

Seeds

March 2022

encourage - inspire - challenge

Augustine
United Church



The challenge of 'ubuntu'

Revd Fiona
Bennett



Over the last few months, I feel I have come across the word 'ubuntu' many times.

Ubuntu is a word which appears in varied forms in several African languages. I have read it translated to mean 'a person is a person through other people'.

One of the places I came across this word was reading *The Book of Forgiving* by Desmond and Mpho Tutu. They understand that seeing ourselves and others from the perspective of ubuntu is part of what can enable the winding process of forgiveness. Indeed, the concept was used in South Africa in the 1990s as a guiding ideal for the transition from apartheid, in which Desmond Tutu took a leading role.

Ubuntu even appears in the epilogue of the Interim Constitution of South Africa (1993): 'there is a need for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for ubuntu but not for victimisation'.

Ubuntu is a way of seeing ourselves not as autonomous isolated units, but recognising that our very humanity

comes from our connection with others. I think, in a culture such as ours, where a lot of emphasis is placed on our individual responsibility and perhaps even entitlement, this concept is alien and challenging. But could it be living water offered from African wisdom to very dry European souls?

As we emerge from the pandemic, in which were periods where there was a great emphasis on supporting each other and getting through it together, we seem to be slipping into a time where my right to choose if I wear a mask is outweighing my responsibility to protect the vulnerable.

Ubuntu challenges us to recognise that how we behave, how we perceive

"our very humanity comes from our connection with others"

the world, even who we are, is bigger than individual choice, and yet our individual choices can play key parts in the whole.

The concept of ubuntu changed the course of history in how it shaped the transition in South Africa. What could it bring to our world today if we allow it to shape us, our church, our society and our world?

This Month

LEGACIES OF SLAVERY

Apologies, reparations and awareness



A YOUTHFUL EXTHPERIENTH

Scottish delegates at this year's URC Youth Assembly



BREAK THE BIAS

Our Tribe celebrates International Women's Day



LENT REFLECTIONS

Quiet meditation and discussion with others during Lent





Augustine United Church,
George IV Bridge,
Edinburgh, EH1 1EL
0131 220 1677
www.augustine.org.uk
facebook.com/AugustineUnited
Scottish Charity no. SC000385

CHURCH SECRETARY

Linda Harrison
secretary@augustine.org.uk
or via the church office

MINISTER

Revd Fiona Bennett
minister@augustine.org.uk
07552 162 717

ASSOCIATE MINISTER

Revd Maxwell Reay
associateminister@augustine.org.uk
07957 543 359

CHURCH CENTRE MANAGER

Rachel Fitzgerald
centre.manager@augustine.org.uk
0131 220 1677

WEBSITE

Thomas McPolin
web.editor@augustine.org.uk

FACEBOOK

Eilidh Carmichael
eilidh.carmichael@augustine.org.uk

SEEDS EDITORIAL TEAM

Laurence Wareing and
Denis Mallon
newsletter@augustine.org.uk

Getting Involved

Within AUC there are Ministry Teams which are responsible for different areas of Church Life. If you would like to know more or get involved with one of these please email the contact person.

CENTRE, PROPERTY & FINANCE

Ewen Harley
treasurer@augustine.org.uk

CHILDREN

Kirsty Murray
juniorchurch@augustine.org.uk

COMMUNICATION

Denis Mallon
denis.mallon@augustine.org.uk

OUR TRIBE (LGBT MINISTRY)

Revd Maxwell Reay
associateminister@augustine.org.uk

PEACE & JUSTICE

Katrina Tweedie
katrina.tweedie@augustine.org.uk

PASTORAL & MENTAL HEALTH

Sheila Storrer
sheila.storrer@augustine.org.uk

WORSHIP

Revd Fiona Bennett
minister@augustine.org.uk

YOUNG PEOPLE

Matt Baines
youth@augustine.org.uk

SAFEGUARDING COORDINATOR

Alex Peden
safeguarding@augustine.org.uk
07747 300897

VISITOR MINISTRY

Thomas McPolin
thomas.mcpolin@augustine.org.uk

To get involved volunteering within AUC or the local community:

AUC VOLUNTEERING

Thomas McPolin
thomas.mcpolin@augustine.org.uk

LOCAL COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERING

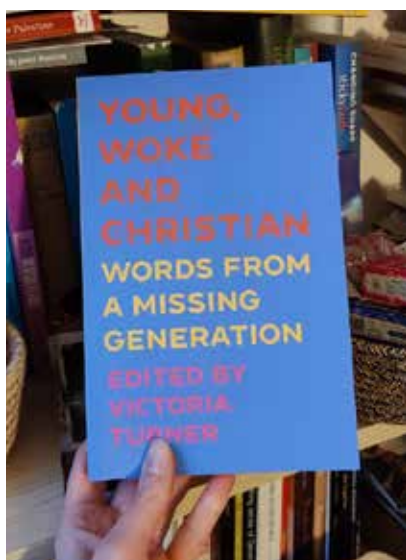
Kathleen Ziffo
kathleen.ziffo@augustine.org.uk

Local and Global

News from the United Reformed Church

BUY VICTORIA'S WOKE BOOK!

Congratulations to AUC member Victoria Turner who has a new book out, published by SCM Press. *Young, Woke and Christian: words from a missing generation* brings together young leaders and theologians from the Church's so-called 'missing generation' who argue that the



Church needs to wake up to injustices in British society.

The collection, edited by Victoria and with a prologue by formidable Black theologian Anthony Reddie, covers a wide range of themes, from climate change and racial inclusivity to peace-making, interfaith relations, and disability justice. It is described as a cry for the Church to ally with "woke" issues 'not because they are popular with youth, but because they are gospel issues'.

Available from SCM Press, the URC Book Shop, Waterstones, Eden, Blackwell's and more.

THE COST OF LIVING IN TEN MINUTES

Following a month where the energy price cap rose by 54%, interest rates

were lifted, and the Chancellor announced measures aiming to soften the blow, the Faith in Politics podcast focuses on what this means for our communities.

Matt and Paul, from the ecumenical Joint Public Issues Team, chat about the changes for just ten minutes. They put them in the longer-term context of poverty in the UK, and discuss how churches and Christians might want to respond.

Listen to the podcast at shorturl.at/tEHOZ

'FATHER OF MINDFULNESS' REMEMBERED

The influential Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, has died aged 95. Often referred to as the 'father of mindfulness', he was exiled from Vietnam in the 1960s for opposing the war there, and persuaded Martin Luther King to speak out against the conflict.

Thich Nhat Hanh spent the following decades in France and established monasteries and meditation centres around the world, known as the Plum Village Tradition. A prolific poet and author, he was regarded as second only to the Dalai Lama in importance. For more about Thich Nhat Hanh, see 'Within her arms', p.11



Photo by Pixiduc

CELEBRATE WITH THE URC

A bright and accessible book telling the story of the United Reformed Church and its activities through a big party has been created to help celebrate the denomination's 50th anniversary.

Celebrate Together is a lively, colourful all-age book picture book designed for families to share together, and is being made available free of charge for all members of the URC, and those connected with it.

Each page has a flap revealing more about the URC, which came into being on 5 October 1972, with insights into the life and work of the Church today. We have some copies at AUC (just ask at the office if you can't find them), or you can order your free copies through the URC Bookshop: shorturl.at/hnqtE



PRIDE RETURNS

And a date for your diary. . . The word is out. . . Pride is returning to Edinburgh's streets in all its queerly colourful wonderfulness!

It will take place on Saturday June 25 from 11:00 am to 11:30 pm. More details to follow, but plan on a parade, a festival, and partying.

Our Tribe, breaking the bias

The next Our Tribe online gathering will be on Thursday 3 March, 7.30pm, where Carol will lead a session inspired by International Women’s Day.

The theme of this year’s International Women’s Day (8 March 2022) is ‘Break the Bias’.

In Our Tribe we’ll be considering some of the biases around what it means to be a woman. We’ll be looking at the horizontal oppression experienced by LGBT+ women from their own gender and deciding what a truly inclusive Bias-busting International Women’s Day might look like!



A capital day out

URC Youth Scotland is holding a Capital Day Out in Edinburgh on Saturday 19 March.

Join TLC Youth and others for a day of fun in Scotland’s capital city! This event is open to all young people / young adults (12 – 25 years) who are connected to the URC Synod of Scotland.

- Meet at Dynamic Earth at 10.45am for 11am start. (Individuals / groups to make their own travel arrangements to Dynamic Earth and home again at the end of the day.)
- Lunch at Augustine United Church (from local fish & chip shop) – 1.30pm approx.
- Ten Pin Bowling at Fountain Park – finishing at approx. 4.30pm.

The Youth Executive will cover the cost of the activities, the lunch and the travel between the three venues. Booking and consent forms* must be completed and returned by Saturday 12 March. For further details of venues / arrangements and for a booking pack, please contact Matt Baines at youth@augustine.org.uk.

* Consent forms need only be completed by parents of 12 – 18-year-olds. Young adults, 18 – 25 years in age, need only complete a booking form.

Bottle tops, stamps and glasses

More on bottle tops and other items for recycling from Ian Rathjen.

The article in last month’s Seeds on ‘Any Old Bottle Tops’ sparked a lively discussion at the Wednesday Blether.

We recalled that at one time there were regular Sunday collections made of bottle tops, used postage stamps and unwanted glasses/cases. Doris Caldwell said that bottle tops are still being brought in and there are bags of them in the ‘flower cupboard’ at the back of the sanctuary.

Boxes for stamps and glasses are still in the opposite cupboard. It was

felt that it might be time to resume bringing items in.

Are new volunteers wanted to deal with each of these collections? The people who originally dealt with them may still be willing to carry on but we were not sure who they were. Perhaps new volunteers would come forward to research suitable charitable recipients and arrange for donations to be taken or sent when amounts have built up. If you would be interested in dealing with any of these items, could you please contact the Church Secretary, Linda Harrison.

Lent reflections

A range of opportunities are being made available to spend time in quiet reflection and discussion with others during Lent.

A SEASON OF PILGRIMAGE

St Columba's by the Castle, one of AUC's ecumenical partners, is going to be running a Lent course on the theme of pilgrimage (6, 13, 20 & 27 March; 3 & 10 April). It will be based around relatively local Scottish destinations, scripture and our own experiences of journey.

The series is going to be on Zoom on Sunday nights, 7-8pm, and will be followed (for those who wish) by a short service of Compline.

We have been invited to join in. The Zoom details are available in AUC's regular Friday email.



FROM WILDERNESS TO GARDEN

Junior Church is bringing an outdoor 'Time for All Ages' to our worship during Lent. Susan Murray explains. 'This year in that time we are using material from "Sparkhouse" in which we journey from the Wilderness to a Garden, by building a garden from a tray of sand. The material is designed so families can do it over 12 stages as set out in 12 cards but we are adapting it somewhat.'

IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY FOR LENT

David Townsend is offering to run an online Lent Group using material produced by the Ignatian Spirituality Centre in Glasgow. David has done their training and would offer a weekly online group (probably early Sunday evenings starting 6 March) to share insights from the daily reflections, which are all available online.

Contact him direct at david.townsend@augustine.org.uk, or the church office, if you are interested.

BOOK GROUP

For those currently joining David for the study on Julian of Norwich, the final session will take place on 7 March.

Following on from the Julian explorations, the group has discussed exploring *The Divine Dance* by Richard Rohr, beginning those sessions in May (16 May, continuing on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of each month).

As a 'bridge' between these two studies, David is offering a reflection on Rublev's *Icon of The Trinity* (pictured), on 4 April.

Apologies, reparations, awareness

HOW WE LIVE WITH THE LEGACIES OF SLAVERY

On behalf of AUC's Justice & Peace Church Life Ministry Team, Kathleen Ziffo reports on the work of the URC's Legacy of Slavery Task Group.

In November 2019 the URC Global and Intercultural Ministries set up a Task Group to consider the involvement of our churches and individuals in the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

They explored its past and current effects and what we might do to counter any perceived white privilege now.

This followed a 2017 Council for World Mission 'Legacy of Slavery' Project in which the URC was involved. The URC's own group is coordinating four 'hearings' in those four areas mainly involved in the Transatlantic Slave Trade: the UK, Ghana, Jamaica and the USA.

At our own recent Church Meeting, our minister played a video in which the URC's Secretary of Global and Intercultural Ministries, Karen Campbell (pictured right), told us about the work and findings so far. Since 2019 investigations and recommendations have taken place in three areas, though progress has been slowed by the Covid Pandemic.

APOLOGY

Firstly it was recognised that (despite misgivings by some people that it might not be possible to apologise for something committed by antecedents) there should be Confession and sincere Apology for the movement of over 800,000 people across the Atlantic into slavery (for those who managed to survive the appalling sea

crossings). An apology should also be made for our continuing complicity in racial injustice to this day.

REPARATIONS

It might surprise and horrify you (it did me) that payments made in 1833 to slave owners for the loss of their 'property' – i.e. slaves – which

“there should be Confession and sincere Apology for slavery”

'completely damaged' their trade amounted at the time to £20 million (valued today at £30 billion). This resulted in repayments of loans made





in 1833 continuing until 2015! Slaves, on their eventual release, received no apology, no monetary help to establish their lives, no reparations, or for any of their ancestors and home countries. How could and should we make reparation now?

WHITE PRIVILEGE

How can we put things right today, as there is surely ongoing discrimination by many (most?) and a culture of white privilege? Any dispute about this can be 'put to bed' as this can be measured - seen - by the fact that such an unequally high proportion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people in the UK have poorer

education and live with fewer jobs and less advancement, poorer pay, worse housing, and worse health (obviously seen in the Covid Pandemic) than their

“The Church should be seen as a mirror of what is right, but too often in the past it has been a mirror of society”

white counterparts. The hurt has always been there for BAME people but they could no longer keep quiet, especially since 2019

and following the global pandemic, George Floyd's death in May 2020, and the Black Lives Matter campaign. The URC has heard that pain!

There are to be further consultations for churches in our synods, before the group makes recommendations and concrete proposals at General Assembly in July 2022. The Church should be seen as a mirror of what is right, but too often in the past it has been a mirror of society.

Please look out for these discussions and help us make our contributions.

THE HUMAN COST OF EDINBURGH'S GLORY

A talk about the legacy of slavery and colonialism in Edinburgh, now available on YouTube, reveals the human cost that lies behind our beautiful city. 'Hiding in plain sight' was first presented in January by Nicholas Hotham, former Head of

Engagement at Edinburgh World Heritage. It offers an objective view of Edinburgh's connections to slavery and colonialism during the 18th and 19th centuries (its so-called 'Golden Age') and asks what, if anything, we should do about it.

Search on YouTube or use this url: shorturl.at/iy157



Youth Assembly and me – a youthful exthperienth. . .

Michael Smith, a member of TLC Youth and St Columba's by the Castle, joined Matt Baines and Victoria Turner as Scottish delegates to this year's URC Youth Assembly at the Whitemoor Lakes conference centre in Alrewas, Staffordshire. Here he offers a taste of an incredibly full few days.

Youth Assembly is an event where the young people of the United Reformed Church get together and discuss important motions which could be put to the General Assembly.

Delegates are made up of people from the URC, as well as other denominations and groups, representing certain areas of the UK.

So though I'm not in the URC (I'm part of the Scottish Episcopal Church) I am in an ecumenical youth group that is URC-organised; and also an intergenerational planning group with

URC members. So I went to represent Scottish church youth generally, and I suppose as a 'piscie observer.

The discussions were very serious and organised and about quite big issues.

Two really stuck out for me. One was a motion disapproving of gay conversion therapy. This included a video presentation which really made an impact – clear, effective, displaying a really brave message.

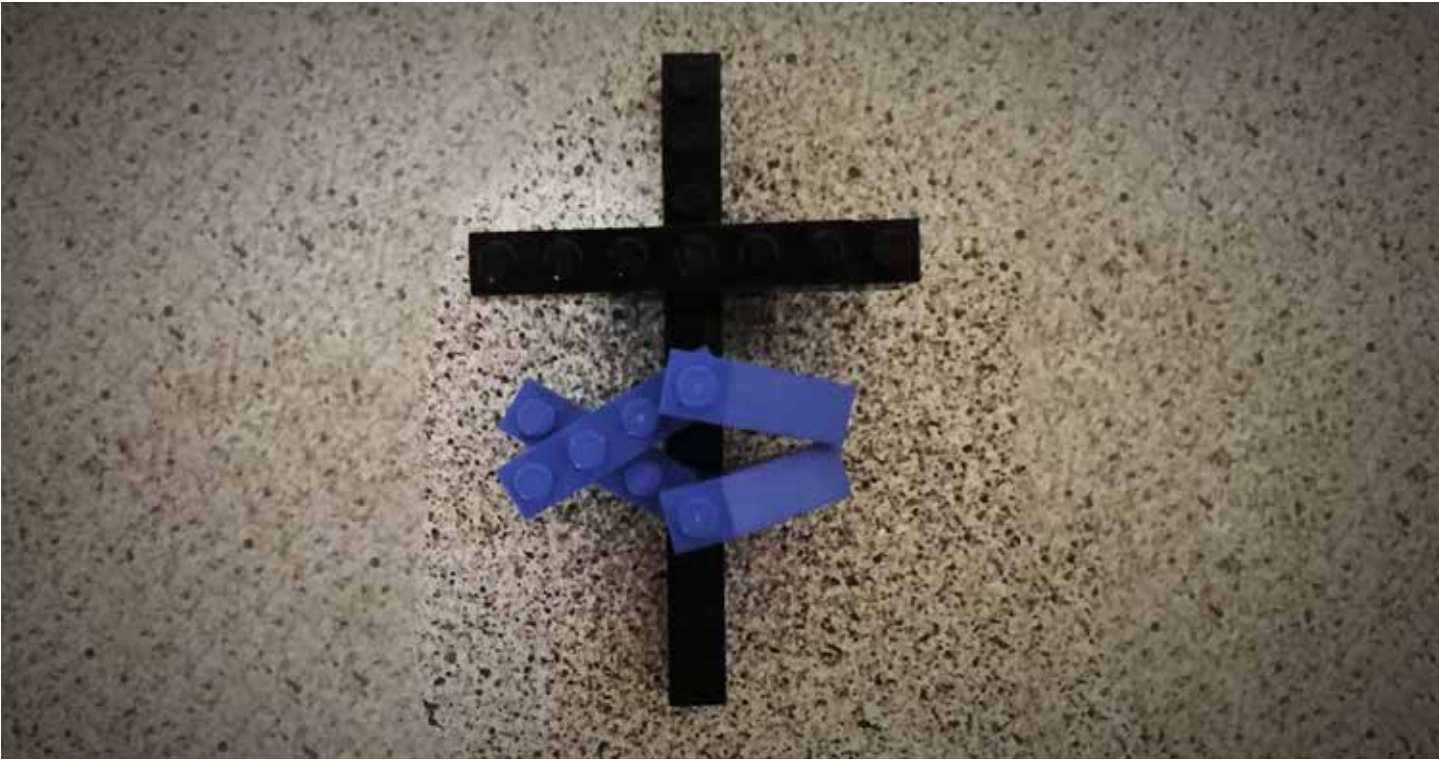
When it came to voting on the motion everyone was pretty unanimous about this. The other was a motion

mandating giving mental health first-aid training in the Church. The YA were a bit more iffy about this – they liked the motion but wanted to amend it to clarify who it affected and who was going to do the training, so they made an amendment to say that one leader in every church should do this training. Though I didn't contribute much to the discussions, it broadened my awareness of these issues.

“What impressed me was that everyone listened to everyone else and valued all input, and it was so good how differences were handled”

Delegates would work towards a consensus where everyone felt they had contributed something to the motion. What impressed me was that everyone listened to everyone else and valued all input, and it was so good how differences were handled. It felt like everyone's voice and vote counted; like a mini-parliament – except of course without the shouting.





WHAT ELSE HAPPENED AT YOUTH ASSEMBLY?

There were also workshops to go to. The first one I did was the Emmaus walk, which took us round the green areas of where we were staying (by a lake), and during the walk they got us to think about the heroes in our lives and the times we felt close to God.

“We made mug chocolate cakes, which was hilarious because everyone’s mug was overflowing – ‘my cup runneth over’ (with chocolate, YAY)...”

That was eye-opening and a good chance to get to know the people round me, and I felt I could share experiences of my own.

Another workshop I attended was a tour of the tech set-up to show us how they tackled the complex audio-visual arrangements during the big

meetings. It was a real feast for the eyes for a techy person like me and it gave me a better appreciation of what goes into doing this in churches these days.

There was a workshop about disability awareness in the church (see p.10) and also less serious ones – I went to a ‘No-bake Baking’ session, which was just a lot of fun. We made mug chocolate cakes, which was hilarious because everyone’s mug was overflowing – ‘my cup runneth over’ (with chocolate, YAY)...

Evenings were full of fun things to do like Lego-building, film showings, or Karaoke (I watched people doing this, rather than sing myself).

There was a silent disco the second night which was brilliant – they gave you bluetooth headphones which played music so that you were all listening to the same thing; but you could take the headphones off to talk to someone without loads of loud noise in the background. Ideal for people who like the idea of discos but aren’t keen on noise and distractions. But it had all the proper disco lights and a smoke machine, which created a very cool atmosphere.

There was also campfire – a proper outside campfire activity where you toasted marshmallows and sang songs and had a laugh.

But if you wanted to just relax and chill, you could just sit and chat with folk in the main lounge – which was actually kind of one of the best things for me. So nice after the last couple of years, to get to hang out with people IRL, in a relaxed atmosphere.

Everybody was really approachable and friendly and inclusive – I didn’t know anybody except Matt who I went with, but I felt I could talk to anybody. I would recommend it to anyone.



Photo by Marcus Aurelius from Pexels

Disability, Church and You

At the URC Youth Assembly in January, Matt Baines, URC Synod of Scotland Youth Ministry Development Worker, led a workshop on disability awareness that could make a long-lasting impact on the denomination as a whole. He explains why.

I was invited to lead a workshop at Youth Assembly on the topic of disability and church, together with Alanna Hurman of Yorkshire Synod.

This workshop promoted understanding and awareness of different kinds of impairments, and of the social model of disability. Central to this was listening to the stories of participants with lived experiences of disability and exploring how we can grow into a Church where all are welcomed and affirmed.

We both shared from our own experience of disability and invited young people present to share their stories. The adults present later commented on the courage and honesty of the young people who came forward to share. In response to this, several participants decided they wanted to progress the conversation on Church and disability by putting together the following resolution:

‘URC Youth asks URC Youth Executive and General Assembly to review and assess their current definition of ‘disabilities’, widening it to include long-term, short-term and dynamic impairments.

‘Ask the URC Youth Equalities and Diversity representative to work with the Equalities committee to explore opportunities alongside the Education and Learning committee to create, or further develop, resources to support and improve accessibility, and raise awareness and understanding, within local churches and for church members.’

Proposer on behalf of the ‘Disability, Church and Us’ workshop group: Alanna Hurman, Yorkshire Synod

Seconded: Esme Ramsden, West Midlands Synod

Unfortunately, a technical difficulty delayed the resolution arriving with the Assembly Clerk on time, which meant there was no longer time for the resolution to be heard in the business meeting.

Understandably, given that the resolution came from a workshop focused on hearing the voices of disabled people and removing barriers to participating in church life, there was considerable disappointment that the voices of disabled participants were not heard in the main Youth Assembly due to unintentional barriers.

“listening to the stories of participants with lived experiences of disability and exploring how we can grow into a Church where all are welcomed and affirmed”

An agreement was reached whereby this resolution would be published in the Youth Assembly write-up, which will be received by every congregation, and that the resolution will be first in the order of business in January 2023.

In the meantime, we are keen to progress matters and so are currently exploring ways this conversation can be taken forward between assemblies. We hope that Augustine United Church and the Synod of Scotland will be part of this discussion.

We are not whole as a Church until we embrace and affirm everyone in all their diversity of ability and experience. I am encouraged that Alanna will be taking on a joint-role of Equalities Representative on the UK Youth Executive and am confident that she will do well, bringing both passion and empathy to the role.

A heart of strength

A poem of blessings and affirmation from AUC member Tony Chan.

*You are strong, courageous and bold as your life slowly unfolds,
as your life is important and will inevitably be told.
You are special and unique, you are not cheap and will not be easily sold,
indeed you have a warm heart and it is not cold.
Acknowledge and affirm and accept your strengths,
you have come far, you go the extra breadth and length.
To battle and survive life,
because it can be full of strife and negativity and darkness can be rife.
People sense and see the strength in you,
why can't you see it too?
You are not done yet you are certainly not through,
never underestimate yourself and put yourself down.
You are certainly not a failure, smile!, you don't need to frown.
Your heart is full of compassion,
kindness and love it is heaven sent from up above.
You certainly focus and concentrate on what is important,
may you live long and prosper may it be in longevity and never shorten.
May blessings, goodness and light come into your heart, as you will do your part.
You will flourish and grow, in your hand it truly showed,
you did flow and you did glow. Because at the end of the day we reap what we sow.*



Within Her Arms

Laurence Wareing introduces a favourite piece by Thich Nhat Hanh.

The influential Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, died recently aged 95. You may have come across his name in relation to the practice of mindfulness, or through broader explorations of faith traditions. I first heard his name after listening to a short, elegiac orchestral piece of music for strings by the composer Anna Clyne. She had dedicated the piece to her late mother, and called it *Within Her Arms*.

'Within Her Arms' is a line from a poem by Thich Nhat Hanh, which I have come to love also. I feel that I will want to explore more of his writing.

*Earth will keep you tight within her arms dear one—
So that tomorrow you will be transformed into flowers—
This flower smiling quietly in this morning field—
This morning you will weep no more dear one—
For we have gone through too deep a night.
This morning, yes, this morning, I kneel down on the green grass—
And I notice your presence.
Flowers, that speak to me in silence.
The message of love and understanding has indeed come.*

What's On?

Most of 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.

March

Tuesday 1st	10.30am-1pm	NHS Mental Health drop-in
	12-1pm	Contextual Bible Study online
	7.30pm	AUC Church Council
Wednesday 2nd		Ash Wednesday
	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		Int. Women's Day #BreakTheBias
	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
	5pm	AUC online social (tbc)
Monday 21st	7pm	Julian of Norwich book group – David Townsend online
Tuesday 22nd		World Water Day
	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
Friday 25th		UN Day to remember victims of slavery
Sunday 27th	11am	Blended Sunday worship & after-service Zoom social
	1.30-3pm	Come OUT with Our Tribe (at Coffee Saints)
Tuesday 29th	12-1pm	Contextual Bible Study online
Wednesday 30th	7.30-8.30pm	Contextual Bible Study online
Thursday 31st	12-1pm	Contextual Bible Study online

Seeds deadline

Seeds is published on the Sunday prior to the beginning of each month. The copy deadline for the March edition is **Friday 18 March**.