

# Seeds

February 2022

encourage – inspire – challenge

Augustine  
United Church

## Stepping out of familiar places

**Revd Fiona Bennett**



**T**he year ahead, 2022, looks to be a year of commemorative celebration.

On 30 May we will mark the fact that the congregation of Augustine United (then the North Square Chapel) is 220 years old and, on 5 October, the United Reformed Church is 50 years old.

The early story of the North Square Chapel links directly with the Haldane brothers, who are credited for being unintentional founding movers in what became the Congregational Union of Scotland.

John Aikman worked alongside the brothers. Taking a group of people from their first community, he then built the North Square Chapel. What motivated this movement was not the idea of setting up a church but a desire to see people more alive in their faith and keen to share the Gospel.

In the late 1700s and early 1800s, the agrarian and industrial revolutions were happening. People were moving to towns and cities, and the French Revolution was making people in power in the UK anxious of similar uprisings here. Change was in the air, which would have excited some and terrified others.

In his book *The Strength to Love* (1963), Martin Luther King Jr said: 'The ultimate measure of a person is not where they stand in moments of comfort and convenience, but where they stand at times of challenge and controversy.'

Our founding congregation will have been made up of people with a diversity of life experiences, feelings and motives, but they were people who in a time of change tried to do something different for the sake of the Gospel.

Their stepping out of familiar places and habits created a community

**"Change would have excited some and terrified others"**

which has evolved hugely over 200 years and yet is still, in our own context, trying to enable ourselves and all people to be alive in our faith and to share the Gospel today.

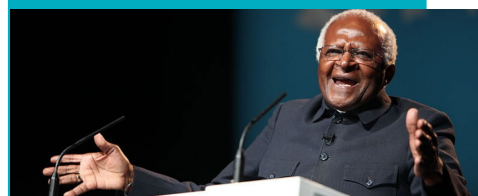
I hope, over this commemorative year, that insights from our heritage both in AUC and the URC might equip and empower us to step out of our familiar places and habits, and to create new places of love, justice and hope in our world today.

**See suggestions for New Year 'care-fulness' on pp.10-11**

### This Month

#### FAITH AND ANGER

Looking back at the legacy of Desmond Tutu



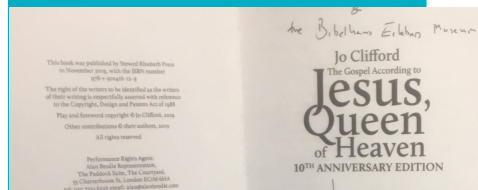
#### BIRD'S EYE VIEW

An alternative viewpoint of the COP26 gathering



#### IN G'D'S NAME

Queen Jesus featured in Frankfurt exhibition



#### NEW FOR 2022

Approaching the new year with 'care-fulness'





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## Getting Involved

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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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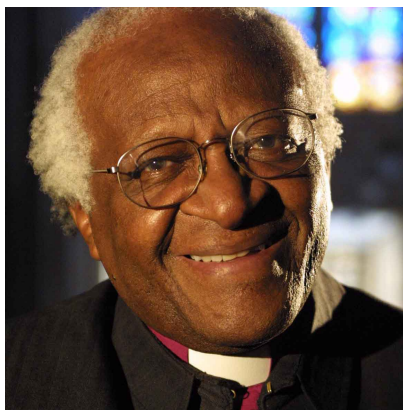
# Local and Global

News from the United Reformed Church

## DESMOND TUTU – FAITH AND ANGER

Archbishop Desmond Tutu died on 26 December 2021 aged 90. However, he was already half that age before he became widely known as a fearless voice for justice and reconciliation.

He is remembered as a campaigner whose infectious laughter sometimes belied the steely faith and righteous anger that drove his words and actions. As a young teacher, he had quit teaching in protest against a policy of segregated schools in South Africa. This decision, and the sense of freedom experienced while later studying in London, was instrumental in grafting political and social activism onto the core of his faith.



It was the revolt and massacre of Soweto students in 1976 that finally drew him into the public sphere, aged 45. 'There comes a point where we need to stop pulling people out of the river', he once wrote. 'We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in.'

## FROM THE GROUND UP: JPIT ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Joint Public Issues Team annual conference takes place on Saturday 11 June – online and at Oasis Hub Waterloo, London.

The day will focus on the local, helping us to explore how we can listen and answer key questions:



- What does social justice look like where you are?
- Where do we find hope in our neighbourhoods?
- How can local change be part of the bigger picture?

Find out more and book a place at [www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/conference](http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/conference).

## SPEAK OUT ABOUT GOVERNMENT BILL

Church members are being asked to write to their MPs to register concern about the Nationality and Borders Bill, currently being debated in the House of Lords.

The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT), which works across a number of Christian denominations, including the United Reformed Church, has expressed its 'horror' at the potential repercussions of the bill, which it hopes the government will reconsider, even at this late stage in the process.



JPIT believes that 'the values that bind UK citizens together, especially those concerning human dignity and life, will be fundamentally damaged by this Bill' and that 'the artificial manufacture of a two-tier system',

creating two classes of refugees, is 'a clear breach of the principles of the Refugee Convention'.

'The Nationality and Borders Bill provides a wonderful opportunity', says JPIT, 'for the government to stand by its traditional values of family life, community service and respect for human dignity.'



## KEEPING UP WITH THE WORLD

Two Zoom gatherings organised by the URC's Commitment to Life team will offer insights into the work the URC supports around the world.

### Christian Aid priorities

On Wednesday, 9 February at 2pm, Charlotte Scott, the new Christian Aid Church Relations Officer in the UK, will provide updates on the work of Christian Aid during 2022.

### Where is Palestine?

On Thursday, 17 March, 11am to 12.15pm, William Bell will share what impact the 2021 Christian Aid Report 'Where is Palestine' has made.

The Commitment to Life team supports the URC's global partners. You can find out more about their work by signing up to their Moving Stories newsletter.

# Thanks for pastoral care

**The role of Pastoral and Mental Health Coordinator has recently been taken over by Sheila Storrier (the new contact email is on p.2). Here, Sheila pays tribute to the way her predecessor in the role, Anne MacKenzie, helped to steer us through Covid restrictions.**

**A**nne extended her term of 'active' eldership to ensure a web of pastoral care was in place when we went into lockdown and were not able to worship or meet up in our building.

She ensured that everyone has a named contact and encouraged and supported these contacts, who phoned and emailed folks while personal contact was prohibited.

She made many phone calls herself over these months of restrictions. As they relaxed, she met up with folk outside then visited and met up for coffee as guidance allowed. I know how welcome and comforting this has

been to many and has maintained their link to AUC.

Although Anne has passed over the mantle of coordinator (a very hard act to follow), she has definitely not given up her own pastoral care activities.

She continues to phone, email, visit and meet with many and offers hospitality too. She now coordinates the Wednesday online blether and does loads of other things, often unseen. We are very blessed by her ongoing pastoral care.

Very many thanks, Anne, for all you have done over the years and all you continue to do – a great example of love in action.

# Christmas must go on!

**Our re-telling of the Nativity story in December was a true 'Covid nativity'!**

**T**he Junior Church had prepared an imaginative, Scottish re-telling of the Christmas story, woven around some fantastic music coordinated and led by Karl Macrae.



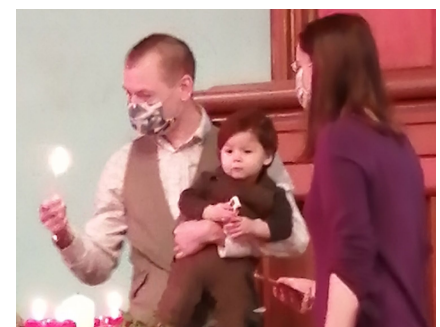
However, Covid hit some of our younger members at the last minute and technical gremlins ran riot, scuppering the replay of videos. But... the show must go on! Christ's birth stops for no-one. Three generations of Murray-Pedens rose brilliantly to the occasion and the leaders of the Scottish clans were still able to pay homage to the baby Jesus.

Even better – on Christmas Day, we were able to see a video of the whole event, complete with videos from our young people, and all gremlins well and laid to rest. Thank you to all who helped us re-live the coming of God-in-Christ, in all its chaos and joy!

# Church welcomings

**H**anna Albrecht was ordained as an Elder at AUC on 16 January, following agreement by the Church Meeting in December.

Hanna now becomes a member of our Church Council. This is made up of elders and office bearers, who currently also include: Harriet, Alex, Linda, Ewen, Denis, Katrina, Sheila, Thomas, Maxwell and Fiona.



*On 19 December, Lewis was welcomed into the AUC family – and he also helped light our final Advent candle*



# Fairtrade Sunday

**T**o celebrate Fairtrade Fortnight (21 Feb – 6 March) Augustine will be enjoying our first post-service coffee of 2022 on Sunday 20 February.

There will be a short quiz and video (also accessible from home as part of the online social time) and a Fairtrade stall. Please come along and enjoy!



# Flower ministry – can you help?

Doris Caldwell invites support in arranging flowers as part of our worship preparation.

**E**very Sunday we have some flowers or plants in church, reminding us of the bounty of nature.

After the service, they are often taken to some of our members to let them know that we are thinking of them. It



Teona Swift on Pexels

would be good to have a group who could share this ministry.

Arranging flowers is not rocket science. There are a few 'rules', like trimming the stems to make sure the flowers can drink – but most of us gathered and 'arranged' flowers as young children. It would be good to have a group of people (not just ladies) who would like to join me in this.

Before 'lockdown' there was a Flower List calendar in the foyer where people offered to donate either cash or flowers for Sundays that were special to them and there was a space to record where the flowers had gone. Please let me know if you are interested in joining this group either by phone 0131 5394537, email [hhfcaldwell@gmail.com](mailto:hhfcaldwell@gmail.com), or by seeing me at church.

# GCP café gets rave review

**T**he Grassmarket Community Project's café next to John Lewis recently caught Katrina's attention.

Five stars for the Grassmarket Project's 'Coffee Saints' café at the top of Leith Walk! Staff were friendly and helpful; the soup and cakes were delicious and I regretted not asking for the generous club sandwich and chips!

The space is very airy, spacious and bright and feels safe in these times of

Covid. When your feet and soul are tired of shopping, you will find it at the side of the Catholic Cathedral next to the side entrance of St. James Centre/ John Lewis.

For more, go to [www.grassmarket.org](http://www.grassmarket.org) or [www.coffeesaints.co.uk](http://www.coffeesaints.co.uk).

Augustine United supports the Grassmarket Community Project with an annual donation.

# A Bird's Eye View of COP26

COP26 was not just last year's news, as Katrina Tweedie's hope-filled short story reminds us.

**I**t was a cold, wet November day in Glasgow and Baby Pigeon was sleeping, cooed in to her mother's soft downy feathers.

A loud noise woke her. She peeked out from under her mother's wing.

'What are all those humans doing?' she asked.

'They are marching to ask their leaders to save the planet.'

'There are so many humans! I've never seen so many. . . but where are the pigeons?'

'We weren't invited.'

'Where are the kingfishers, the spiders and the trees,  
the woodpeckers, the dormice and the bees?

Where are the sticklebacks, the otters and the plants,  
the dandelions, lobsters and the ants?

Where are the sparrowhawks, the badgers and the bats,  
the butterflies, the starlings and the. . .

'None of us were invited' Mother Pigeon interrupted. She sighed.

'The mice have got in but they're only interested in the food.'

Baby Pigeon nearly fell out of their nest. 'NONE OF US WERE INVITED!'

But the humans don't own the planet. They share it with US! ALL of US!'

'Ah, my beautiful little pigeon, you try telling THEM that!'

'I will!' Baby Pigeon exclaimed, and she was off!

Out from under Mother Pigeon's wing, down onto the road into the midst of the marchers. Big shoes and boots all around her, the sound of thumping feet louder than the shouting and music.

She could no longer tell where she was. All she could see was legs, hundreds of legs. Suddenly, she was scooped up in soft woollen hands and looked up at kind eyes.

**"She could no longer tell where she was. All she could see was legs, hundreds of legs"**

'Baby Pigeon, if you walk here someone might stand on you by mistake. Fly to the very front where people can see you and you will be safe.'

And that is why Baby Pigeon became the star of the march. She flew to the front and took up her position a metre or two ahead of the humans.



Jeremy Bezanger on Unsplash





Artur Kraft on Unsplash

Head held high and chest puffed out, she led the march all the way to the leaders' building.

Inside the building there were rows and rows of humans sitting wearing earphones. None of them even glanced up at the drumming and chanting just outside their window.

**“Then one of the humans shouted, ‘Oui!’ And then other humans shouted, ‘Ja!’ ‘Ndio!’, ‘Na’am!’, ‘Yes!’”**

Baby Pigeon looked round at the procession. Everyone was chanting ‘Save our planet!’ Still nobody inside looked up. Then she looked again at the building. The window was open and she would be able to fly through it.

A small boy was watching her and he, too, realised she could fly through. He wrote a message and offered it to her. She shook her head. ‘Not good enough,’ she thought.

He wrote another message but again she refused it.

But the third message, the third message was perfect. He popped it into her beak.

Baby Pigeon flew through the window and landed in front of the human speaking, who gasped.

There was a silence, then the speaker picked up the message and read it out.

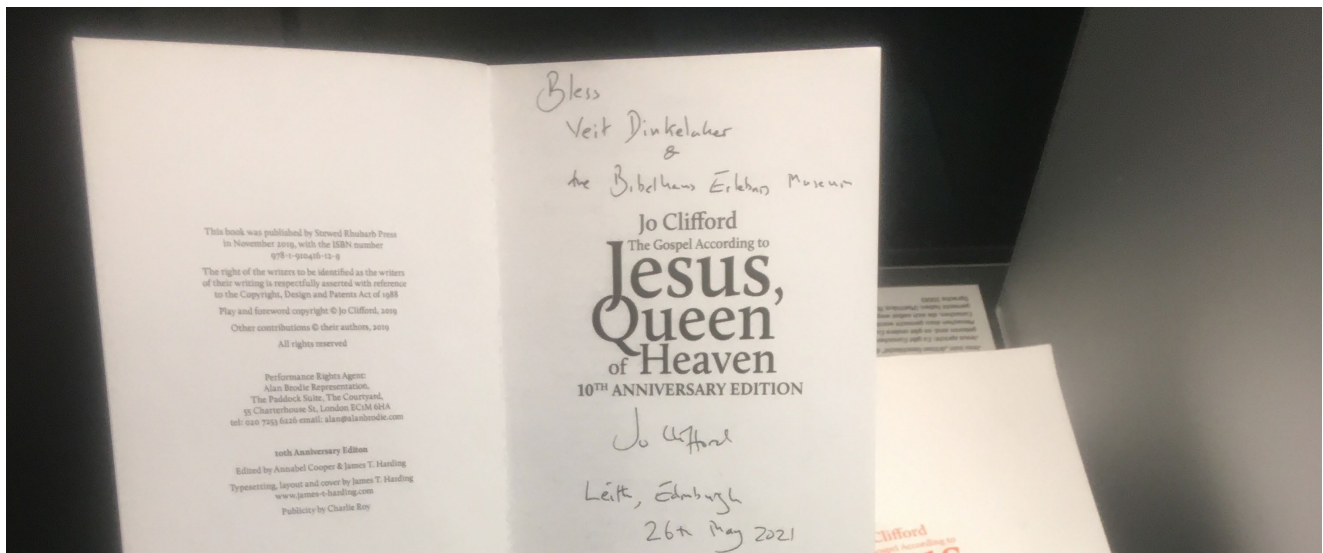
Then one of the humans shouted, ‘Oui!’ And then other humans shouted, ‘Ja!’ ‘Ndio!’, ‘Na’am!’, ‘Yes!’ until they were all shouting.

Everyone leapt up, clapped and cheered Baby Pigeon.

Then they burst through the doors out to the marchers and started dancing and laughing with them.

Later, when Baby Pigeon was nestling into Mother Pigeon again, Mother Pigeon asked, ‘And what did the last message say?’

And Baby Pigeon replied, ‘We will just have to wait and see.’  
And so will we.



# Male and female she created them...

**Jo Clifford describes a visionary exhibition she visited in Frankfurt.**

**In every era there have been more than just two genders. G\*d loves the diversity of the world and of people.'**

These were the words introducing the main exhibition in Frankfurt's Bible Museum, and I was hearing them in the company of a Christian youth group who were being shown round the museum, which was exploring gender diversity in the Old Testament.

The asterisk in the middle of G\*d's name indicated that, according to research, the Divinity themselves was gender diverse; and when Brix Schaumberg, the German Queen Jesus, and I performed a bit of the play and answered questions at the end, the young people proudly said: 'Christian youth around here are all queer'.

And they all saw the copy of *The Gospel According to Jesus Queen Of Heaven* that I'd signed and which had been put in a display case next to the most amazingly beautiful illuminated medieval bibles illustrating the androgynous nature of the first human beings.

In the week I was there, I met schoolchildren, teacher training students, church groups, university chaplains, trans activists, confirmation classes. . . all being shown round this amazing, beautiful, visionary exhibition. I remembered

my own confirmation classes and wondered what would have happened if this information about gender diversity had been available to me. How many years and years of useless suffering I would have been spared.

Or what would happen if this information was available to every Christian church everywhere?

And how miraculous that this should all be emerging now. I wrote and performed a play about these questions way back in 2002 – *God's New Frock\** – and by a strange coincidence it was being performed (in Italian) by an Italian theatre company in Berlin the same week I was in Frankfurt.

**“what would happen if this information was available to every Christian church everywhere?”**

I never expected that to happen. . . nor that *Queen Jesus* would be translated into German, performed by a trans man, or that I would get to see the film of it being screened in a Women's Centre to an audience of queer people so deeply moved by its message.

In the play, Queen Jesus talks of the unstoppable change that is coming. But actually, it is already here. And far deeper and more radical than anything I could ever have imagined. . .

\**God's New Frock* was first produced at The Tron Theatre in Glasgow. It introduces 'a boy called Billie who really wants to be a girl' but who isn't allowed to show it, and 'a god called Jehovah who's got a wardrobe full of frocks. A closet he's afraid to show anyone.'





# Any old bottle tops?

**Would you like to put your plastic milk carton caps or other plastic bottle tops to good use? Anne MacKenzie has been finding out how.**

Martha Dickson, from Murrayfield Church of Scotland, has told me about a scheme that supports some very important causes.

## **“the Rotary Club of Galashiels set up the scheme in aid of the extension to the Borders General Hospital’s Oncology Department”**

‘For anyone in Edinburgh who saves bottle tops and caps of any colour with an 02 or 2, or 04 or 4 within a triangle inside (e.g. from milk cartons), there is an option for these lids to be collected and recycled for good use.

‘It’s important that the caps are washed (and dried) and do not have foil discs or tags attached to them. They can then be left in the bins in front of the two lounge windows at

6 Osborne Terrace (opposite what was Donaldson’s College for Deaf Children near Haymarket).

Please leave them in bags. Do not empty loose into the bins.

‘In 2012, the Rotary Club of Galashiels set up the scheme in aid of the extension to the Borders General Hospital’s Oncology Department, now called the Margaret Kerr Unit. The Unit needed coffee making, tea making, radio, television, library and other facilities. This was achieved and future money raised continues to be given to palliative care initiatives. All aspects of Marie Curie care, Macmillan Nurses and the Lavender Trust have been recipients since then.

‘The tops are sorted at St Peter’s Church in Galashiels – you would be surprised at what you find in with the tops – and then go to the Polymer Factory in St Boswells. There they are made into tiny balls which go on to be made into fiberoptic cable covers as used for your television, computer, telephone, and even for periscopes.

Some were even used with Marshall Asphalt on a runway at Glasgow airport, and if it is successful maybe we shall have no further potholes!

‘The current figure of £12,500 raised shows just how easy it is to help those needing palliative care, so please keep collecting.’

Martha’s email is [marthadickson@outlook.com](mailto:marthadickson@outlook.com) if you want to contact her direct. She says that people bring them from all over Scotland. You’ll love the row of bins!

# New Year – new ‘care-fulness’

There has been much discussion around how to approach this new year – as a society, as communities, as individuals. People have spoke about New Year ‘intentions’ rather than ‘promises’. Many have spoken about trying to be kind to ourselves. There has also been mention of grace – grace towards

others and grace towards ourselves. What might intentions – kindness – grace look like for you or your families, friends, and communities?

Here are one or two ideas and prompts.

## Showing self-compassion

**Ruth Allen is CEO of the British Association of Social Workers. She recently shared the following thoughts, which are relevant well beyond the social work profession.**

We have had nearly two years living and working with the pandemic. Like many of you I expect, I started the year taking stock of the impact on me, personally and professionally.

I have been trying to focus on what I need to recover from what has been a tough time, and to thrive in the year ahead. This has meant time spent:

- Applying critical reflection and unconditional, positive regard to myself.
- Recognising and celebrating my strengths and accepting ‘human failings’ is just another term for chances to learn.
- Listening to what my mind, emotions and body are telling me they need.
- Consciously changing the balance of how I use time and effort between looking after myself and taking up challenges – recognising none of us can carry heavy loads, make good decisions and support others without really good recovery time and nourishment

- Feeling and showing gratitude to others and for all that I have

This is just my way of showing self-compassion – everyone is different and needs to find their own way. . . finding time to reflect and look after yourself and decide what is right for you can be hard.

We are living through times when worsening inequalities and social need have been exposed.

We may have been exposed to health, bereavement, financial difficulties and other challenges ourselves. . . A paradox of coming through this phase of the pandemic, when there is so much to do for others, is that to keep making a difference we have to look after ourselves first.

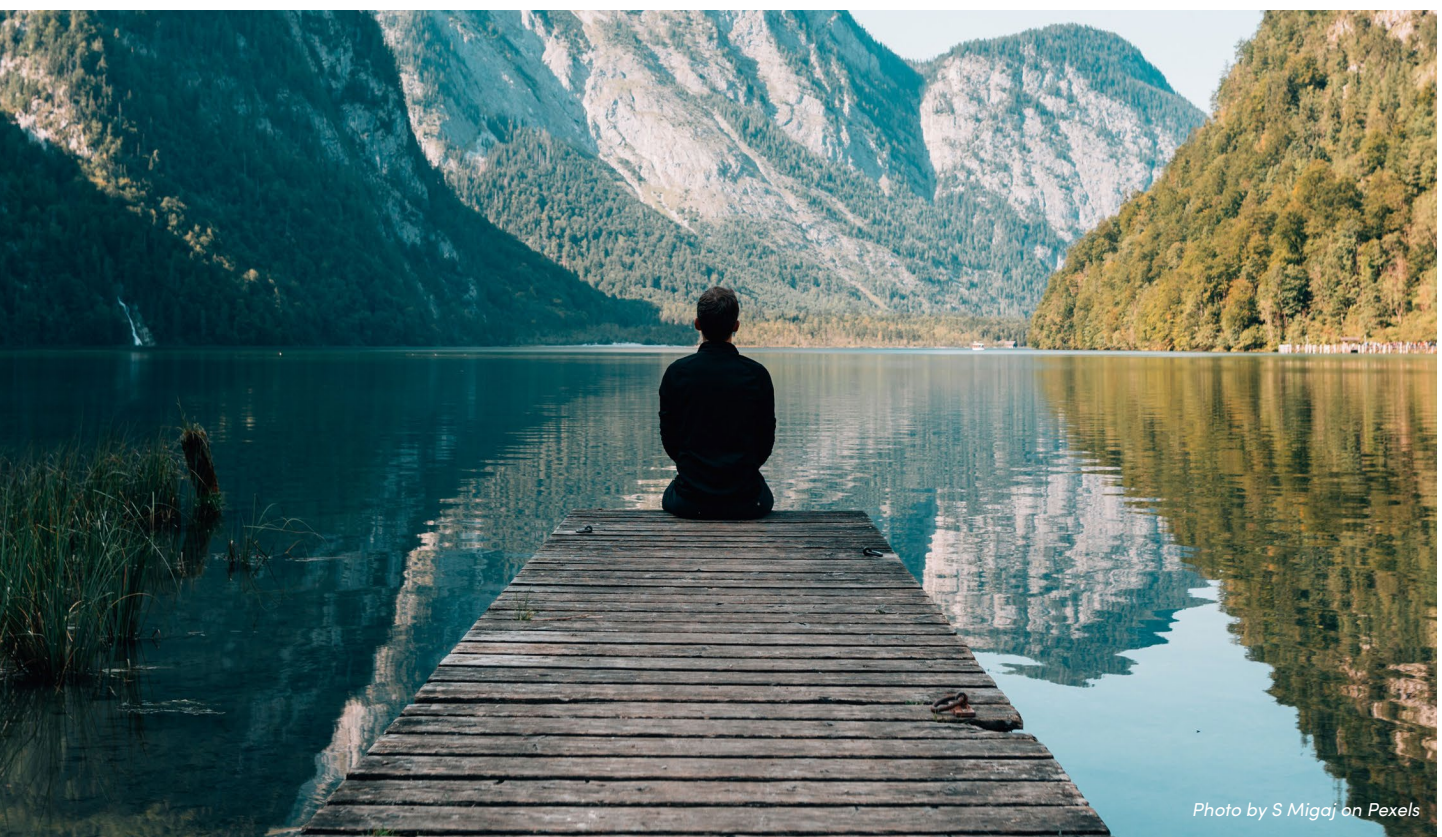


Photo by S Migaj on Pexels





Photo by Juliane Liebermann on Unsplash

## Dear Tomorrow

**Send your promise to the future.**

**Dear Tomorrow is an award-winning climate storytelling project where people write messages to loved ones living in the future.**

Messages are shared now at [deartomorrow.org](http://deartomorrow.org) and through social media, public talks, community events, and public art to inspire deep thinking and bold action on climate.

At [deartomorrow.org](http://deartomorrow.org) you can think of a person important in your life – a friend, a family member, your child or your future self. Imagine it is 2050 and they receive a message from you written today.

What would it say? About climate change and your promise to take action to ensure they have a safe and healthy world?

## Nurture connections offline

**‘One thousand hours outside’ promotes ‘digital detox’. Getting beyond our screens.**

It describes itself as ‘a global movement designed for any age child (or adult) and any environment’ and takes its name from an estimate that the average American child spends 1,200 hours a year in front of screens.

So – the organisers say – it’s not as if the time isn’t available to spend a 1,000 hours outside!

The 1,000 hours outside website and downloadable pack offers all sorts of prompts and strategies for reconnecting with the world around us.

It does have a US-focus, but all the ideas are transferrable to our own situations. It only takes a spark of an idea to set imaginations going.  
[www.1000hoursoutside.com](http://www.1000hoursoutside.com)

## An angry prayer

**Whoever said anger couldn’t have positive outcomes? Just ask Moses or pretty much any of the Old Testament prophets.**

Remember Jesus overturning the traders’ stalls in the precincts of the Jerusalem Temple. Think about Martin Luther King (see Fiona’s article, p.1) or Archbishop Desmond Tutu (p.3). Do we have an anger that we can turn to good use?

*God, I am angry  
 at the loss of innocent lives;  
 that people don’t have enough to eat;  
 at the police for not executing justice;  
 with the very rich for hoarding wealth  
 and then oppressing the helpless;  
 at the stupid military forces for making  
 people homeless.  
 I am angry with the unequal  
 distribution of resources around the  
 world.  
 God, this is damn unfair! Amen.*

Edited from *Liturgies from Below: praying with peoples at the ends of the world* by Claudio Carvalhaes (2020: Abingdon) and included in the January Commitment to Life newsletter.)

# What's On?

Most of 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.

# February

Tuesday 1st	10.30am-1pm	NHS Mental Health drop-in
	12-1pm	Contextual Bible Study online
	7.30pm	AUC Church Council
Wednesday 2nd	7.30-8.30pm	Contextual Bible Study online
Thursday 3rd	12-1pm	Contextual Bible Study online
	7.30-9pm	Our Tribe (LGBTQI+ ministry)
Sunday 6th	11am	Blended Sunday worship & after-service Zoom social
	1.30pm	TLC Quiz online
Monday 7th	7pm	Julian of Norwich book group – David Townsend online
Tuesday 8th	12-1pm	Contextual Bible Study online
	7.45-9pm	AUC Church Meeting
Wednesday 9th	1-2pm	Wednesday Blether online
	7.30-8.30pm	Contextual Bible Study online
Thursday 10th	12-1pm	Contextual Bible Study online
Sunday 13th	11am	Blended Sunday worship & after-service Zoom social
Tuesday 15th	12-1pm	Contextual Bible Study online
Wednesday 16th	7.30-8.30pm	Contextual Bible Study online
Thursday 17th	12-1pm	Contextual Bible Study online
Sunday 20th	11am	Blended Sunday worship & after-service Zoom social
Monday 21st	7pm	Julian of Norwich book group – David Townsend online
Tuesday 22nd	12-1pm	Contextual Bible Study online
Wednesday 23rd	1-2pm	Wednesday Blether online
	7.30-8.30pm	Contextual Bible Study online
Thursday 24th	12-1pm	Contextual Bible Study online
Sunday 27th	11am	Blended Sunday worship & after-service Zoom social
	1pm	Our Tribe social TBC

For further information see Friday emails. If don't receive these and would like to, email [centre.manager@augustine.org.uk](mailto:centre.manager@augustine.org.uk).

## Seeds deadline

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