

Seeds

May 2022

encourage - inspire - challenge

Augustine
United Church



Month of Celebration!

Revd Fiona Bennett



The month of May lies ahead of us. This month it includes Kai Millar's ordination and AUC's 220th anniversary.

Saturday 28 is Kai's service of ordination, followed by a party tea and disco (more detail in the calendar on p.8 and in our weekly notices). On Sunday 29 we will hold a 220th anniversary service celebrating the foundation of AUC as a congregation on 30 May 1802. It is a celebration weekend which everyone is invited to join in.

Both Kai's ordination and AUC's anniversary are cairns marking significant points in the stories of much broader journeys. As journey markers they point to the past with gratitude, the future with trust, and remind us to be present in this moment, alive and awake to celebrate in this journey we are on together.

Celebration is a very important part of being human. In the midst of struggle, celebration becomes all the more significant.

In John's gospel he tells a story of Jesus shortly before he entered Jerusalem where he would be killed, where during a meal Mary anointed Jesus' feet with very, very expensive oil. This oil was the stuff rubbed into loved

ones' bodies after death to honour the person and to reduce the smell of decay. Judas criticised Mary for the extravagant waste of the oil. Jesus told him to leave her alone, for she was preparing Jesus' feet for the journey to his death.

"Jesus showed us that to be human is to know when to fast and to know when to feast"

Jesus knew there were times to fast and times to feast. John tells another story of Jesus coming to a wedding where the wine had run out and Jesus turned jars of water into exceptionally good wine. Pragmatically, neither the oil nor the wine was necessary, but Jesus showed us that to be human is to know when to fast and to know when to feast.

There are times in life when the rainy day arrives and the saved bottle of champagne should be drunk, the piggy bank broken into, that special shirt worn. The weekend at the end of May is one of these occasions for AUC.

The genocide in Ukraine, the fragility of our planet's health, rising prices, the uncertainly facing churches across the UK, and personal struggles are realities we bring with us into our celebrations. May their fragility and pain make us appreciate all the more laughter, company, dancing, food and the freedom to celebrate.

This Month

NO ORDINARY EVENT

We look forward to the ordination of Kai Millar



FINANCIAL UPDATE

We delve into AUC's finances post-covid



CHRISTIAN AID WEEK

Learn more about how you can Give, Act and Pray





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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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We are always looking for volunteers to undertake various tasks each week to keep church happening. Perhaps you could consider learning how to make coffee or welcome people. To find out more, contact:

AUC VOLUNTEERING

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LOCAL COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERING

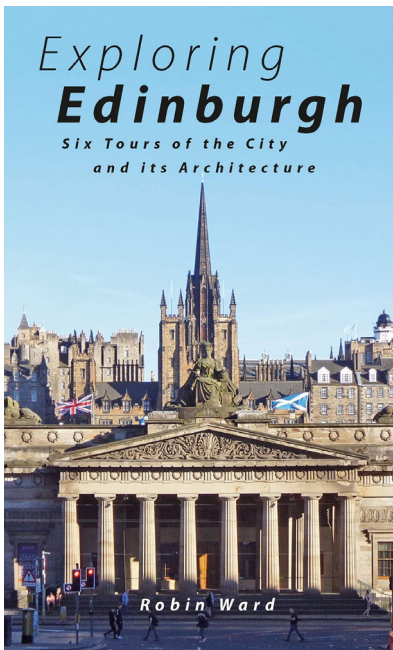
Kathleen Ziffo
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Local and Global

News from the United Reformed Church

EXPLORING EDINBURGH

Robin Ward, an architect and graphic designer, has written a book about the architecture of Edinburgh which features our own beloved building!



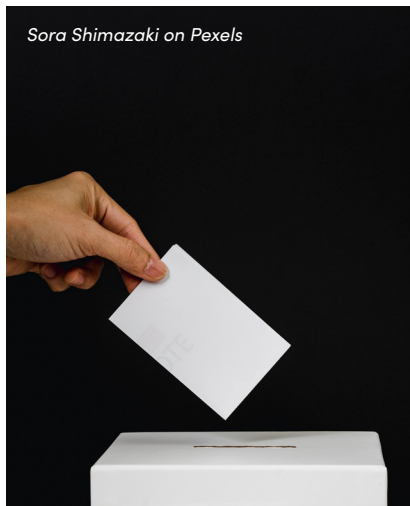
Exploring Edinburgh, so we're told, takes the reader on a fascinating journey through Edinburgh and its architecture.

If you give it a read we'd love to know what you think (newsletter@augustine.org.uk)

LOCAL ELECTIONS - THINK, PRAY, VOTE

Election Day is Thursday 5 May, where we'll be voting for new councillors. The Joint Public Issues Team and the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office have produced resources to support those wanting help considering the role of local government before you cast your vote.

Visit www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/elections/ for more details.



VOLUNTEER TRAINING AND GET TOGETHER

There will be an opportunity for our volunteers to get together and have some training on Sunday 15 May from 1pm to 2.30pm (in-person at AUC).

This session is open to all volunteers and it would be great to have a good turnout. If you want to get more involved this is an ideal opportunity for you. To book your place contact Lewis on lewis.reay@augustine.org.uk

CHRISTIAN AID SCOTLAND SUPPORTER GATHERING

Over 200 individuals joined the virtual Christian Aid Scotland Supporter Gathering in March.



All the slides and recordings from the speakers and supporters are still available to view at www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/events/gathering-2022.

James Wani and Fred Bully from the Christian Aid South Sudan team shared about Christian Aid's work in South Sudan and Tom Colley, Global Humanitarian Manager, gave an update on their work in Afghanistan.

Celebrating Kai Millar's Ordination

On Saturday 28 May we will be celebrating Kai Millar's Ordination as a clergy person within Metropolitan Community Church.

The service will be conducted by our very own Associate Pastor, Rev Elder Maxwell Reay. Rev Fiona Bennett will be preaching.

Ordination in MCC is the signifier of professional ministry. Kai has had a varied life, including time in a religious order, and has now studied for several years. This time includes a placement at Augustine United Church, which lasted longer than expected due to Covid-19 – all to our benefit.

During this time Kai made the move from the north of England to work as a Healthcare Chaplain at the Royal Infirmary Edinburgh. Kai has also been involved in running many Our Tribe events and is leading on holding a Queer conference later this year called Blessed and Resilient.

Metropolitan Community Church is a global denomination rooted in the LGBTQ community. The Community was started in 1968 in Los Angeles by Rev Elder Troy Perry as a response to the homophobia that he experienced in his former denomination. That was the beginning of MCC and now there are many churches in the US, Canada,

Latin and South American, Europe, Africa, the Philippines, and Australia.

MCC has led the way in LGBTQ human rights since its inception – petitioning the California Courts in 1970. Many of the churches that are now welcoming and affirming of LGBTQ people would not have been without the message and theology of MCC. Inclusive language and

inclusivity are a central part of MCC and this has had a huge impact on other denominations. The current Moderator is Rev Elder Cecilia Eggleston, who is from the UK, and lives and works from her home in the southwest of England. Some of you may remember Cecilia as she has visited us to lead workshops on LGBTQ people and the Bible.

AUC is an aligned organisation with MCC, which means we have a special relationship where we share our values

and work together. Our Tribe, our LGBTQ ministry, is run in partnership with MCC.

We hope that you will come to Kai's Ordination – it promises to be a special day. We will be celebrating with food in the afternoon and a disco in the evening. These are open to everyone, and you can dip in as you like too.

Ordination Service 3.30pm
(doors open 3pm), Refreshments
5pm, Disco 7-10pm

"We hope that you will come to Kai's Ordination ... celebrating with food in the afternoon and a disco ... These are open to everyone"



Financial Update

As we gradually return to post-covid normal, the Centre, Property and Finance team have been looking at some key indicators of how things are going compared to pre-Covid times, writes Fiona Somerville.



As a new challenge looms in the shape of the 'cost of living crisis', the following snapshot represents a more visual way of illustrating how things have gone in the first quarter of 2022.

BUILDING UTILISATION

In terms of building utilisation (charged and otherwise), users are returning to the building in good numbers. There were **316 bookings in quarter 1 (Q1) compared to 304 for the same period in 2020**. This is slightly misleading, as a substantial chunk of recent bookings were due to the Grassmarket Community Project. They hired the Studio and Mull continuously for the period (at a discounted price), without which we would have been considerably down on the 2020 figures.



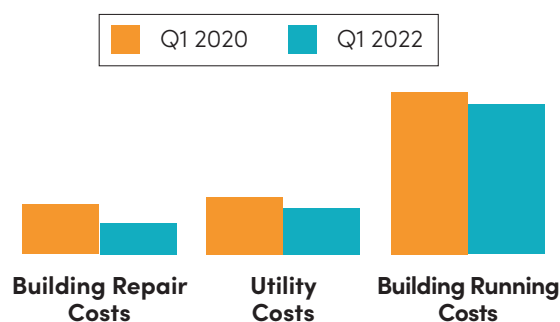
BOOKING & RENTAL INCOME

Booking and rental gross income for Q1 was **£19,164 compared to £29,023²** for the same period in 2020. Augustine remains competitively priced for a city centre location and now offers enhanced AV/streaming facilities which many users are taking advantage of.

OFFERING INCOME

Offering income for Q1 was **£18,378** (including £7,000 for 'Gift Day') **compared to £22,526²** for the same period in 2020 (including £12,215² for 'Gift Day'). We appreciate

everyone's contributions and are acutely aware of the current squeeze on personal finances and are looking at additional avenues to bolster our income.



BUILDING REPAIR COSTS

Building repair costs¹ for Q1 were **£4,057 compared to £6,563²** for the same period in 2020. This is somewhat misleading as the figures exclude the costs for the work currently underway to repair the Finials on the Church Tower, for which our insurers will only meet 50% of the cost. Other recent works include replacing the very inefficient electric night storage heaters and pigeon proofing the roof.

UTILITY COSTS

Utility costs (electricity, gas, water, phone and broadband) for Q1 were **£6,116 compared to £7,561²** for the same period in 2020. We are fortunate to be on a fixed price deal for electricity which will provide stability until March 2025.

BUILDING RUNNING COSTS

Building running costs (excluding utilities) for Q1 were **£19,819 compared to £21,387²** for the same period in 2020.

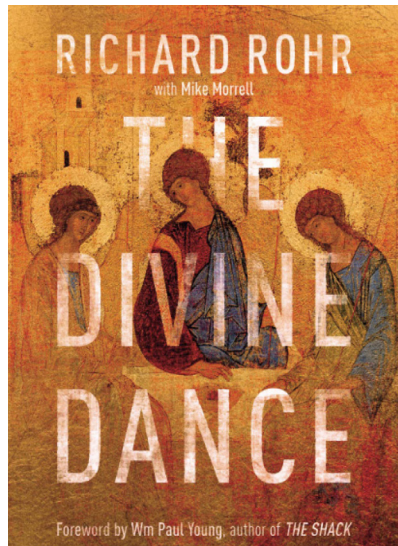
Footnotes

1. 2020 Building Repair costs are measured as 25% of the 12 month costs up to end of Q1.
2. To provide a better like-for-like comparison, the 2020 financial figures above have been adjusted using the Consumer Price Index, which rose 8.9% between Jan 2020 and Jan 2022.

Next book group, beginning May

The AUC book group, writes David Townsend, will be exploring *The Divine Dance* by Richard Rohr from 16 May.

They will continue on the 1st and 3rd Monday of each month online from



7.30–9pm, with a possible break over the summer.

“The Divine Dance points readers to the at-times forgotten, ancient mystery of the Trinity – God as utterly one, yet three.

Drawing from Scripture, theology, and the deepest insights of mystics, philosophers, and sages throughout history, Fr Rohr presents a compelling alternative to aloof and fairy-tale versions of God: One God, belovedly in communion, as All-Vulnerable, All-Embracing, And All-Given to you and me.

The Divine Dance makes accessible and Practicable the Christian tradition’s most surprising gift.”

If you are interested to join in the group, please contact David (david.townsend@augustine.org.uk). You can read more from David in next month’s *Seeds* when we’ll share his book review of Diana Butler Bass’s *Freeing Jesus*.

Christian Aid week – Give, Act and Pray

Christian Aid Week 2022 takes place in the week 15-21 May.

For the first time in a generation, global hunger and poverty are rising. Covid-19, conflict and the climate crisis are pushing vulnerable communities into a struggle for survival.

People living on the sharp edge of injustice are hungry – for a good meal, to earn a decent living, to provide a more hopeful future for

their families. But they’re anything but helpless. Learn more about how you can Give, Act and Pray on the Christian Aid website: www.christianaid.org.uk.

Here in Edinburgh, the Christian Aid book sale returns, celebrating its 50th year. Running from Saturday 14 May to Friday 20 May (excluding Sunday), the sale takes place at St George’s and St Andrew’s Church West, George Street. More detail, including opening times, available here: www.stagw.org.uk/work/christian-aid-sale/.



Facing up to poverty

With poverty levels already rising rapidly, the conflict in Ukraine will only make things worse. In their second article on behalf of the Peace and Justice Church Life Ministry Team, Kathleen Ziffo and Pat Tweedie explain why and ask where solutions may be found.

We are likely to be plunged further into a huge cost of living crisis by the war in Ukraine.

The UK does not import much oil or gas from Russia, but the world market price is expected to rise dramatically – perhaps adding a further £1,000/year to average UK energy bills.

Ukraine is also the ‘breadbasket’ of Europe. It supplies vast quantities of wheat and sunflower oil. Again, rather fortunately for the UK, we are mainly self-sufficient in wheat supplies, but the processed foods we buy rely heavily on this imported grain.

It is important to recognise that a large proportion of Ukrainian wheat goes to poor areas of the world, so the poorest, as ever, will suffer badly. Fifty percent of Lebanon’s wheat is supplied from Ukraine.

What action can we take? Recalling Desmond Tutu’s words, how can we ‘go upstream and find out why [the poorest] are falling into the river’?

EXAMINING THE CHILD MAINTENANCE SYSTEM

‘Are absent fathers condemning their children to poverty? Why do ministers let them get away with it?’, asked Polly Toynbee in *The Guardian* (3 March 2022). She understands that the Child Maintenance Service (CMS) is heavily biased against women.

Many mothers, tired out by the fight for paternal payment, just ‘give up’ and walk away with no maintenance at all.

“How else can we counter the many varied causes of poverty in the UK?”

Vast arrears from absent parents grow, but this UK agency claims it has reduced the legacy of debt by £2.6bn. But this is because they have largely written off that debt!

The National Audit Office gets more complaints about CMS problems than any other single issue – just 56% of those eligible have any maintenance

arrangements in place at all. No wonder single mothers are amongst the poorest in society.

ADDRESSING FOOD COSTS

BBC Radio Scotland reports that there has not been a supermarket in Castlemilk, Glasgow, for five years. The nearest is three miles away and buses cost £4.50 return. The remaining local shop charges much more for essentials – £1.50 for a loaf of bread!

How can people in poorer areas have better access to cheaper, fresh and sustaining food? Can we encourage more vegetable gardening and food co-operatives? Our own Pat Tweedie can arrange classes on economical cooking and energy saving.

How else can we counter the many varied causes of poverty in the UK? How should we speak out to change the attitudes of those who seem to regard these levels of poverty as an acceptable part of life in 2022?

The Revd Susan Durber says: “Faith can give us courage and a kind of wisdom to ask about causes of poverty and suffering . . . Pray, Give and Speak Up, for Jesus’ sake!”



Photo by Pixabay

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 posts on the AUC Facebook page.

May 2022

Sunday 1	11am	Blended Sunday worship & after-service Zoom social
	12.30-1.30pm	Film - Hiding in Plain Sight: The Legacy of Slavery and Colonialism in Edinburgh
Monday 2	12-1pm	Contextual Bible Study online
Monday 3	10.30am-1pm	NHS Mental Health drop in
	12-1pm	Contextual Bible Study online
	7.30-9pm	Church Council
Thursday 5	12-1pm	Contextual Bible Study online
	7.30-9pm	Our Tribe
Sunday 8	11am	Blended Sunday worship & after-service Zoom social
Monday 9	12-1pm	Contextual Bible Study online
Tuesday 10	12-1pm	Contextual Bible Study online
	7.30-9pm	AUC Church Meeting
Thursday 12	12-1pm	Contextual Bible Study online
Sunday 15		Christian Aid week (until Saturday 21)
	11am	Blended Sunday worship & after-service Zoom social
	1-2.30pm	Training for Rota Volunteers
	5pm	Sunday Social (TBC)
Monday 16	7.30-9pm	The Divine Dance Book Group
	7.30-8.30pm	Contextual Bible Study online
Tuesday 17	12-1pm	Contextual Bible Study online
Thursday 19	12-1pm	Contextual Bible Study online
Sunday 22	11am	Blended Sunday worship & after-service Zoom social
Monday 23	12-1pm	Contextual Bible Study online
Tuesday 24	12-1pm	Contextual Bible Study online
Thursday 26	12-1pm	Contextual Bible Study online
Saturday 28	3.30pm	Ordination of Kai Millar
	5pm	Refreshments
	7-10pm	Celebratory Disco
Sunday 29	11am	220th Anniversary Blended worship & after-service Zoom social
	1.30pm	Come OUT with Our Tribe (at Coffee Angels)

Seeds deadline

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