

Seeds

Feb/Mar 2024

encourage – inspire – challenge

Augustine
United Church



Stripping back to our core

Revd Fiona
Bennett



Lent is a Christian season of stripping down to discover or re-discover what is truly important to us as disciples of Jesus.

The stripping down of Lent always makes me think of the poignant clarity I have experienced when someone close to me has died and I have asked myself: So, what is really important?

So much of our lives can be absorbed in surviving or in doing things which distract us. A bit of absorption in living and distraction can be quite healthy, but what does not seem healthy is if we cannot allow ourselves to stop activity and be at peace, nor feel comfortable in ourselves without distraction as beloved by God. It is particularly in the tough times, like when we lose people close to us, that we need to draw on inner resources of peace and acceptance, to face hard journeys ahead.

This year, in preparing for Lent, I have been deeply struck by two stories about the inner resources which people in Palestine have been drawing on, as all their resources for living and the possible distractions of basic comfort have been stripped away.

One story (from *The Guardian* newspaper) was of a woman in Gaza, an accountant who had lost her four-bedroomed home and all her

belongings to bombings and was now living with her two teenage children by sleeping on the floor of a shop. Asked if she and her children would prefer to escape to Egypt they said, No. Palestine was their home and they had to stay to rebuild it.

The other story was shared by the director of the Holy Land Trust (Holylandtrust.org) when he spoke in AUC in December. The Holy Land Trust is helping to rebuild homes which have been destroyed by bombs or bulldozed to make way for illegal settlements. Asked what happens when homes they have worked on are destroyed, the director said: 'Then we build again... and again. There is no alternative.' These are people who have experienced generational traumatic loss, frustration, exhaustion, desperation beyond anything I can dare to imagine. When all else is lost, what is important? They have nothing left but their inner resource, and their inner resource stripped bare enables them to stay and rebuild. It is a vision which is bigger than their individual lives.

Living in the privilege of a place where we are not under constant threat of bombs and starvation, when we strip back the busyness and the distractions, what will we discover is truly important to us as humans who are disciples of Jesus?

What is at our core, as individuals, as a congregation, as threads in the fabric of life? And if we start from that core, what clarity might it offer us in how God is calling us to be and to live, in a vision which involves our whole lives and yet also is about something bigger?

This Month

LGBTQ+ HISTORY MONTH

Marking the occasion in a variety of ways at AUC



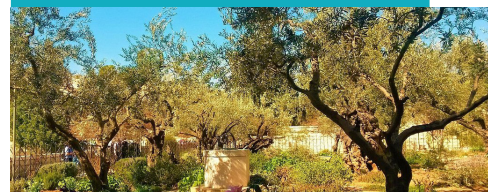
NATURE IN GRAVEYARDS

More from Mandy Rathjen on her work of grave tending



LEANING INTO LENT

Focusing our thoughts on living a Jesus-way this year



QUEER BEDROOM MUSIC

A genre that speaks to the marginalised and insecure





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

ASSOCIATED MINISTER

Revd Maxwell Reay
associateminister@augustine.org.uk

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

Kate Owens
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

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

Lewis Reay
lewis.reay@augustine.org.uk

LOCAL COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERING

Kathleen Ziffo
kathleen.ziffo@augustine.org.uk

Local and Global

News from the United Reformed Church



GAZA IN CRISIS

Commitment for Life will host an update on the situation in Gaza with Christian Aid expert William Bell on Wednesday, 7 February from 2 to 3pm via Zoom, including a Q&A. William is Head of Middle East Region – Advocacy and Policy at Christian Aid. Register at commitmentforlife@urc.org.uk for a link.



HALF OF SCOTLAND FOR NEW PRESBYTERY

As part of the Church of Scotland's wide restructuring process, a Presbytery (district) covering almost half Scotland's landmass has been formed. It extends from the Mull of Kintyre to John O'Groats, and the Western Isles to West Moray. It includes more than 100 congregations and has been named *Clèir Eilean Ì* – Gaelic for the Presbytery of the Island of Iona. Members will meet in local hubs as well as online, local preachers and worship leaders are being trained up, and communion is held online.

Header globe icon by Vectors Market
via Noun Project



WHEN IS A FEMALE MINISTER NOT A FEMALE MINISTER?

In the all-new United Reformed Church podcast from *Reform* magazine, the Revd Margaret Ali speaks out about her struggles as a woman in the Church of North India, and coming to the UK to finally fulfil her vocation.

The podcast is presented by Stephen Tomkins, Editor of *Reform* magazine, and Ann-Marie Nye, URC Communications Officer (pictured). It is available on Spotify, all major podcast streaming platforms, or via *Reform* at bit.ly/3RZVphm.



SCOTLAND'S NEW MODERATOR

The National Synod of Scotland's new Moderator, the Revd Lindsey Sanderson, will be inducted on Saturday 17 February at St John's Church of Scotland. Lindsey has been serving as minister of Hamilton URC and Righead URC, East Kilbride,

and was chaplain to the Revd Fiona Bennett during Fiona's year as URC Assembly Moderator.

CHURCH LIFE REVIEW OPPORTUNITIES

The United Reformed Church is seeking nominations and applications for convenors and members of its new Church Life Review Task Groups, and for convenor of the New Nominations Committee. The Church Life Review is looking at all aspects of how the denomination is structured, funded, and organised for mission. Its conclusions will affect AUC. The new task groups will focus on developing models for future employed, lay workers; HR, Health and Safety, and Safeguarding; and creating models for 'the effective and faithful use of our gifts and resources'. Details are on the Jobs page of the URC website at bit.ly/48IJNGv. **Deadline for applications: 12 February.**

CONVERSION PRACTICES CONSULTATION

The Scottish Government's Consultation on Ending Conversion Practices is now open for comments. Many of us at AUC have firsthand experience of these practices and how damaging they are. Lewis Reay says, 'The religious right-wing are already expressing opposition to ending conversion practices – so we need to be equally vocal as one of the few churches that can provide a safe "home" for all those who have experienced conversion practices.'

Go to consult.gov.scot to read the whole consultation document or a summary. 'Please take the time to respond as this will really make a difference to the lives of those within and those beyond our community,' Lewis adds.

Life on the Bridge

News from Augustine United Church



WORSHIP AT AUC – WHAT'S COMING UP

On 18 February, the first Sunday in Lent, the Moderator of the URC General Assembly, the Revd Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson, will be our preacher. In March, we will welcome Lisa Williams from the Edinburgh Caribbean Association (3rd) and Ash Barker from Newbigin House in Winson Green, inner city Birmingham (17th).

Ash will also be launching his latest book: *No Wastelands: how to grow seedbeds of Shalom in your neighbourhood*. On Easter Day (31st), we will be joined by Scotland's new URC Moderator, the Revd Lindsey Sanderson. In addition, see page 12 for details of services throughout Holy Week (25–30th).



CAN YOU TAKE CARE OF AUC?

We urgently need additional caretakers on Sunday mornings. Full training and support will be given for this important role. You will be asked to open up the church at 9.30am on a Sunday morning, and will generally be the first person in the building and the last to leave. Quite literally church cannot happen without you!

If you feel a calling to this ministry, or would like to chat about it, please email Lewis at lewis.reay@augustine.org.uk.

GIFT DAY 2024

AUC's annual Gift Day will be held on **Sunday 3 March**. AUC Ewen Harley writes:

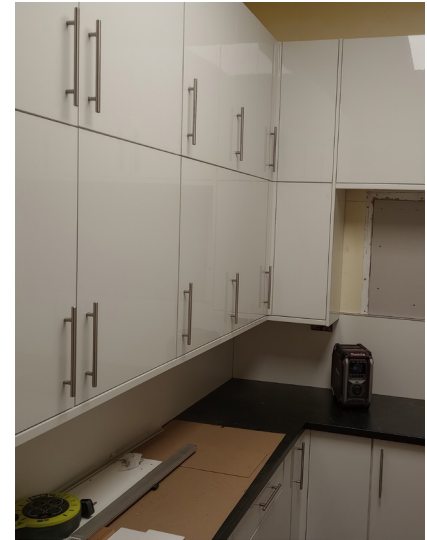
'Folk in our congregation make gifts of many kinds, including money, all through the year. This is recognised in our worship each Sunday. Regular financial contributions, such as weekly or monthly standing orders, are helpful for the financial planning of individuals and the church.

'So, what is different about Gift Day? Well, it falls quite early in AUC's financial year. It is the opportunity to make a special, annual gift of money. But only for those who have adequate resources.

'The worship on Gift Day will encourage us all to reflect on gifts that we make to the AUC community: of time, of skills, of presence, of wisdom, of companionship, of energy, of leadership, and of money. We can recognise these in each other and perhaps encourage more sharing of those gifts.

'The total raised each year on Gift Day has been significant. The total in 2022 was just over £10,000, and in 2023, just over £7,000. Gift Day donations give us the opportunity to go beyond covering the regular monthly expenses, potentially to invest in building improvements or new equipment which will widen the scope of our ministry.'

Payment of gifts can be by the usual bank transfer or PayPal, or by cash/cheque on the day.



NEW-LOOK PANTRY

The church pantry has been transformed (above, almost complete). Centre Manager Rachel Fitzgerald writes:

'The old pantry units served us incredibly well for many years (more than 30, I'm reliably informed!) but the pantry was well overdue for a refit. We have improved and increased the storage to make the space more user-friendly and also fitted an immersion heater to supply mains hot water to all the sinks on the Sanctuary level – no more water heaters!'

Costing not far off £10,000, AUC's Finance and Property Committee will be grateful for donations towards the work. A PayPal page has been set up at bit.ly/3O8IN6h, or simply make a bank transfer (Bank of Scotland – 80 02 24 / 00139118) and reference the payment with 'pantry'.

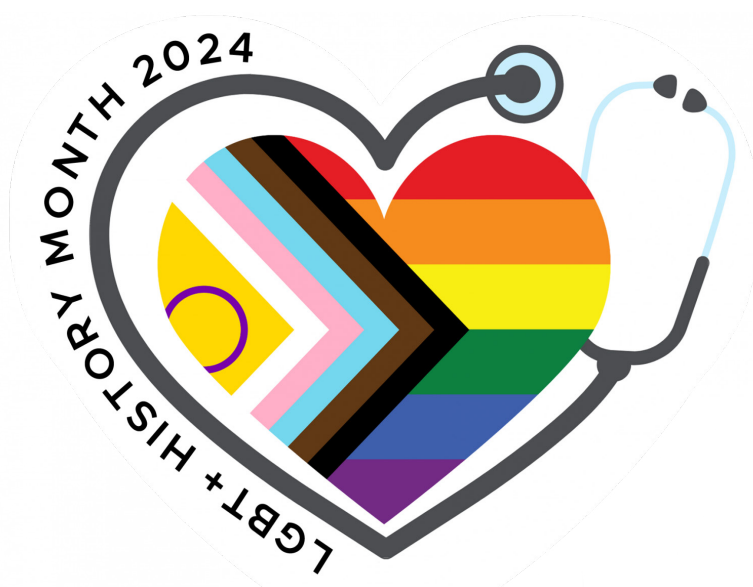
LGBT history celebrated in February

February is LGBTQ+ History Month. History Month was first celebrated in February 2005. The idea is to celebrate LGBTQ+ lives both historically and in the present day. This year we will be marking History Month will be marked at AUC in several ways.

'NARRATIVES OF JOY AND CELEBRATION'

This will take place on Saturday 17 February from 2pm to 8pm, with a range of activities throughout the afternoon and evening.

2 – 3pm Human Library: Stories of Queer Joy and Celebration. All ages welcome.



3.30 – 5pm Tea Dance and Quiz, hosted by the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. All ages welcome.

5.30 – 8pm Open Mic Cabaret. Parental discretion advised.

Doors open at 1.30pm.

This is an alcohol-free event. Tea, coffee and cake will be provided.

The whole day is in-person and free to attend. We ask that you book, simply for us to know numbers, using the link below. Please indicate which parts of the day you wish to attend. bit.ly/47KmBqh. Alternatively, you can email ourtribe@augustine.org.uk. We hope that you will choose to come.

At **Our Tribe** on Thursday 1 February, the theme will be 'How Christian Churches Became More Affirming', led by Carol Joyner. This is an online meeting. For the link and further information, email ourtribe@augustine.org.uk

The monthly '**Come Out with Our Tribe**' social gathering will take place on Sunday 25 February, 1.30 – 3pm

at Coffee Saints, 1 Little King Street, Edinburgh, EH6 6TQ (behind John Lewis). There will be no meeting on Sunday 31 March. For further information contact ourtribe@augustine.org.uk

Transgender Day of Visibility takes place on Sunday, 31 March. 'A Celebration of Trans Lives' will be held at in the Sanctuary at AUC from 2 to 4pm. Transgender Day of Visibility is dedicated to celebrating transgender people and raising awareness of discrimination faced by them throughout the world. There will be a time to name trans people who have made a difference in our lives. For further information please email ourtribe@augustine.org.uk.

MCC IN EUROPE FOR 50 YEARS

Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), the worldwide LGBTQ+ Christian denomination, has been ministering in Europe since 1973! As MCC turns the corner of the year, all are welcome to join as we pay tribute to those who have gone before and pray God's blessings on what is to come!

We are excited to hold a virtual service on Wednesday, 31 January, beginning at 7:30pm GMT, which is 8:30pm CET / 9:30pm EET & SAST / 10:30pm EAT / and 1:30pm Central / 2:30pm Eastern.

Please join using the link: bit.ly/3S6IRGa

The nature of graveyards

Through her business, Yew Tree Grave Care, Mandy Rathjen offers her skills and care for others as a 'gravetender' (See *Seeds*, December '23). In this second of her two articles, Mandy uncovers the rich natural environment she encounters in her work, from ancient yew trees to tiny lichen microcosms.

I live near Newington Necropolis in Edinburgh, which is a wonderful garden cemetery full of historical gravestones and wildlife.

In places, it can look neglected, where stones have fallen or broken, but in other areas there are magical green paths weaving through the graves of men, women and children, artists, soldiers, teachers, and scientists. The Necropolis (pictured) illustrates the importance of finding a balance between wildlife and respecting burials.

In Edinburgh, The Metropolitan Cemetery Association was set up in 1844 to build 'new, picturesque "garden cemeteries" with catacombs'. Garden cemeteries were a Victorian response to the overcrowding and

insanitary state of city centre burial grounds, highlighted by the cholera epidemic of 1832.

There are now committed volunteers working in these beautiful peaceful places to keep them safe, encourage biodiversity, maintain them, and document the memorials.

"places of respect where loved ones are laid to rest and as wildlife havens"

Eco-congregation Scotland's Living Churchyard Project encourages churches to care for their graveyards as 'places of respect where loved ones are laid to rest and as wildlife havens'.

As well as offering practical advice, they have highlighted inspiring stories from across the UK, including the 'Yew Tree for the Millennium Project'. This programme took cuttings from yew trees that were thought to be at least 2,000 years old, and hence alive in the time of Christ. These were propagated and distributed at special services between autumn 1999 and spring 2000, for planting in churchyards. More than 7,000 yew saplings were planted as a symbol of hope for the new millennium.

Other markers of nature's ancient roots are the fungi and algae that combine on bark and stone to create lichens.

I was recently wandering around the church burial ground around the old Norman church of St Mary's in





Masham, North Yorkshire, where the engraved base of an Anglo-Saxon cross outside the church door is evidence for continuity of Christian worship in this place for well over 1,000 years.

The burial ground is a designated nature reserve and the variety of lichens on the stones was wonderful to discover (pictured). It's hard with a 'not very smart' phone camera to capture the variety of colours and textures from vivid lime green dusts, yellow ochre crusts to scaly grey continents.

Most lichens grow slowly at around a millimetre a year, but what they lack in speed they make up for in longevity. Many can be almost as old as the tombstones themselves and it can take hundreds of years for some lichens to become established, highlighting both their value and vulnerability. Rare species of plants, fungi, and lichens are strictly protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Of around 2,000 identified species of lichen in the UK, over 600 of them in

burial grounds, many of them rare. The writer George Baron describes the way older churches have consistently

“The leaves of the trees are for the healing of the nations”

REVELATION 22:2B

been built to point eastwards towards Jerusalem, 'with their longest walls facing south towards the sun or north away from it'. Add to this the numerous different stone surfaces and angles for windows and doorways, the bird roosts (offering rich nutrients), air quality and metal run off, plus the variety of stone used for grave memorials, and it is clear why there are so many microclimates and habitats for lichens in churches and in graveyards.

In Tayside, visits by lichenologist John Douglass, together with the Scottish

Churchyard Lichen Group, to seven graveyards in the Braes of the Carse (a rural area between the cities of Perth and Dundee) documented 176 lichen species, 30 of them very rare. This survey led to a larger project in East Perthshire's churchyards incorporating wildflower areas. Bat and bird boxes were included at each site, together with red squirrel feeding areas; reptiles and amphibians were also considered when improving stonework and boundary walls.

These stories of work for the future, in places dedicated to respecting the past, offer such a positive thought for us to hold on to and perhaps become more actively involved in supporting.

If you want to know more about my work, or about some of the resources that can motivate more of us to be aware and protective of the beautiful church graveyard wildlife havens, contact me at Yewtree58mandy@gmail.com.

A prayer of – and for – AUC

AUGUSTINE UNITED CHURCH IS...

STUDENTS FAR FROM HOME

CHILDREN WITH RAINBOW FAMILIES

MIXED IN OUR MENTAL HEALTH

VISITORS DISCOVERING EDINBURGH

FAITHFULS WHO KEEP MAKING THE VITAL COFFEE

QUEER FOLK THROWN OUT OF CHURCHES

PEOPLE WITH OUR UPS AND DOWNS

DIVERSE IN OUR ABILITY AND ETHNICITY

REGULARS WHO ARE OFTEN SURPRISED

QUESTIONERS AND ACTIVISTS

ONE THREAD IN A VAST CLOTH OF PARTNERSHIP

A COMMUNITY OF DISCIPLES SEARCHING FOR HOPE AND GRACE
IN THE POWER OF LOVE.

HOLY ONE,

THANK YOU FOR THE COMMUNITY OF AUGUSTINE UNITED.

GRANT US THE GRACE TO LISTEN TO YOUR SPIRIT SPEAKING THROUGH
EACH OTHER IN OUR RICH DIVERSITY.

GRANT US THE OPENNESS TO HEAR YOUR SPIRIT SPEAKING TO US
FROM VOICES OF HUMANITY AND THE EARTH, WHO ARE OPPRESSED,
DISMISSED AND SILENCED.

GRANT US THE WISDOM TO BE CHANGED BY WHAT WE HEAR.

GRANT US THE PASSION TO TELL OF YOUR LOVE.

GRANT US THE COURAGE TO ACT SO THAT WE AND THE WORLD WILL BE
TRANSFORMED INTO YOUR DREAM OF ABUNDANT LIFE FOR ALL.

THIS WE ASK IN JESUS' NAME.

AMEN

Written by Fiona Bennett for the Synod of Scotland e-news prayer cycle

Leaning into Lent

The idea of ‘giving up’ something for Lent is something we’ve probably all tried at different times – with more or less success.

The idea is to help us focus our thoughts on living a Jesus-way more closely as we move towards Holy Week and Easter.

Fasting was (and for some still is) one particular form of Lent discipline. Geoff Miller’s response to words from the Gospel of John make for an interesting response to both fasting and ‘giving up’.

‘Out of God’s fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given.’ (John 1:16)

Geoff writes that ‘a novel but creative discipline to practise would be’:

To **fast** from grumpiness and meanness of spirit and to **feast** on seeing the good in others, even in ourselves.

To **fast** from complaining and living life in the negative and to **feast** by enjoying, nourishing and, yes, treasuring all that we have been given.

To **fast** from seeing things in the minus and to **feast** on the ‘more than’ abundant grace of God.

(from *The Bright Field: meditations and reflections for Ordinary Time*, by Martyn Percy and others)



“The Garden of Gethsemane (see ‘Don’t forget the green’, p.10)”

Get to know Jesus better in Lent

A five-part online course for Lent will feature the progressive theologian Dr John Dominic Crossan.

Dr Crossan will be introducing ‘The Historical Jesus: the Evolutionary Challenge of a Mediterranean Peasant’. The course will be hosted by Homebrewed Christianity, an American podcast. It will include

five visual lectures and a series of livestream Q&As with Dominic and guests, including Diana Butler Bass and Brian McLaren. The sessions are ‘pay-what-you-can’.

Check out Dominic Crossan or Homebrewed Christianity on Facebook, or visit www.crossanclass.com.

Don't forget the green

Four years ago, at the start of Lent 2020, the Revd David Coleman (Eco-Congregation Scotland Chaplain, and a member of AUC) asked a question.

Do our concerns for the environment perhaps get sidelined by our focus on the 'spiritual' in Lent and Holy Week?

Are we sometimes guilty of thinking our Lent studies and disciplines and lectionary-focused worship are 'the proper business of being church', at the expense of other issues?

Environmental destruction, in other words, doesn't take six weeks off while we turn our thoughts to higher things.

And yet, he wrote:

'In the coming weeks we will welcome Jesus with **branches**, and see him nailed to the **Tree**, received gently by the **Earth**, and re-establish contact with his community through a meeting in a **garden**. The greenery of the story is in plain sight, but will we see it?

'Thus it's an encouragement that Pope Francis, in his Lenten message, lists environmental devastation amongst the "satanic" challenges we face. Sometimes we have let such language become emptied of its meaning. But the denialism which Jesus himself faces up to in the temptations, the twisting of truth that all will be well if we trust greed and power and step off the precipice, is insidiously present in our Church and national life.'

COP28 – 'Could do better'

The meeting of COP28 in Dubai in December became the 'Oil and Gas COP', says Steve Hucklesby, from the Joint Public Issues Team.

It was the first COP gathering where the question of 'phasing out' fossil fuels took centre stage. The topic proved controversial and the outcomes were mixed. Steve writes:



'Crucially, the US now supports a commitment to phase out, so the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) were forced to show their hand and found themselves to be in a small minority against the rest of the world.

'The text that finally achieved consensus was a commitment to: "Transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner, accelerating action in this critical decade, so as to achieve net zero by 2050 in keeping with the science."

"Accelerating action in this critical decade" reflects the urgency of our situation. Nevertheless, it is outrageous that some countries claim to accept the scientific consensus and then refuse to take the action that the science demands.

'In others areas of concern, \$100bn/year (at least) was committed for mitigation and adaptation, essential for developing nations states that require finance to fund the alternatives.

'Pledges to a new Loss and Damage fund totalled \$792 million (including £60 million from the UK). Now the fund needs to be seen to work efficiently. Nations/communities that have suffered loss and damage must be at the centre of its decision making.'

Read Steve's complete assessment, and a day-by-day account of the talks, on the Joint Public Issues Team website (jpit.uk).

The rise of queer Christian bedroom music

A new type of popular music has been making its presence felt from the indie origins of performers' own homes. Music explorer Carol Joyner invites us to join her as she uncovers a genre that often speaks to the marginalised and insecure.

Those who have made it inside the hallowed corridors of Tether's End, the home I share with my wife in East Lothian, will know that I am a media junkie.

My study has one wall devoted exclusively to books and another to CDs, closely guarded by Bobbi the mannequin. I was brought up by my equally music-mad dad, who once cut a record with a local skiffle group in Edinburgh. I also had a cool Saturday job as a teenager in the late '80s, working in West Glamorgan County Gramophone Library, which exposed me to a wide variety of musical genres.



All-girl, queer, feminist supergroup Boy Genius

My go-to genres have always been female-led rock or acoustic guitar music, reflected in my all-time favourite artist – Blondie, Melissa Etheridge and Suzanne Vega. There is something about New Yorker Suzanne Vega's combination of poetic story-telling, skilled guitar work and razor sharp lyrics that swells my heart and reduces me to awe-struck silence (no small achievement!). With Melissa Etheridge, by way of contrast, it is the rousing guitars, raucous vocals, and tales of torture growing up as a queer woman in conservative Kansas state that hit me in the gut every time.

However, a new genre of music has emerged over the past five years or so that speaks to both my love of acoustic singer-songwriter music and queer-affirming lyricism. It is known as Bedroom Pop, as it is largely recorded at home, rather than in a studio, with recordings shared via social media. It came to prominence during the enforced isolation brought about by the Covid pandemic and is particularly popular with Gen Z, the generation who has grown up with social media.

Billie Eilish is probably the most well-known proponent of this genre, with Norwegian artist Girl in Red (Marie Ulven) a rising star. Eilish's popularity is in no small measure due to her ability to speak to a youth that increasingly seeks individualism over mainstream culture, while Ulven taps into the depression and anxiety felt by many young people negotiating an ever more insecure future. Some lesser-known queer bedroom musicians have appeared in the past few years, writing within a faith context and it is these artists that particularly speak to me. The sense of alienation from mainstream religion is palpable in the lyrics of acts such as Boy Genius, the Aces and Semmler.

Boy Genius is an all-girl, queer, feminist supergroup from Tennessee, formed in 2018 by Julien Baker, Phoebe Bridgers, and Lucy Dacus. The name alludes to how men are labelled geniuses, whose ideas should be heard, while women are told the opposite. A key motif in their music is disillusionment with organised Christianity, and the adverse impacts of fundamentalism on young people's mental health, particularly through conversion therapy. Another

indie all-girl group coming from a similar psychological place are the Aces, from Provo in Utah, who speak of their experiences growing up within the constraints of Mormonism.

Gender-neutral singer songwriter Semler (full name: Grace Semler Baldrige) also writes from a queer Christian perspective. The child of an Episcopal priest, they released an EP in February 2021 entitled *Preacher's Kid* about being a queer Christian, which they recorded at home and promoted themselves in

true bedroom pop style. The EP features the single 'Jesus From Texas', which is about losing friends at a conservative church on coming out as queer.

*My best friend found God so we lost touch
I guess a savior beats a friend who thinks you're good enough
I hope she finds love and peace
And if her kid comes out I hope that she calls me
Oh what a terrible honor it's been
To learn that my blessings are things you call sins
I'll spend the rest of my life tearing down
The Jesus from Texas you put in a crown*

To be asked to help explain the complexities of human sexuality to a truth-seeker in a faith context is a privilege that gives me great joy and hope as a bisexual Christian. So, I'd like to encourage Semler to hold in there with their past acquaintances; my wife and I have both experienced formerly hostile friends and family members return to us on realising life (and faith) does not fit into the neat categories previously assumed.

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.



Giving made easier with AUC's new QR code

February / March 2024

Every Sunday at 11am **Blended Sunday worship** and after-service Zoom social. **More details p.4.** **Contextual Bible Study** is currently running online each Wednesday at 7.30pm and Thursday at 12 noon. Note: The **NHS Mental Health Drop-in** is cancelled until further notice.

February		
Thu 1	7:30pm	Our Tribe LGBTQI+ Gathering
Mon 5	7:30pm	AUC Book Group (The Church Cracked Open)
Tue 6	7:30pm	Church Council
Sun 11	12pm	Soup & Bread Lunch
	12:30pm	TLC Youth (S1 up to 25 years)
Tue 13	7:30pm	Church Meeting ONLINE
Wed 14	7pm	Ash Wednesday service at St Columba's by the Castle (tbc)
Sat 17	2pm	Induction of the Revd Lindsey Sanderson as Moderator of the National Synod of Scotland, in Hamilton
	2pm – 8pm	LGBTQ+ Narratives of Joy and Celebration (see p.5)
Sun 18		1st Sunday in Lent
	11am	Revd Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson, guest preacher
		Marmalade and Cake stall to raise funds for Pantry renovations
Mon 19	7:30pm	AUC Book Group (The Church Cracked Open)
Sun 25	12:30pm	TLC Youth (S1 up to 25 years)
	1:30pm	Coffee Social: Come OUT with Our Tribe (LGBTQI+)
March		
Fri 1		World Day of Prayer
Sun 3	10.15am	AUC Gift Day and breakfast rolls
	11am	Guest in worship: Lisa Williams
Mon 4	7:30pm	AUC Book Group (The Church Cracked Open)
Tue 5	7:30pm	Church Council
Thu 7	7:30pm	Our Tribe LGBTQI+ Gathering
Fri 8		URC Synod Meeting in Tulliallan – until Sunday 10th
Sun 10	12pm	Soup and Bread Lunch
	1pm	Belonging – exploring membership of the Church, the URC & AUC
Tue 12	7:30pm	Church Meeting ONLINE
Sun 17	11am	Guest in worship: Ash Barker – followed by launch of his new book at 1pm
Mon 18	7:30pm	AUC Book Group (The Church Cracked Open)
Sun 24	12:30pm	Belonging Course
	12:30pm	TLC Youth
Mon 25 – Sat 30	8am	Holy Week Communion and Breakfast at St Columba's by the Castle
Thurs 28	7.30pm	Maundy Thursday Service of Reflection at St Columba's by the Castle
Fri 29	12 – 3pm	Reflective Service of Waiting by the Cross at AUC (Come / go as you are able)
	9pm	Service of Tenebrae at Greyfriars Kirk
Sun 31		Easter Sunday and Transgender Day of Visibility
	6am	Easter Climb up Arthur's Seat with our Ecumenical partners
	10.15am	Easter Egg Roll & Hunt.
	11am	Revd Lindsey Sanderson, guest preacher
	2pm	'A Celebration of Trans Lives', AUC sanctuary

Seeds deadline

The next issue of **Seeds** will be a double issue for April and May. **Seeds** is usually published on the Sunday prior to the beginning of each month. The copy deadline for the April/May edition is **Wednesday 20 March**.