

Seeds

July 2022

encourage - inspire - challenge

Augustine
United Church

Crossing thresholds

Revd Fiona Bennett



inducted to a pastorate in Leeds on 3 September.

Many of us in and around AUC will pick up who we are and what we have experienced in life so far and carry it into a new stage.

When I cross the threshold to serve as Moderator, I will step out of the boat of the familiar into the unfamiliar. I feel sure the year ahead will include times when I seem to be walking on water, and times I will find myself drowning.

“I am preparing to step out of the boat of the familiar into the unfamiliar”

However, it is my life-long experience that God’s Spirit is with us and can grow new life and wisdom from anything. One of my abiding images of God is of a holy midwife, of whom I only every see her back as I follow in her wake, catching glimpses of the new life she has helped to birth.

That is my sense of the year which lies ahead in all our lives and world. God’s Spirit has already been where we will go and is inviting us to see and learn and be changed by what she is doing. God loves us so deeply that they can never leave us or forsake us. Let the adventures begin!

The United Reformed Church General Assembly takes place in Swanwick, Derbyshire 8 – 11 July

July is going to be quite an exciting month for me, my family and AUC.

Celebrating Sian and Carol’s wedding on 2 July. Being inducted as Moderator at the URC General Assembly in Swanwick on the 11th. Sharing in the Free To Believe (a network of progressive Christians within the URC) Conference, exploring the theme ‘Keeping Hope Alive’.

Celebrating daughter Megan’s graduation. And going on holiday, 18-24 (no plans yet!). July may even be a very exceptional month when I iron some clothes. . . but that could be too extreme.

July will be a month of thresholds. The threshold of a wedding as a life partnership begins. The threshold of life post-education for graduates and for everyone leaving school or moving to a new one, like AUC’s Ellie.

The threshold of young people, like our son Fraser, moving from education into work. A threshold for all within and around AUC who are stepping in to take on many of my roles and responsibilities within our community. Later this summer there lies a threshold for AUC’s Nicola Robinson, who has finished her ministerial training and is being ordained and

This Month

SUSAN AND KIRSTY

Thank you for two decades of children’s ministry



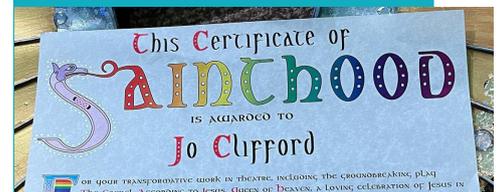
WOMEN MINISTERS

New opportunities made possible by pioneering women



SAINT JO

Reporting on life as the newly appointed Scribe of Our Souls



AUC AWAY DAY

A chance to reconnect at our annual church get together





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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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lewis.reay@augustine.org.uk

LOCAL COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERING

Kathleen Ziffo
kathleen.ziffo@augustine.org.uk

Local and Global

News from the United Reformed Church

PLASTIC-FREE JULY

Will you be part of Plastic-free July by choosing to refuse single-use plastics? AUC's Justice & Peace team is inviting us to join millions of participants in 190 countries to 'make a small change that will collectively make a massive difference to our communities'.

Plastic-free July provides resources and ideas to help you reduce single-use plastic waste every day and find great alternatives that can become new habits forever. Find out more at www.plasticfreejuly.org



HAVE A HOLY FRINGE

The Edinburgh Sacred Arts Festival in the Fringe runs 14-20 August, 'exploring the profound resonance between faith and art'. All events will take place in church venues around the city centre.

Highlights will focus on the music of James MacMillan, the paintings of Phoebe Traquair (pictured) and the poetry of Christine De Luca. For information about the full programme and to purchase tickets visit www.edinburghsacredartsfestival.org/festival-2022.html

URGENT WORSHIP IN CREATIONTIDE

The Revd David Coleman and the team at Eco-congregation Scotland are developing worship and reflections for this year's Season of Creation (1 September – 4 October) for Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. Materials will include 'stilling videos', reflections based on the Bible lectionary, and music suggestions.

The writers say: 'Following the United Nations COP26 Climate Conference last year, we are compelled to assert more firmly than ever that, to follow Christ in the years of crisis that lie ahead, we need to be more open than ever to the creative leading of the Spirit in building our spiritual resilience as people of hope beyond hope. . . the hugely ambitious project of Net Zero is a response of faith, offered in dependence on grace.' We are invited to 'join the shout of "Hosanna – God help us!" echoing throughout Creation, remembering that this is also a joyful shout.'

Keep an eye on www.ecocongregationscotland.org for more details.



UNDERSTANDING THE HOLY LAND

Want a better understanding of the situation in Israel-Palestine? The URC Mission Team is offering a webinar in

collaboration with the charity Solutions Not Sides. It's for anyone who wishes to be better informed and have a deeper understanding of the issues in the Holy Land.



The webinar, 'Holy Land? Learning about Israel and Palestine', is on 25 July, 5.30-9pm, including discussion time and a dinner break. Email for the Zoom link: urcinterfaith@urc.org.uk.

CRISIS? WHAT CRISIS?

A new resource from the ecumenical Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) and Church on the Margins is designed to help congregations respond to the cost of living crisis.

It describes how the crisis might affect our neighbourhoods, ways to respond locally, and how we can work together to build an effective national response. You can download the briefing from the JPIT website (www.jointpublicissues.org.uk). You can also watch a webinar recorded in May to launch the first edition of the briefing.

Also, look out for a new series of economical cooking suggestions from AUC's Pat Tweedie – beginning in the next edition of *Seeds*.

AUC Day Away

Remember, remember..!
This year's AUC Day
Away will take place on
Saturday 5 November,
from 10 'til 3. And you won't
have to go far to join in.

It's going to be 'a day away at home', says Church Secretary Linda Harrison. 'This year we're going to host our discussions in our own church building, because we felt we've had to spend so long out of it over the past couple of years!'

The day will be led by the Revd Sarah Moore, who works within the URC's Scotland Synod to help congregations at times of change. This will be an important opportunity to help us re-connect as a congregation 'in person' after so much disruption. We plan to look forward over the next five years: building on our experiences of the past two years, identifying the challenges and opportunities ahead.

More information to follow but, in the meantime, save the date!



Opening our doors again

Doors Open is returning
to Edinburgh again, and
we hope to be part of it.

Doors Open is an annual, city-wide event that allows visitors to get to know buildings not usually open for general access to the public. Though AUC strives to be a seven-days-a-week church, we have still found that taking part in Doors Open is a great way of engaging with visitors who have walked past our doors on many occasions but never stepped across the threshold.

DOORS OPEN DAYS 2022

Can you help? Be a welcomer? Help us offer hospitality? Be a guide, sharing information about our life as a congregation? (We will provide support

and training as required, and we have loads of resources you can have at hand – you don't have to remember all the facts!) If you're interested or want to know more, please contact our Doors Open coordinator, Thomas McPolin at thomas.mcpolin@augustine.org.uk.

The theme for this year is "Standing strong" – which AUC most certainly is! (And we are currently working on a new visual guide to the changes to the building's interior over the decades.) It will also give us an opportunity to share some of the challenges of maintaining a large and aging building for worship and community use in ways that are sustainable and environmentally friendly.

Visitors will be able to see the steps we have taken over the years to insulate, effectively heat and retrofit our historic building, as well as to address accessibility issues.

Whether you've helped out before, or want to give it a go – do get in touch: thomas.mcpolin@augustine.org.uk.

Something new for Seeds

It hardly seems possible that it's now two years since we took over the care of *Seeds* from Eilidh.

There is real joy in the privilege of producing this small expression of AUC life, and we're grateful for the positive feedback we often receive.

We have found, however, that as our personal circumstances have changed, the challenge of producing *Seeds* every month has become that bit tougher; so we are grateful to both Church Council and Church Meeting, which have both supported our proposal to move to producing *Seeds* bi-monthly all year round, not just in the summer and at Christmas.

We know this will bring one or two other challenges (we're working on how best to fill and display the calendar of upcoming events, for

example). However, we believe that this new arrangement will allow us to keep producing what we hope is a useful resource for AUC's members and friends in a sustainable way. And if it doesn't work, we'll think again!

The next issue will be for September/October, with a copy deadline of Friday, 12 August.

We're also conscious that *Seeds* sometimes underplays the great wealth of work, creativity and events (both personal and congregational) that happens in and around AUC. We'd love to be able to redress that balance as we move forward and do more face to face again. So please do tell us what you've been up to, and share your passions and concerns. We'd love to hear from you.

With our thanks – Denis and Laurence
newsletter@augustine.org.uk.

'Roots' news from Emma

Emma John has been writing about her life changing experience with the Roots community.

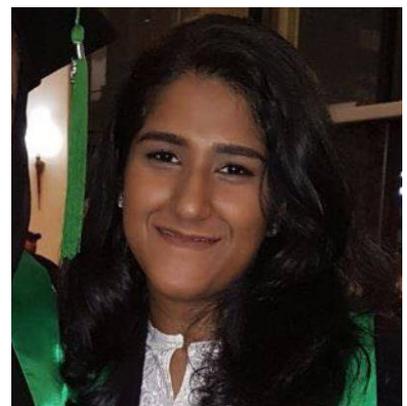
Hello! I'm Emma.

I've been coming to Augustine since the spring of 2019 when I heard about this loving, welcoming, and passionately affirming church and was ecstatic to find that it was in fact true!

When I moved to Edinburgh four years ago to be a student, I felt alone and disconnected from everyone I knew and was lacking the fellowship of a faith driven community. Fortunately, I found Roots in my first week here.

Roots is a charity for all university students where they can find community and explore life and faith together. This community shaped my university experience and changed my life, and after four years of being on the receiving end of their love and care, I will be joining the team as an intern this August to make that happen for other students.

The work that Roots does is only possible because of our many partners who believe in what we do and support us in prayer and financially. I never expected to find a church community like Augustine where I felt so fully loved and accepted for who I am, and would love for you to be a part of my journey.



If you would be interested in hearing more or in partnering with me, please reach out to me at emmajohnroots@gmail.com.

The art of being light-footed

We say thank you to Susan and Kirsty Murray for two decades of children's ministry.

The summer holidays may be upon us, but at AUC that doesn't mean Junior Church is taking a break.

And even though Susan and Kirsty Murray have (in theory, at least) retired from leading Junior Church after a remarkable 20-year stint, it doesn't mean they're done yet either!

They have plans for how families and children can be welcomed during the summer months – with activities designed so that anyone who is present can just pick them up and run with them. And then there are different Festival traditions – like going out on to the Royal Mile and seeing how many show flyers the children can collect! All this is typical of the variety and imagination Susan and Kirsty have brought to Junior Church since the late 1990s.

'Mum spends hours researching and exploring what others are doing,' says Kirsty. 'She finds what the best curriculum is – and whether it works theologically for us at Augustine.'

“All this is typical of the variety and imagination Susan and Kirsty have brought to Junior Church since the late 1990s”

Together, the pair has developed what they call a 'rotation' approach to Junior Church. Rather than focus on a different Bible story or theme each week, they take a single story and explore it over a few weeks through a

range of activities – allowing children to respond to different approaches according to their own strengths and preferences. There'll be baking, craft activities, filming animations on an iPad. . . and the amazing display boards in the Iona room are testament to the depth and thoughtfulness with which the children respond to stories and teaching from the Bible.

But if Susan and Kirsty are creative, so are AUC's children. 'You need to be light on your feet and adapt to your current group,' Kirsty says. 'It demands that you think properly about what you're doing.' Just giving children sheets to colour in won't cut it. Part of the thinking, too, is that the children themselves should have flexibility. There is no crèche as such, for example. There is always a range of toys available for the smallest children, but if they decide to join in with





whatever is going on at the nearby table then of course they can, for as long as it catches their imagination.

'I have always valued the welcoming, non-judgemental and supportive environment which Kirsty and Susan manage to create in Junior Church,' one parent says. 'However late and ragged we are on arrival, we all always feel better by the time we leave AUC! The amazing boxes of inspired activities which Susan delivered to JC families throughout Covid lockdown were so characteristically imaginative and thoughtful. Their combined ministry has been a great gift to our congregation.'

Nevertheless, Susan and Kirsty would be the first to say that Junior Church has never been a family affair.

They enthuse about the way Fiona Macdonald undertook training in order to bring Godly Play into the church's life, forming a 'Godly dream team' with Ivy; and they note that when Matt Baines began working with older children and young people, this created a clear pathway

for those wishing to grow further into AUC church life. Those are only two examples of the way the whole congregation has embraced the presence and activity of Junior Church, as well as our children as a whole.

“working with older children and young people, this created a clear pathway for those wishing to grow further into AUC church life”

There's never been a shortage of helpers, and there are many members of the congregation who still feel engaged with the children well into their nineties, says Susan. 'Before the term "intergenerational" became a buzzword', she says, 'we were already being that!'

Now others are gearing up to step into the Murray-sized space. They say they're looking forward to seeing where Kate Owens and the refreshed

team go next, not least with the recent influx of new small people.

Kate herself, with husband Andrew, says that they were drawn to AUC in the first place in part because 'each child is encouraged to be themselves and is valued as a part of the church family!' Now fully part of the vibrant Junior Church team themselves, we are thankful that they will support yet more generations of youngsters to be fully part of the AUC church family.

PRAY LIKE HANNAH

As the United Reformed Church prepares to launch a brand-new URC Children initiative at its General Assembly, all URC congregations are invited to 'Pray like Hannah' (the mother of Samuel in the Old Testament) throughout July. Find out more at the URC website.

Women can't be ministers?

The exciting new opportunities in ministry that will face both Nicola Robinson and our minister Fiona Bennett this summer (see "Crossing thresholds" p.1) were made possible by remarkable pioneers such as Vera Findlay (later Kenmure), who was recognised as a minister of the Congregational Union of Scotland in 1929.

Fiona recently received a full account of Vera's life written by the late Sheena Young. She headed her article: 'Women can't be ministers?'

Sheena writes that Vera, born in 1904, studied Classics at Glasgow University, but was encouraged to pursue her call to ministry by the Principal of the Scottish Congregational College, where Vera studied with distinction from 1926 to 28.

'Vera's preaching was so impressive that in 1928 the deacons of the Partick Church in Glasgow called her to be their pastor. Later in the same year she was ordained. At the Annual Spring Assembly of the Congregational Union of Scotland (CUS) in 1929 she applied for and received recognition as one of their ministers, the Assembly having agreed to amend the constitution to allow 'Minister' to apply equally to women and men.

"it was a strange and wonderful thing to see and listen to a lady in a Scottish pulpit"

'These events in the religious life of Scotland stimulated great debate both locally and nationally about Women in the Ministry.'

One Church historian writes that Vera had 'a notable ministry' at Partick at a time when 'it was a strange and wonderful thing to see and listen to a lady in a Scottish pulpit'.

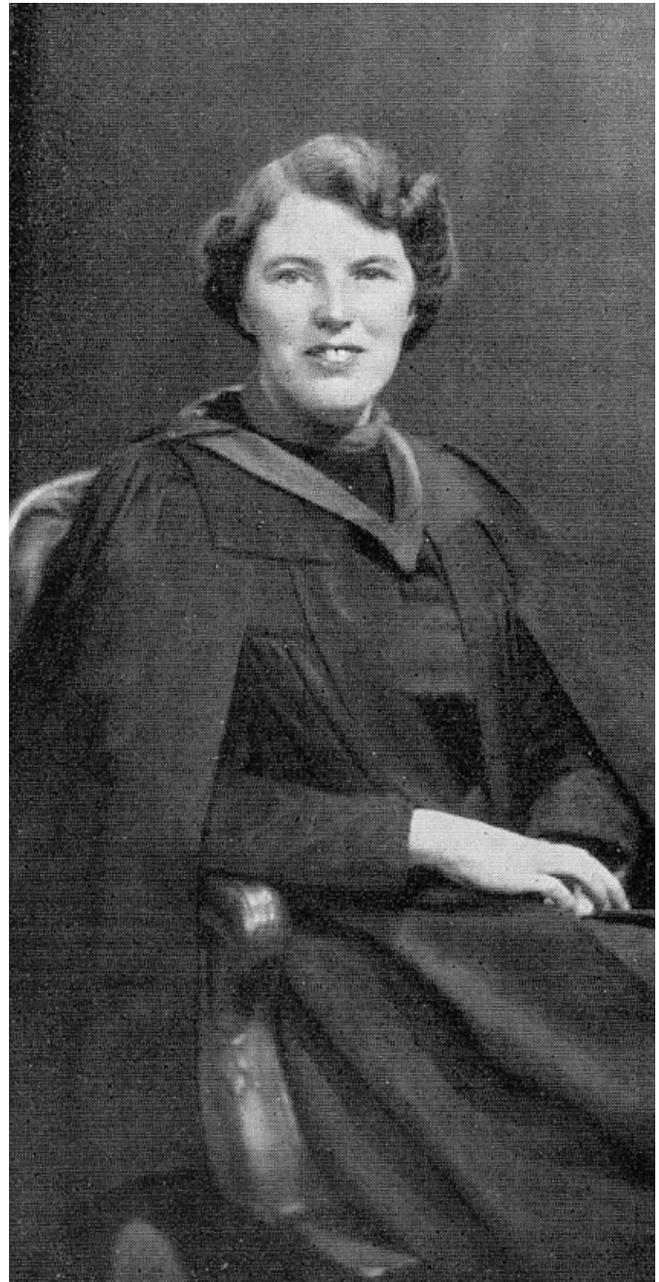
Sheena writes: 'Vera was a very gifted preacher and crowds flocked Sunday by Sunday to hear her message. It is reported that she would start prayers by addressing God as "Father, mother, heart of all the world". This must have seemed adventurous, even daring, in an age when God was usually addressed as male.'

Vera ministered at Partick from 1928 to 1934. However, not everyone was convinced by the introduction of a woman

to the ministry of Word and Sacrament; and, following her marriage to the Colin Kenmure in 1933, matters came to a head when she became a mother.

'In February 1934 Vera, aware of the hostility towards her, decided to resign from the pastorate. In her resignation statement to the congregation, she stated that 'a married woman makes an ideal minister. If she is a mother, so much the better because her gift of understanding is thereby increased'.

The Evening Post reported that, at her final service in Partick (preaching to a congregation of a 1,000!), 'when the doors were opened there was a wild rush to enter the church and an official had to appeal to the crowd to be more orderly or he would have to send for the police. Women lost their hats in the stampede and over 500 were locked out. Many people wept.'



After Vera left Partick, some members of the congregation also decided to leave. They started a new church (Christ Church) with Vera as their leader and met in the Central Halls in Glasgow for about two years.

In 1936 Vera accepted a call from the Hillhead Church in Glasgow and was joined by the members from Christ Church. She ministered there till 1945. 'From 1945 to '54 there appears to be no specific information about Vera's ministry except that she served as President of the Congregational Union of Scotland 1951-2. From 1954, she ministered at Pollokshields in Glasgow until her retirement in 1968.

Sheena concludes: 'Vera died in 1973 in Aberdeen. In 1976 Glasgow University founded in her memory the Kenmure

Prize to assist Classics students to visit sites in Greece and Italy. Her preaching robes are on display in Glasgow's St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art.

“The Revd Vera Kenmure represents those who blazed the trail”

'Over the past 90 years the Congregational Union of Scotland/Scottish Congregational Church/Scottish Synod of the United Reformed Church has benefitted greatly from the growing contribution of women ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. The Revd Vera Kenmure represents those who blazed the trail. No longer should anyone believe Women can't be Ministers!'



AUC member Nicola Robinson will be ordained and inducted into Leeds URC Partnership on 3 September.

At our service at AUC on 26 June, Nicola led us in Prayers of the People and Fiona presented her with small gifts on behalf of the congregation. We are invited to support Nicola on the occasion of her induction.

The Yorkshire Synod of the
United Reformed Church
invites you to

The Ordination of Nicola Anne Robinson

AS MINISTER OF
WORD AND SACRAMENT

AND INDUCTION TO SERVE THE
LEEDS URC PARTNERSHIP

**on Saturday 3rd September 2022 at 2pm
Christ Church Halton, Chapel St,
Halton, Leeds, LS15 7RW**

Followed by refreshments
Please RSVP and dietary allergies to:
Sheana Dudley at: yeldud34@gmail.com
by Sunday 21st August

How to be a saint

On 3 June, Jo Clifford became a saint, confirming what many of us knew already! Here at AUC, she was sanctified by the Order of Perpetual Indulgence Convent of Dùn Èideann in a ceremony that Jo describes as ‘so perfectly silly and solemn at the same time’.

To be honest, it is a bit embarrassing being made a saint.

I did try to put it off, but it was such an honour the Order of Perpetual Indulgence were giving me, and I was so touched by it, that I had to go ahead with it.

And now I’m Saint Jo, Scribe of Our Souls, and people ask me, so what’s so different about being a saint?



Well, if I think about it, I’ve started using make-up and wearing dresses again. . . and I wonder if St. Augustine would approve.

Possibly not, I imagine; but then dear Laurence has sent me a copy of his useful book, *Celtic Saints* (Birlinn 2020), so I can see what my colleagues used to get up to.

They weren’t very nice to themselves.

St David just drank river water and ate nothing but meadow leek. With St. Finnian it was bread and herbs; and St Cuthbert spent his nights praying in the freezing cold sea with the water up to his neck. It’s true that otters used to dry his feet with their fur in the morning, but still. I do like my electric blanket. . .

They were pretty grumpy, too: if one of the monks under St. Columbanus fell ill with flu, he made them thresh wheat until they collapsed with exhaustion.

St. Mirren got so cross with an Irish king who wouldn’t let him preach the gospel of love to his people that Mirren made the king suffer the pains of childbirth. After three days and three nights of agony, the king gave up resisting and agreed.

And St Cainnech was absolutely furious with a bunch of birds. Because they were singing on the sabbath.

It looks like we don’t have a lot in common, me and my fellow saints. Except perhaps in one thing: we all live in a dark time.

And we all bear witness: bear witness to the fact that it is possible to live a different way.

The Sisters and Brothers of the Order of Perpetual Indulgence are part of a worldwide order of queer people of all sexualities, formed around 1979 in response to attacks on the queer community by fundamentalist religious organisations.

The Order aims to ‘expiate stigmatic guilt’ and ‘promulgate universal joy’.

The Order is neither religious nor anti religion. Many within the Order observe a religious or spiritual life. Others do not. The Order is open to all who feel the call of the habit.

We need a new global plan

In the June edition of *Seeds*, we marked Refugee Week by reflecting on our different attitudes to refugees worldwide. For the week itself, the URC's global justice programme, *Commitment for Life*, offered further facts and figures.

Amnesty International reports that in 2019, more than two-thirds of all refugees came from just five countries: Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan and Myanmar.

Syria has been the main country of origin for refugees since 2014, and at the end of 2019 there were 6.6 million Syrian refugees hosted by 126 countries worldwide.

In 2019, only half a per cent of the world's refugees were resettled. Over the past decade, just over 1 million refugees were resettled, compared to 3.9 million refugees who returned to their country.

About half the Palestinian population (10 million) lives outside the Occupied Palestinian Territories as refugees. In host countries, Palestinian refugees are often unwelcome and their rights denied.

Wealthier countries aren't doing nearly enough to share the cost of protecting people who have left everything behind. Appeals for humanitarian assistance for refugees are consistently – and often severely – underfunded.

In short, the world urgently needs a new, global plan based on genuine international cooperation and a meaningful and fair sharing of responsibilities.

Lord of the journey, we ask for your protection on all who have fled their homes.

Give them strength on their journeys and grant that they may find places of compassion at which to rest.

Ease their fear as they throw in their lot with strangers and keep alive their vision of finding a secure and welcoming home. Amen.

Forgiving

A poem by AUC member Tony Chan

God has taught me, and I have learned, to forgive people when they upset, hurt and are unpleasant to me.

I realise now how important it is to forgive myself and pray for God to forgive people.

I haven't always forgiven people, and the result is I felt bitter, resentful, angry and unhappy.

I thank you God, I praise you God, I worship you God, I give you the glory and the honour; thank you for teaching us to forgive.

When I forgive, I experience joy, peace, calm, serenity and healing of mind, body, spirit and soul. Jesus you are our role model and you inspire us and motivate us,

when you were nailed to the cross you said, 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do'.

Jesus, that was a beautiful statement that you said and you paved the way to deal with life's difficulties and pain.

I now realise that you, God/Jesus, are available any time I need you, I just need to stop what I am doing and find time to pray to you.

We are blessed and highly favoured because you can touch our lives in such a beautiful and spiritual way. We look forward to meeting you in heaven, Jesus,

however heaven can also be experienced here on this Earth.

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.

July / August 2022

July		
Sunday 3	11am	Blended Sunday worship & after-service Zoom social
Monday 4	7.00pm	Divine Dance book group – David Townsend online
Tuesday 5	10.30am-1pm	NHS Mental Health drop-in
	7.30pm	AUC Church Council
Sunday 10	11am	Blended Sunday worship & after-service Zoom social
Monday 13	7.30-8.30pm	Contextual Bible Study online
Tuesday 12	7.30-9pm	AUC Church Meeting (social time from 7.15pm)
Sunday 17	11am	Blended Sunday worship & after-service Zoom social
Monday 18	7.00pm	Divine Dance book group – David Townsend online
Sunday 24	11am	Blended Sunday worship & after-service Zoom social
Sunday 31	11am	Blended Sunday worship & after-service Zoom social
	1.30pm	Coffee Social: Come OUT with Our Tribe (LGBTQI+)
August		
Thursday 4	7.30pm	Our Tribe LGBTQI+ Gathering
Friday 5		Edinburgh Festival Fringe begins (– 29th)
Saturday 6		Hiroshima Day
Sunday 7	11am	Blended Sunday worship & after-service Zoom social
Sunday 14	11am	Blended Sunday worship & after-service Zoom social
Sunday 21	11am	Blended Sunday worship & after-service Zoom social
Tuesday 23		International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition (UNESCO)
Sunday 28	11am	Blended Sunday worship & after-service Zoom social

Seeds deadline

The next issue of **Seeds** will be a double issue for September and October. **Seeds** is published on the Sunday prior to the beginning of each month. The copy deadline for the September/October edition is **Friday, 12 August**.