

Seeds

April 2021

encourage - inspire - challenge

Augustine
United Church



Hearing Wisdom's voice

Revd Fiona
Bennett



One of the passages we discussed in Contextual Bible Study last month was Proverbs 8, where wisdom is described as a woman.

She is standing by crossroads and public areas full of people making choices and decisions, calling on people (somewhat frustratedly) to listen to her. She reminds people that she is the way of justice and righteousness, and she is treasure worth more than gold. It is a wonderful passage and a striking image of Wisdom speaking out to us, if we choose to listen.

As the vaccines gradually begin to take effect in the UK, it seems that now is a good time to start thinking and planning for a time when schools, shops, cafes and even churches will be open again.

Before we rush back into old habits, there is a short time of grace to consider how we want things to be when they re-open. Are there things we have gained or learned during

this pandemic that we do not want to forget or lose? What has Wisdom been saying to us through the past year that can steer us toward her paths of justice and righteousness for the present and future?

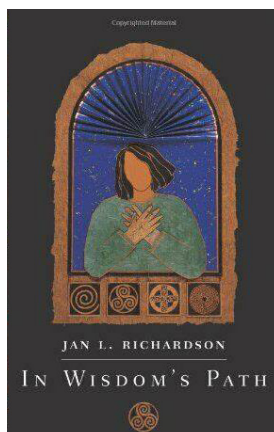
At Church Meeting on March 9th, we began asking these questions and have followed them up with letters and emails toward the end of March. The three key questions were:

- What do you want to carry from 2020 into the future, which you would be sad to lose?
- What do you want to reclaim from 2019, which you have missed through 2020?
- What insights might the 2020 experience offer AUC about our calling and the future shape of our ministry and mission?

A next stage will be to re-visit the Shaping a Healthy Future Report produced for us in February 2020, in light of these responses.

As with many adventures with God, this year has taken us to places we did not expect to be, but through it all God has been with us and Wisdom has been speaking to us.

Can we take time to listen carefully to her voice and allow her insight to shape our individual, congregational and societal life in our gradually unlocking world?



'Wisdom's Path' by Jan Richardson

This Month

WHAT'S COOKING?

Pat Tweedie shares her love of food and hospitality



HELPING HANDS

Kathleen Ziffo on working with Grassmarket Community Project



A "MORE THAN" WORLD

"I didn't know that I didn't know that" moments with TLC Youth



STEPPING BEYOND EASTER

What did it mean for the early Christians to take their first steps?





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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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LOCAL COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERING

Kathleen Ziffo
kathleen.ziffo@augustine.org.uk

Local and Global

News from the United Reformed Church



HAVE YOU REGISTERED?

Elections will be taking place right across the UK on 6 May, including for the Scottish Parliament. This is a time to Think, Pray and Vote. But before that, you need to make sure you're registered.

If you are eligible to vote and need to register, go to www.gov.uk/register-to-vote.

The deadline for registration is 19 April. But if you want to vote by post, your application form must reach the registration office by 5pm on 6 April.

COMBATTING CARBON FOOTPRINT

The URC National Synod of Scotland has agreed a resolution proposed by the Synod Youth Executive to "encourage Synod Committee members, ministers and church members to reduce their carbon footprint by travelling the most environmentally friendly way possible.

Synod encourages churches and the Synod office to carry out an audit of their current levels of recycling and use of single use products and determine what further action they will take to be more environmentally friendly."

More detailed proposals relating to carbon offsetting have been referred for further work on their tax implications.

TRIDENT INCREASES CRITICISED

Church leaders, including the Revd Clare Downing, Moderator of the United Reformed Church General Assembly, have made a joint response to the UK government's decision to increase by more than 40 percent the number of Trident nuclear warheads the UK can stockpile.



Their statement calls this "a retrograde step that will not make any of us safer", adding that "it is immoral that the UK government is committing resources, which could be spent on the common good of our society, to stockpiling even more."

The signatories also point out that the decision will "complicate rather than aid" the process of non-proliferation, which was formalised in January when the United Nations treaty to ban nuclear weapons was made official. "We believe that 'Global Britain' should strive for peaceful and cooperative international relationships, and joint endeavour on climate change, global poverty and other challenges."

#RESETTHEDEBT

Since the Covid pandemic began, millions of people have been forced into debt simply to make ends meet. One year ago, many families received their first unpayable bill because of Covid-19. Many are still facing an

uncertain future weighed down by debt. The Reset the Debt campaign is calling for us to pray for action – and to act ourselves. We are asked to sign a petition calling on the Chancellor to #ResetTheDebt; share the petition; and write to our MP. All details and links at www.resetthedebt.uk.

RESOURCES FOR A GREEN CHURCH

The Yorkshire local group of the Joint Public Issues Team (of which the URC is a member organisation) is hosting an online day conference "to stimulate your imagination, develop your understanding of the Bible and reinvigorate your worship life". Climate Change Emergency: Resources for a Green Church runs on Saturday, 12 June. Go to www.jointpublicissuesyorkshire.org.uk/ and check out "Green Conference" to register.



FRESH START OPEN FOR BUSINESS

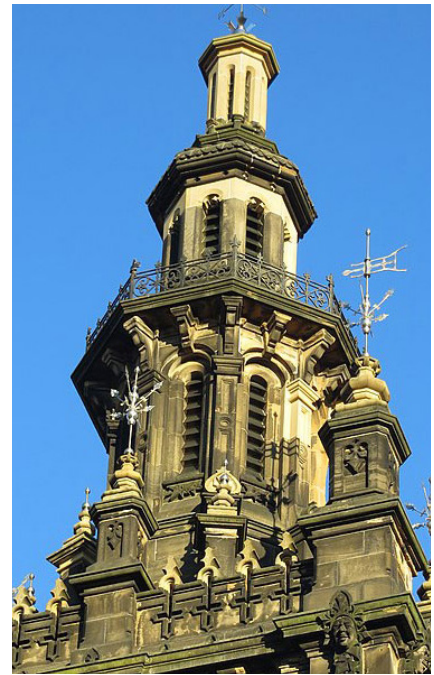
The Fresh Start warehouse will re-open for donations from Tuesday, 6 April, Monday – Thursday, 9-4pm. Check their website for what's needed and please do stick to those items listed, as it costs the charity money to dispose of any goods they can't use.

Returning to the Building

Following the Scottish government's recent announcement, Church Council has taken the decision to start streaming our worship services from the building once again from April 11th.

From May we hope to offer a monthly service, with limited numbers for folk to attend in person if they wish. We'll be using the same booking system as before and we'll advertise the link well in advance.

The number of in-building services will be reviewed each month in response to the Covid rates, the appetite for in-building worship, and the willingness of people to steward.



Art for justice and peace

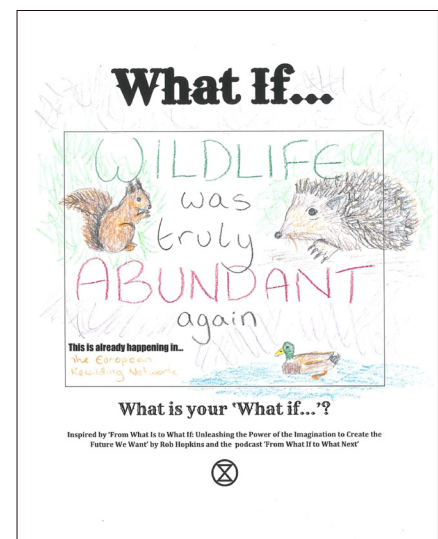
An activity for adults and children of all ages.

You will need: an A4 sheet of paper, pens/coloured pencils, your imagination

Make a poster. Start with the words 'What If', then set your imagination free!

For example, what if we could play football safely in the street? What if we planted so many trees a squirrel could cross Edinburgh without touching the ground? What if everyone in the world had a tap?

Make your poster, send it to the church and we will display it. Perhaps together we will make your idea a reality some day!



Junior Church birthdays

We have two special birthdays in April.

Congratulations to Ellie and Rowan – we hope you each have very special days, and are able to find good ways to celebrate, even if it feels a bit different this year!

Meet Your Neighbour

Getting to know members and friends of the AUC community

Pat Tweedie



Pat Tweedie began cooking when she was three years old – standing on a stool next to her Nana.

She's been cooking ever since. It's a gift she shares with a huge range of people, from private clients, who hire Pat for her high-end culinary finesse, to young parents using foodbanks and needing tips on producing simple, cheap meals for their families.

Cooking has also been a gift for Pat herself. She describes herself as a shy person, but she's discovered that making meals for others helps her find a way into conversation and socialising. "I'm most relaxed in the kitchen – hospitality is a side of life I really enjoy. I begin to get to know people."

Her career as a private chef has been fascinating, she says, and she's cooked in all sorts of settings – hunting lodges, private parties, and even in the remote wilderness ("where planning had to be meticulous, down to the last pinch of salt") . . . "I've been places and met people I'd never have dreamt I'd have done." The downside has been extremely long days, a chock-full diary, and many weeks away from her home and family in Montrose and Fife.

That's why many aspects of the pandemic lockdown have been surprisingly welcome to Pat. The suddenly empty diary was frightening, and dependency on government financial support was a big shift. On the other hand, the enforced downtime helped her step back to have a re-think. "I've taken my foot off the pedal and considered what I could do for the next while. Am I just filling up life or doing what I enjoy?"

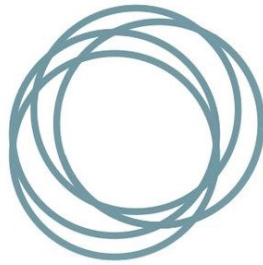
In part, this meant getting busy in other ways. During the first lockdown, Pat set up a children's cookery project in Aberdour, starting out with six 6-12 year-olds. By Christmas there were 24 joining in, each with their own fully equipped work station; and it's a sign of hope that there are plans for the project to re-start in May.

This community-based work is Pat's real passion. For 15 years she has worked with foodbanks in Broomhouse and Montrose, looking at all aspects of food poverty – by which she means skills and knowledge as well as money. "There can be three generations of non-cooks in a family", and her task is to create recipes using only the limited ingredients that have been donated to the foodbank. This, she says, "is what makes my heart sing."

Lockdown has also meant there has been more time for church. AUC's online offerings have enabled Pat and Katrina to be "faithful" to a church that Pat first got to know over twelve years ago. And part of her personal reflection during this period has led her to take on the new role of building manager, to which she brings past experience in project management and admin (plus, remember that wilderness cooking!).

More important, perhaps, Pat also brings that strong sense of gift. "You can't really freely give unless you're grateful for the place you're in", she observes, which is what lockdown has given her: the gift to be herself and to give freely of herself. "Freed up to think of all the ways I can be," AUC will be another beneficiary of Pat's skills and singing heart.

Open Doors, helping hands



Augustine supports Open Doors Meals at the Grassmarket Community Project (GCP) financially and through volunteers. Kathleen Ziffo has been a volunteer with them for 26 years. Katrina Tweedie asked Kathleen to tell her more.

HOW DID OPEN DOORS MEALS START?

Over 25 years ago, a small project for feeding homeless people one evening a week was started by ladies of Greyfriars Kirk Guild in their Kirk House in Candlemaker Row. Divinity Students living in the Grassmarket, and some veterinary students, also assisted. Twenty to thirty people would come and we brought in (and eventually made on the premises) soup, sausage rolls/sandwiches and home-baking.

Around that time, people in Augustine, Greyfriars and St Columba's by-the-Castle looked at what the local churches could do together to help in the area. We carried out a joint parish visitation, knocking on peoples' doors and asking what the

community needed. We discovered that there were far more people living around the area in flats than we had imagined and that there were homeless people going hungry, and others in need of support.

Since then, it has developed hugely, first with the appointment of a field worker, and then with the establishment of the more ambitious Grassmarket Community Project, which also offers services such as skills development including weaving and woodworking.

GCP now serves a much wider group of people, addressing lack of opportunities, mental health issues and poverty, as well as homelessness. It is the Open Doors Meals part of GCP that our congregations supports.

WHAT DOES YOUR ROLE INVOLVE?

I used to head up a cooking team but in the last three or so years GCP has employed a chef for their café (and cooking classes) and he now prepares two course meals for our members. Volunteers set up, heat the food, serve it, chat to members and then clean up.

WHAT OTHER ROLES ARE THERE?

While the meals are eaten, others advise on benefits and other financial matters, hairdressers cut members' hair, and vets help with pets. Folk might like to get more involved with other aspects of the volunteering work of GCP and can contact GCP direct. (details on the next page.)

WHO VOLUNTEERS?

There are people from our three local churches, from other churches, some with no church affiliation, students and people of all ages. Everyone mucks in together. We are all of us, volunteers and people being served, called "members".



Della, Francis, Robert and I have been more recent helpers, as were the late Brian Teyhan and Zandra Russell; and among the earlier volunteers was the late Agnes Nisbet.

“Many people consider it a safe place to come. It provides opportunity for socialising, friendship and companionship to people who have difficulty accessing that.”

HOW OFTEN DO YOU VOLUNTEER?

Once a month nowadays (prior to the pandemic).

WHAT DO YOU MOST ENJOY ABOUT IT?

I enjoy producing a meal for people, seeing people enjoying the food and socializing with the folk attending.

Most people are very appreciative – so I like that – and I like being able to chat to people when we have time. Most of the people who come in are pretty nice people. There’s such a variety of people too. . . foreigners with low incomes, occasionally a few asylum seekers, people with mental health issues or dependency problems, people who are socially excluded. Anyone is welcome to come for a free meal.

ANYTHING YOU DON'T ENJOY?

Team leaders are meant to be in first to set up tables, crockery and cutlery in the main hall, but if prior events are running late it can mean a real rush. And it can be quite strenuous moving furniture quickly from different parts of the building!

HOW DOES AUC DECIDE HOW MUCH TO CONTRIBUTE FINANCIALLY?

Up to fifty meals produced one day a week over about 50/52 weeks cost around £2,400 in 2019; and so each of our three local church agreed to donate approximately £800 each.

WHAT BENEFITS DO YOU THINK OPEN DOORS MEALS BRING?

Many people consider it a safe place to come. It provides opportunity for socialising, friendship and companionship to people who have difficulty accessing that.

AND DURING THE PANDEMIC?

Work has continued in whichever form is possible at the time, whether it's delivering food to members of the community project and others, or giving out 'take away' meals. The day and time of the meal has changed; and the members helping and leading have changed quite a lot, too.

Thank you, Kathleen, for your all your hard work and dedication. Also thank you to all the other members of AUC who have volunteered. Anyone wishing to volunteer should contact Kathleen.

Contact details for Grassmarket Community Project:

Online: info@grassmarket.org
phone 0131 225 3626
text 07860 021 262



What are we talking about?

Especially while we are unable to gather together in person, it has been suggested that *Seeds* carries brief summaries of recent online meetings – keeping us all a little more up to date, and spreading the word. In each case, Minutes contain fuller details.

AUC Church Meeting – 9 March 2021

- Fiona introduced a “Looking back and looking forward” discussion. Feedback is helping to create a questionnaire for the congregation to begin to form an “AUC Road Map”. Add your thoughts and ideas by contacting the minister or Church Secretary.
- The Gift Day total was exceptional; a huge thanks to all who contributed.
- A generous offer to design an AUC Tartan was explained. Results from a survey of options will be announced soon!
- Four names were agreed to be received into full membership, possibly on 4 April.
- We are preparing to host worship from the church building again. Online worship will continue each week. (See details on p.4.)
- Next meeting is on 13 April, with our AGM the following month on 11 May.

National Synod of Scotland Meeting

13 March 2021 – 84 people were present, including ecumenical guests.

- Names of ministers serving a significant number of years were read out, including Fiona Bennett who is celebrating 25 years since ordination.
- The Synod Clerk, Bill Robson, will stand down in September.
- Thanks were offered for the World Day of Prayer service, hosted by AUC with 1,000 attending.
- A resolution on reducing our carbon footprint, proposed by the Synod Youth Executive, was discussed at length. See p.3.
- The Youth and Children’s Ministry Development Workers, Matt Baines and Jess Poole, encouraged churches to consider working towards the new Children and Youth Friendly Church Award Scheme, and pointed to ways of becoming intergenerational communities.
- Synod-level links with Hungry and Cuba are being drawn to a close and links with the World Council of Churches rekindled.
- A resolution from Church and Society was carried following discussion: “That this Synod, expressing the need for urgent action in relation to the global climate emergency, call on the Church and Society Committee, working in conjunction with other appropriate bodies, to bring forward a programme of actions to resource the United Reformed Church National Synod of Scotland in working towards achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030.” Churches were urged to apply for grants while these are still available.
- Discussions about deployment of ministers and staff took place in breakout groups and feedback is being sent to the Synod Pastoral Committee.
- Synod agreed to put forward the name of the Revd Fiona Bennett to the election of Moderator of General Assembly 2022/23, alongside nominations from the other 12 synods. Nominations will be voted upon at the General Assembly in July.
- The next Synod Meeting will be held on 18 September.

It was wonderful to hear music from Karl Macrae and Mike Holroyd during the offline breaks.

“I didn’t know I didn’t know that!”

**Matt Baines issues a call-out
from the TLC Youth team.**

Have you ever had a moment where you said, “I didn’t know that I didn’t know that?”

For me, that moment came at my last dental hygienist appointment. I was in such a rush to leave the flat that I completely forgot to brush my teeth (yuk, Matt!) and didn’t even pack my toothbrush. When I asked at reception, they didn’t have any of the complimentary brushes they usually hand out. What they handed me was something like this:



“Oh! That’s strange”, I remarked, “Why does this brush have bristles on the back?” Do you know the answer? If you guessed it’s a special brush for cleaning dentures, you are right! The tapered brush on the back is for those harder to reach areas on sets of false teeth. Not only did I not *know* that, I never *knew* that I didn’t know that! I had no idea that such a thing might exist.

This led me to consider how the world is full of things we don’t realise exist, or might exist, until we are surprised by them.

This Spring in TLC Youth, we are going to explore how the world we live in is a “More than ____ World”: more than we have experienced, more than we ever imagined, more than we expected, or have seen or have ever dreamed of! We’ll be exploring far-off

countries, seeing life from a cat’s-eye view, and looking for those details we overlooked in our everyday lives.

But . . . we need your help to get started!

- Do you have any possessions that you think might surprise our young people and open their eyes to a side of life they haven’t considered before? A tool, an artefact, from the past or from another country?
- If so, could you make a short video* with your unusual artefact?
- In the video, hold the item up to the camera without telling us what it is. Then ask the question: “What do you think this item is?” (Or for?)
- Pause, and then give the answer, perhaps with a little demonstration of how to use it, or the story of how it came to be in your possession. Were you surprised by its existence or its utility? Is it something you use regularly or an item you simply keep as a memento?
- Then pause again and finish your recording by looking at the camera and saying the words: “This world is more”, with emphasis.
- Email your video to Matt at youth@augustine.org.uk by Wednesday 7 April using the title, “I didn’t know I didn’t know that!”
- I will then use your videos for a quiz introducing our theme of “More than ____ World” at TLC Youth on Sunday 11 April.

* If you are not confident in your ability to record a short video, please don’t be put off: we still want to hear from you and your surprising object! Just drop Matt a line and we can discuss other options.

Also, if you have contacts or experience of other countries and cultures, we want to hear from you too! Again, drop Matt a line, and let’s start a conversation!

Stepping beyond Easter

During this month, we will re-experience what Jesus' first disciples experienced – what it means to step beyond the years of Jesus' ministry, arrest and execution to a post-Easter life. What did it mean in reality for the first Christian communities to take their first steps, not simply as followers of Jesus but as his co-workers and legacy?

What will it mean for us? Here are three thoughts (from a minister, a rock star and a cottar) – each of them offering challenge and opportunity.

In her sermon on the 4th Sunday in Lent, Fiona spoke about the cross on which Jesus was crucified as being more than an object; and the story of the cross, more than a one-day event.

"In the whole story of the cross – how Jesus lived, ended up there, how he died, what happened after (that whole story of the cross) – Jesus shows us, and journeys with us along the path of healing.

He showed us the path of healing when he included people who were beyond the pale. He showed us the path of healing when he restored people to themselves and to their communities. He showed us the path of healing when he stopped violence against women, as he refused to cast the stone. He showed the path of healing when he called fisherfolk

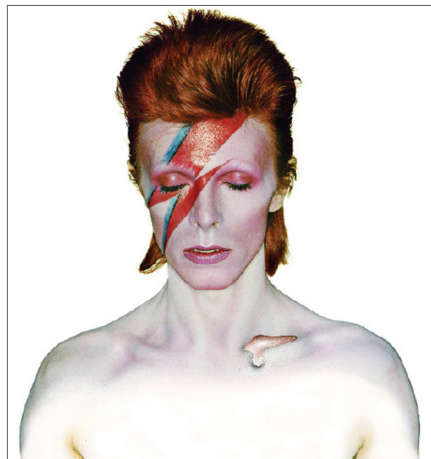
as disciples, to discover more within themselves that they might have dreamed of. . .



Jesus healed and showed others how they too could heal themselves and others and their society as a whole. The whole story of the cross shows the path of healing for the brokenness of the world."

Rock legend David Bowie (and who doesn't need a bit of David Bowie every now and then!) once said this in an interview:

"If you feel safe in the area you're working in, you're not working in the right area. Always go a little further into the water than you feel you're capable of being in. Go a little bit out of your depth. And when you don't feel that your feet are quite touching the bottom, you're just about in the right place to do something exciting."



Dugall MacAulay was a cottar (farm labourer) on Benbecula who would always recite this little prayer to himself, fo m'anail, "under my breath", when he went upon a journey, however short the distance, however small the matter of his errand.

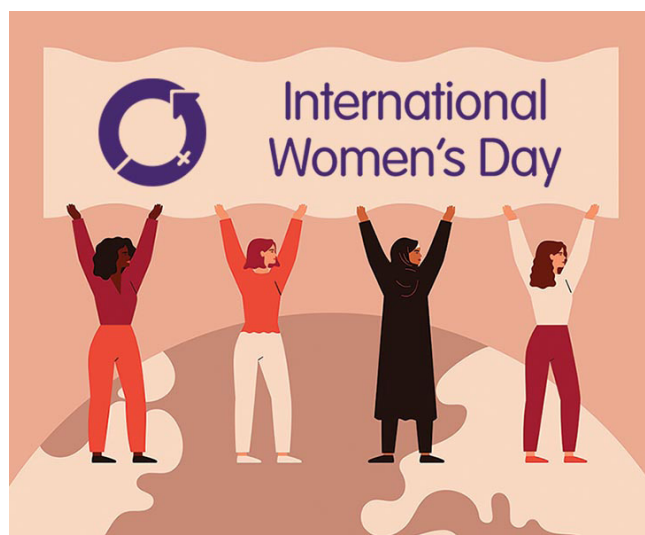
Bless to me, O God,
The earth beneath my foot,
Bless to me, O God,
The path whereon I go;
Bless to me, O God,
The thing of my desire;
Thou Evermore of evermore,
Bless Thou to me my rest.

Bless to me the thing
Whereon is set my mind,
Bless to me the thing
Whereon is set my love;
Bless to me the thing
Whereon is set my hope;
O Thou King of kings
Bless Thou to me mine eye!

Hands up with Our Tribe

Our Tribe last met on 4 March, at our new time of 7.30pm on the first Thursday of every month. On that occasion we looked forward to International Women's Day on the 8 March, and want to give a huge 'Thank You' to Katrina Tweedie and Nicola Robinson for sharing their stories of life and ministry.

As our way of marking International Women's Day, all who took part raised their hand to stand up and challenge gender stereotypes and bias.



**Our Tribe will meet virtually
Thursday, 1 April 2021**



THE SESSION WILL OPEN AT 7:20PM
AND START AT 7:30PM

A Quiet reflective worship, remembering Jesus' last meal with his disciples when he washed their feet.

Led by: Fiona Bennett & Mike Holroyd

Worship will include Communion. Please have bread and wine/juice available if you wish to share in communion. All are welcome.

What's On?

All our gatherings and resources are currently online. You can find out details on our website 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).

Find us on 

Check our daily posts on the AUC Facebook page.

Looking ahead...

Joint TLC service with Greyfriars and St Columba's by the Castle

SUNDAY 23 MAY

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. 9.)

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

Church dates in March

Tuesday 6 – Church Council

Sunday 11 – TLC Youth: "More Than. . . a human world"

Tuesday 13 – Church meeting: 7.45pm, with social time from 7.15pm

Sunday 25 – Blended worship service

Sunday 25 – TLC Youth "More Than. . . my local world"

Muddy Easter Trail for All Ages

SUNDAY 4 APRIL (EASTER DAY)

Use your eyes and ears to explore the world around you! Follow the Muddy Easter Trail as a household and join TLC Youth for a chat on Zoom afterwards. Email Matt on youth@augustine.org.uk to find out how to join in.

Seeds Deadline

FRIDAY 16 APRIL

Seeds is published on the Sunday prior to the beginning of each month. The copy deadline for the April edition is Friday 16 April.