

# Seeds

May 2021

encourage - inspire - challenge

Augustine  
United Church



## Did Jesus invent the 'new normal'?

Revd Fiona Bennett



The theme of this year's Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival is 'Normality?'.

The festival is running 3-23 May with a mainly online program, but also including a few live outdoor exhibitions (in Renfrewshire). You can find out more at [www.mhfestival.com](http://www.mhfestival.com). The theme was inspired by many lockdown conversations about 'getting back to normal' or 'creating a new normal'. It raises questions about what we perceive as normal. And whether much of what was assumed in pre-lockdown as 'normal' was – for people who live with anxiety, illness or disability – often damaging to mental



Letter To My Mother, Amina Maher

health. Is it possible to shape a new normal in our society that is inclusive and enabling for all?

The festival includes the dates of Mental Health Awareness Week Scotland, which is 10-16 May. This year the theme is 'Nature and the Environment', which has been shown to be a huge factor and tool for supporting our mental health throughout lockdown. ([www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/mental-health-awareness-week](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/mental-health-awareness-week)) (See p.5.)

**"Was Jesus trying to shape a new normal in the world in which he lived, one that was inclusive and enabling for all?"**

The experience of lockdown and losses brought about by the pandemic have certainly raised everyone's awareness that our mental health requires as much attention and care as our physical health. This would not have been a new idea to Jesus, for all of his healing stories are about more than physical events; they involve people being restored to themselves and to their communities. Was Jesus trying to shape a new normal in the world in which he lived, one that was inclusive and enabling for all?

I hope the opportunities to learn and connect this May through all these Mental Health events can inspire us to treasure and care for the gift of our mental health, and consider how we can shape a new normal world which creates space and support for all.

### This Month

#### BLESSED BY QUEEN JESUS

Jesus, Queen of Heaven reimagined at St. Mary's



#### CONNECT WITH NATURE

Mental Health Week focuses on exploring the natural world



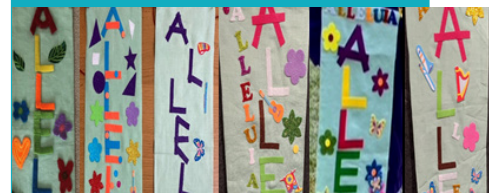
#### SILVER LININGS

Finance report reveals strong 2020 growth for AUC



#### SIGNS OF "ALLELUIA"!

Junior Church unfurls Easter banners





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# Local and Global

News from the United Reformed Church

## MENTAL HEALTH AND THE ARTS CELEBRATED

'Reclaiming our Heritage' is an oral history project exploring the arts and mental health landscape in Scotland between the 1950s and 2000s. A new online archive shares personal stories and celebrates the pioneers who led the way in arts for good mental health. All the stories are collated on the Mental Health Arts Festival website ([mhafestival.com](http://mhafestival.com)).

The project was undertaken with help from a group of volunteers across Scotland who were trained in oral history techniques. They explored a wide range of creative processes that have taken place in all sorts of contexts, from painting and drawing to drama, writing and dance. (See p.5 for Lewis Reay's mental health awareness poem.)



## BLESSED BY QUEEN JESUS

St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh, recently hosted Jo Clifford and her team as they live-streamed 'A space to bless' – a series of short 'chapters' incorporating elements of The Gospel According to Jesus, Queen of Heaven. The scenes were reimagined for St Mary's glorious space and offered challenging reflections on the world we inhabit. Tickets and viewing are still possible (just!) until Monday 26 April. Go to the Queen Jesus Productions website.



## WHAT DOES TRADE HAVE TO DO WITH CLIMATE?

'Change in a Time of Chaos' is the fourth in a series of webinars hosted by our ecumenical partner St Columba's. Each webinar focuses on an issue around climate change in the run up to COP26.

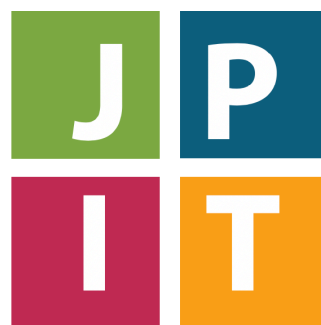
The next lecture, on 27 April, 7.30–8.80pm, is titled 'How can we secure climate justice and trade justice together?' and features Ed Johnson-Williams, Senior Campaigns Officer at Traidcraft Exchange (above). He will ask: 'How can we change the rules of trade to tackle both climate change and poverty? You can sign up via the 'Learn' section of the St Columba's by the Castle website.

## UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE UK 2021

### COP26 – LATEST

Following a well-publicised debate about whether or not to hold an in-person COP26 gathering in Glasgow in November, a compromise has

been reached, which allows virtual negotiations to take place ahead of the summit. There will now be a three-week long virtual meeting from 31 May to 17 June, to begin negotiations and hammer out agreements on key aspects of the talks. However, countries will still have to wait until they meet in person to rubber stamp any decisions.



## JOINT PUBLIC ISSUES TEAM

### NEW PLAN FOR IMMIGRATION QUESTIONED

The Westminster government's recently published New Plan for Immigration gives details about a long-promised overhaul of the asylum system. The proposals are described as aiming to increase the fairness of the asylum system and deter illegal entry into the UK. However, the ecumenical Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) believes that many of the measures 'risk creating more injustices in the system which will increase the trauma and pain experienced by asylum seekers attempting to reach safety in the UK'.

JPIT says: 'As a Church which seeks to offer sanctuary, witness to God's love and stand for justice, we must speak up for human dignity and flourishing. We're engaging with the proposals, and encouraging you to do the same.'

# Sharing our news

**E**ight new members joined AUC on Easter Day. Welcoming them, the Revd Fiona Bennett described Easter as ‘a wonderful day for joining the church’.

She said: ‘Easter is a day celebrating new life. Every time new members join the church, the whole congregation is

born again as we are transformed. We become a new body of people with new gifts, and new members who are part of it’

Welcome to Jim and Elaine Kerr; Katrina, Donna and Josh Hadley; Hanna Albrecht; Tony Chan; and Carolyn Thornton.



## Church Council

Meeting on 6 April, Church Council agreed the next steps towards the appointment of an Assistant Treasurer (Tom Murray is currently filling this position), and was supportive of the proposal for pastoral support of our

Minister of Word and Sacrament as recommended across the URC. Council also agreed to update the Congregational Contact List of full and associate members annually, around the time of the AGM.

## Church Meeting

The Church Meeting on 13 April was thankful for:

**4** caretaking staff

who have again deep cleaned the building ready for live streaming of worship.

**£22,000**

donated to AUC’s Gift Day, including Gift Aid.

**8** new members

who joined on Easter Day (see above).

The meeting heard that 65% of those who voted on an AUC tartan from Gordon Nicholson Kiltmaker chose Option 2, with its ‘green’ reflection of our commitment to the environment. Learn more in the June *Seeds*.

TLC Youth has grown in number with connection to the States; and the meeting heard of ongoing conversations with our TLC partners and of getting to know the URCs around Edinburgh as we look towards future deployment discussions.

In other news, Pat Tweedie, newly-appointed Buildings Manager, offered early thoughts about the church kitchen and pantry as well as for church heating improvements, mindful of green energy technologies. The Peace & Justice Church Life Ministry Team is planning three-monthly ‘Windows into the World’ themes for our consideration, and we received a heads-up for ‘Plastic Free July’.



# Mental Health Awareness Week, 10-16 MAY



## They were waiting

In his poem, 'They were waiting', AUC member Lewis Reay offers a glimpse into life on a hospital ward, where patients live with the impact and rhythms of mental illness.

*They were waiting for the drugs round*

*Hamilton trembling like a frightened boy,  
pacing up and down,  
stretching out his legs.*

*Fraser with his thirst,  
tongue dry, sticking to the roof of his mouth,  
needing a glass of water.*

*Brown muttering to himself  
with the voices ringing in his ears,  
all-consuming and inevitable.*

*Christie with his tummy sticking out,  
his shirt too short to cover him,  
and his trousers falling down: no belt.*

*Porter crying silently to himself,  
no one noticing his insistent grief,  
the loss of his loved one more than he  
could bear.*

*Angus shuffling in his slippers,  
with his head turned down,  
intent on the carpet's pattern.*

*They were waiting for the drugs round.*

## #ConnectWithNature

**Mark Rowland, Chief Executive of the Mental Health Foundation, writes:**

A 1960s study in the US found that patients who were treated in hospitals with a view of nature recovered faster.

Nature is so central to our psychological and emotional health that it's almost impossible to realise good mental health for all without a greater connection to the natural world.

Despite this, many of us are not accessing or benefitting from nature. Teenagers in particular appear to be less connected with nature and around 13% of UK households have no access to a garden.

Nature is not a luxury. It is a resource that must be available for everyone

to enjoy – as basic as having access to clean water or a safe roof over our heads. Local and national governments need to consider their role in making this a reality for everyone.

During Mental Health Awareness week, the Mental Health Foundation has two aims:

Firstly, to inspire more people to connect with nature in new ways, noticing the impact that this connection can have for their mental health.

Secondly, to convince decision makers at all levels that access to and quality of nature is a mental health and social justice issue as well as an environmental one.



# Money Matters

Ahead of AUC’s Annual General Meeting (11 May), the Centre, Finance and Property team has compiled this report on our 2020 accounts. The members of the team are Fiona Bennett, Rachel Fitzgerald, Ewen Harley, Ian Johnson, Pat Tweedie, Steven Smillie and Fiona Somerville. Graphics by Steven Smillie.



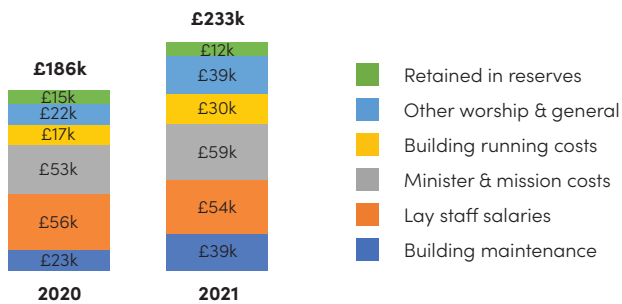
**In the year to 31 December 2020 the income of the church exceeded expenditure by £15,662 compared to £11,765 in 2019. Given the disruption the COVID pandemic has had on the income generation activities of the church this is a very welcome outturn. Income was lower than in 2019 but so was expenditure.**

The total expenditure of the church decreased by £50,500. A large proportion of this was due to £16,000 less being spent on repairs, as the Studio ceiling was repaired in 2019. £10,000 less was spent on heating as the building was not in use over the winter.

Some of the building equipment became fully written down in 2019 and this reduced expenditure by £11,000. Due to the uncertainties over the church’s income, the church contributed £4,000 less to the Synod for Ministry and Mission costs at the start of lockdown.

There was £6,000 less spent on consultancy fees as the Shaping a Healthy Future project was completed in 2019. £2,000 less was spent on travel expenses as the minister was mainly working from home; however, this was offset by £2,000 (3.6%) of inflationary pay increases for lay staff.

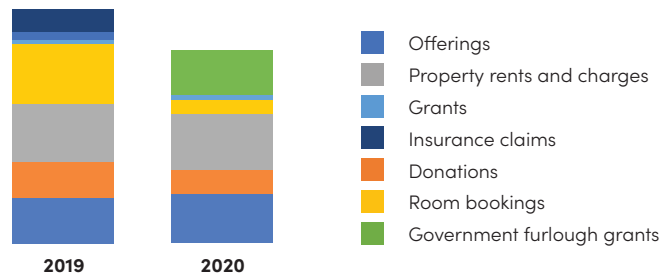
## Income: how was it used?



Overall income decreased by £46,500, mainly because the building was closed from the end of March. Building lettings income decreased by £29,500, booking income being offset by furlough grant income received from the government.

We were fortunate in that the rental income from Paradise Green was received even though the Fringe Festival did not go ahead. Donations decreased but this was offset by an increase in regular offerings of £5,400 (10 per cent). It is encouraging that the congregation continued to increase their offerings when services were not being held in the building.

## Income: where did it come from?



There are uncertainties in 2021 over the extent to which room bookings and Fringe income will be able to be generated. The continued support of the congregation through offerings and donations remains important.

# Signs of “Alleluia”!

Tamsin Kilgour reports on what’s to come for Junior Church.

**O**n Easter Sunday, the promised banners which members of Junior Church had been working on during Lent were revealed – Alleluia! And, yes, the anticipated creativity was evident.



From Easter to Pentecost, the children will be offered activities linked to the lectionary readings. Mirroring the approach we follow when meeting in church, a variety of learning tools will be used, allowing for the children’s different strengths and learning styles.

Over the next few weeks, they will be doing craft, playing games, having fun with science, and – as we approach Pentecost – cooking. (I wonder what that might be, given that Pentecost is the church’s birthday?).

As Covid-19 restrictions are eased, we are hoping to meet in church a couple of times during the summer term, but no dates are yet confirmed. For those families who find it hard to access the AUC building, don’t worry – we’ll be carrying on providing at-home activities too.

## Birthday congratulations

Ozzie – we can’t believe you’ll be six on 1 May! We miss seeing you, and hope you’re enjoying school. Have a great birthday celebration with your family!

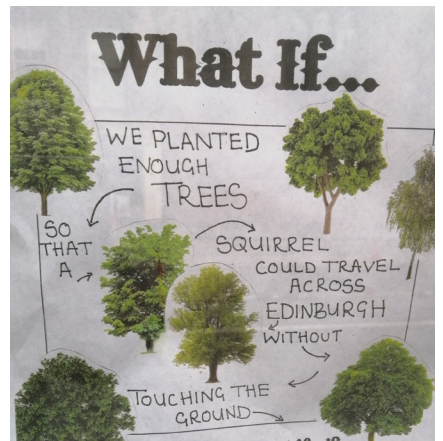
# Art for justice & peace

**A**s we think about mental health and the impact of the pandemic – but also about that sense of transformation the welcome of new church members brings us (p.4) – Anne MacKenzie offers us these words from ‘Pentecost’ by Kate McIlhagga. Kate was a URC minister and a member of the Iona Community.

*Come Holy Spirit,  
Come wind of God,  
Whisper your tender words of healing  
In the ears of the sick,  
Breathe your spirit of comfort  
Around those who mourn,  
Stir hearts hardened by despair  
To new life and hope.*

*Drive us out of our pious ghettos  
To glimpse new ways to witness,  
New ways to use our wealth,  
New ways of being the people  
You call us to be.  
Come Holy Spirit, Renew the whole  
creation.*

We’re still looking for posters for our ‘What If?’ display at the church. Posters from adults and children of all ages are very welcome. Examples so far include ‘What if there was a ministry of imagination?’ or ‘What if everyone felt valued and invested in their community?’ Simply send your poster to the church and Rachel will put it up!



# 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.

## Our Tribe

FIRST THURSDAY OF THE MONTH, 7.30 – 9.00PM

LGBTQI+ ministry at Augustine United Church. This month: Mental Health and Scripture.

## 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 May

**Tuesday 4** – Church Council

**Sunday 9** – Blended worship service

**Tuesday 11** – Church meeting (AGM): 7.45pm, with social time from 7.15pm

**Sunday 23** – Pentecost joint TLC service\*

**Sunday 30** – Blended worship service

\*with Greyfriars and St Columba's by the Castle

## Worship in our building

A reminder that, 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. Note that Sunday afternoon parking controls have now been put in place in the city centre from 12.30pm to 6.30pm every Sunday. (Details at [www.edinburgh.gov.uk/sundayparking](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/sundayparking))

## Seeds deadline

*Seeds* is published on the Sunday prior to the beginning of each month. The copy deadline for the June edition is **Friday 21 May**.