AUC Elder for the Peace and Justice Church Life Ministry Team.

Nicola and Katrina will join in conversation and share their own experiences and reflections on "being a woman in the world today". Communion will be shared.

We look forward to you joining us all on zoom. Please email [maxwell.reay@augustine.org.uk](mailto:maxwell.reay@augustine.org.uk) for the zoom link.



# Thanks from Fiona

I am very grateful to everyone at AUC for the beautiful flowers and card that arrived on my 50th birthday.

To mark my new decade, Pete, Fraser, Rachel and I climbed the Seven Hills of Edinburgh on the previous Saturday, which was a winter wonderland.

I had a marvellous long weekend of celebrations and am excited to see what this next decade holds. Thanks for all your love and support.



# What's On?

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).

## 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 ([centre.manager@augustine.org.uk](mailto:centre.manager@augustine.org.uk)).

Find us on 

Check our daily posts on the AUC Facebook page.

## Worship

SUNDAYS, 11AM

Join services through the zoom link (see Friday emails), AUC website or Facebook page. Junior Church activity sheet on the website. The Post Service Social Time is a valuable way of keeping in touch with each other 11.45-12.30pm. Link in the Friday email.

## TLC Youth

SUNDAYS, 1.30 - C.3.00PM

Inclusive youth group for all young people from S1 up. Email Matt for more information. (See pg. 10.)

## Our Tribe

FIRST THURSDAY OF THE MONTH, 7.30 – 9.00PM

LGBTQI+ ministry at Augustine United Church. This month: International Women's Day (See pg. 11)

## Contextual Bible Studies

TUESDAY 12-1PM, WEDNESDAY 7.30-8.30PM, THURSDAY 12-1PM

Email our minister, Fiona, to join in.

## Midweek Social Time

WEDNESDAYS, 1-2PM

Drop in and chat for 10 mins or the hour. Link in the Friday email.

## Church Meeting

SECOND TUESDAY OF THE MONTH, 7.45-9PM

Open to all. Link in the Friday email. Social time from 7.15pm

## World Day of Prayer 2021

FRIDAY 5 MARCH, 2PM

AUC is hosting the World Day of Prayer service online this year and Fiona will be leading the worship. The theme is 'Build on a Strong Foundation' and it's written by the women of Vanuatu. Zoom joining details from church office or Church Secretary.

## Church dates in March

**Tuesday 2** - Church Council

**Wednesday 3** - "Change in a time of Chaos" webinar, hosted by St Columba's by the Castle

**Sunday 7** - Annual Gift Day (see p.6)

**Tuesday 9** - Church meeting: 7.45pm, with social time from 7.15pm

## Seeds Deadline

FRIDAY 19 MARCH

Seeds is published on the Sunday prior to the beginning of each month. The copy deadline for the April edition is Friday 19 March.