

# Seeds

Oct/Nov 2024

encourage - inspire - challenge

Augustine  
United Church



## Autumn Preparations

Revd Fiona  
Bennett



**A**s I look out of the window, the leaves on the birch tree which stands on the grass in front of our house are turning from green to yellow.

The tree has been making and storing energy in its trunk and roots all summer and is now preparing to shed its leaves, which will risk losing too much of the tree's moisture and energy in the cold season ahead. The tree is preparing so that it will have the resources to thrive and grow next year when the light lengthens and the air warms again. The naked tree will have to survive the cold wind and dark ahead, but it can do so in the knowledge that the leaves have given themselves for its survival. Is this love?

The cycles and seasons of nature stand in stark contrast to some human aspirations to produce more and more energy and resource, regardless of season or cycle or weather. As we enter the autumn, I am reflecting on Jesus' frequent habit of withdrawing to pray. He did not withdraw to avoid the challenges and struggles of life, but to find the resource and strength to re-enter them with wisdom, faith and love. We are entering an autumn with struggles in our lives and world. The

Amos Trust is coming back to AUC on 5 December to have another evening to share news from the West Bank and Gaza, and I am shocked to recognise this October will mark a year of the nightmare people are living in. How do we keep hoping and caring and acting for those torn apart?

By knowing that it can be different, by having faith that huge, entrenched situations can change (think on Northern Ireland, South Africa, the Berlin Wall...) and by continuing to hold that hope and work and call for change for the sake of Love. But in order to do this, and to face any long struggles in our lives, we also need to ensure that our inner and community resources of wisdom, strength and love are tended to and nurtured. Autumn offers us the insight to respond with grace to the seasons of our lives and recognise with gratitude the many leaves, in nature and humanity, which have offered themselves for us.

*As the days pass and we grow older  
we stand united again  
we stand shoulder to shoulder  
It is Autumn now, and the days are colder  
We brave tomorrow, the new normal  
as we are stronger, and we are bolder.*

Tony Chan

### This Month

#### MCC IN GERMANY

Lewis Reay at the European Network Gathering in Hamburg



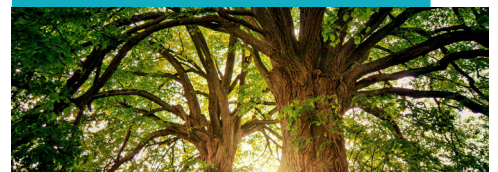
#### SAINTS AND SWEET PEAS

Stephen Hoare and Mandy Rathjen on their planting project



#### THE TREE OF LIFE

Taliesin Coleman and Matt Baines do the science



#### BINOCCHIO

Carol Joyner talks about her Fringe stand-up experience

The Edinburgh Festival  
**fringe**



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**WANT TO GET MORE  
INVOLVED IN AUC?**

Do you feel called to get more involved in the life and ministry of AUC? Then joining the volunteer rota might be for you! We are always looking for new people to join the rota to provide our inclusive ministry of hospitality for all.

There are many different roles available and full training will be given, mainly by shadowing current volunteers. The rota is planned quarterly, so it is always a great time to get in touch.

Please pick up a 'Sharing' card at church or email **Lewis Reay** directly on [rota@augustine.org.uk](mailto:rota@augustine.org.uk).

# Local and Global

News from the United Reformed Church



## SILVER ANNIVERSARY IS 'A SAD REFLECTION'

Edinburgh charity FreshStart has marked 25 years of helping those who have experienced homelessness to settle into a new home. FreshStart provides a range of services, including 'Starter packs' of home equipment and goods, house painting and food advice.

Managing Director Bidy Kelly said: 'On the one hand, providing services to those in need for 25 years is a great achievement, but on the other hand it is a sad reflection of our world today. In the last few years, we have seen demand for all our services grow year on year.'

AUC members have regularly donated goods for Start Packs. Speak to Kathleen or Anne for more information.



## BOOKS AND BELIEF FESTIVAL RETURNS

The fourth Festival of Books and Belief will take place at New College, 7-9 November. Speakers will include Stuart Murdoch, founding member of the Scottish indie pop band Belle and Sebastian. Also featured: fiction writers Michel Faber and Ayanna Lloyd Banwo (*When we were birds*), the writer on Islam Ziauddin Sardar, and Hebrew scholar Francesca Stavrakopoulou, author of *God: an anatomy*. Programme and tickets from [bit.ly/47C3DUe](https://bit.ly/47C3DUe).

Header globe icon by Vectors Market via Noun Project



## FAIRTRADE

Shoppers' commitment to Fairtrade is holding up despite cost of living pressures, according to a YouGov poll commissioned by the Fairtrade Foundation. It found that 70% of UK adults had bought Fairtrade products in the last year, while 85% believed that farmers should be paid fairly for their produce. Fairtrade has marked its 30-year anniversary in 2024.

## TWO-CHILD LIMIT 'UNJUST', SAYS CAP

Church Action on Poverty is coordinating a church campaign calling on the UK government to withdraw the two-child limit, introduced in 2017.

The limit prevents families from accessing support through Universal Credit or Child Tax Credit for more than two children, if children were born after April 2017. Over one and a half million children in 440,000 households are affected, and families are being denied access to £3,455 a year. Save The Children calls it 'a sibling tax'.

The limit has long been opposed by church leaders and charities. In response to the UK government's new Child Poverty Strategy, over 100 church leaders have signed a letter opposing the limit, in the hope the policy will be removed in the October Budget.

## DISAPPOINTMENT OVER CONVERSION PRACTICES BILL PROGRESS

The Equality Network (EN), the Scottish LGBTI equality and human rights charity, has said it is disappointed that no timeline was confirmed for legislating on Conversion Practices in the Scottish government's Programme for Government, announced in September.

It said a huge amount of work over four years had gone into producing recommendations, as part of the government's consultation. Members and friends of AUC contributed to this work. But it said progress is being held up in order to coordinate with the Westminster government. EN said that survivors in Scotland have devoted their time and energy, and shared their stories and experiences, to help protect future generations from the abuse that they lived through.

'Conversion Practices are still happening in Scotland', said Erin Lux, EN's Policy Coordinator, 'and result in significant, long-term harm to LGBT+ people. The timely progression of a bill and its accompanying support measures are essential to ensure that our community is protected from abuse and survivors receive the support they need to heal.'





# Life on the Bridge

News from Augustine United Church



## QUEER LIFE PHOTOS – CALL-OUT

As part of Edinburgh's 900th anniversary celebrations, an art exhibition will take place at St Cuthbert's Parish Church, 19-25 October. Our Tribe has been asked to take part.

The exhibition is being organised by the Ukrainian St Margaret's Saturday School, supporting the education of children from Ukraine within Edinburgh and beyond.

Maxwell Reay is gathering photos of attendees of Our Tribe to create an exhibit called '900 Years of Queer Experience and it is still not safe for everyone to be out'. He says, 'We are hoping that if we add up the ages of the people in the photos that it will come to 900 or thereabout!' Send photos to Maxwell by Sunday 29 September [maxwell.reay@augustine.org.uk](mailto:maxwell.reay@augustine.org.uk), including a note of your age.

If you would like to take part but do not want your face to be shown in the exhibit, please just take a photo of your hands or feet or get someone to take a picture of you from the back etc. Photos of couples or a 'family group'

also welcome. No names will be used in the exhibition, only ages.

## WALKING FOR AUC

Thomas McPolin took part in the Big Stroll, one of Edinburgh Kilwalk's events, on 15 September. He undertook the 11.2 mile walk to raise funds for AUC. He set a target of £200 'to support the mission and ministry of Augustine United Church' but in fact raised a blister-inducing £540. An amazing effort. On the same day, James Julian undertook the shorter route – a great effort from both men.

## BECOME A BETTER LISTENER

A two-week 'Becoming a Better Listener' course will run on Sundays 20 October & 3 November, 12.45-3pm @ AUC.

The course offers an opportunity for all AUC members, associates and friends to consider how we can improve the support we offer each other through listening and how we can become better listeners. Led by chaplain and trainer the Revd Dr Linda Dunbar, the sessions use Flipped Learning (there is

great online material to work through before the in-person sessions, so that the group time is practice of learning and skills). There is a taster video with more information put together by Linda. Open to all. Please email Fiona to register ([minister@augustine.org.uk](mailto:minister@augustine.org.uk)).

## TLC TRIP

A small group from TLC Youth at AUC made a trip to Aberdeen for the 'Spirit Justice' exhibition in July. The exhibition was of work by URC minister and artist Elizabeth Gray-King, and was hosted by Aberdeen URC in partnership with Aberdeen Methodist Church. It featured themes of creation justice, institutional injustice, and wisdom. The group enjoyed the exhibition, saying the art was 'lovely', and it prompted fascinating discussions on nature and justice. The group explored Aberdeen in the afternoon and enjoyed some entertainment at Codona's Leisure Park. The group are grateful to Synod for the small grant that helped make the rail journey to Aberdeen possible.



Thomas McPolin took part in the Big Stroll



TLC Youth at AUC made the trip to the 'Spirit Justice' exhibition

# Love & affirmation in Germany

**Lewis Reay reports on this year's MCC European Network Gathering in Hamburg.**

**The Network Gathering of European Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC) gathered at the Danish Seaman's Church in Hamburg (pictured) in August.**

About 50 people attended, from right across Europe, speaking German, Italian, Finnish and English. Service sheets and PowerPoints in multiple languages are common in our gatherings.

MCC Moderator the Revd Elder Cecilia Eggleston was present, leading workshops and chatting to many of the attendees, providing an overview of current issues that MCC is facing and some of the ways forward.

On the Friday, the clergy and pastors went on retreat – a pilgrimage in the local park and time for personal reflection. Dinner was followed by our first worship service altogether. Starting outside, the Revd Mario Bonfanti sought to make connections with the earth beneath our feet and the world around us. He took us on a journey to come closer to God and one another through words, music, dancing and the sharing of bread. This was a moving service and, for me, one of the highlights of the weekend.

Two workshops followed, on the future direction of the European Network and how we might forge links with the European Forum of LGBTI+ Christian Groups.

On Saturday, we began with a beautiful morning devotion led by the Revd Axel Schwaigert from our Stuttgart church. Then we went to workshops. I attended Rev Paul Whiting's workshop on 'Dismantling Our Safe Houses'. In small groups of members who have been with MCC from less than one year to around 40 years, we gathered useful

information about how we thought MCC could become more welcoming and what had drawn us to MCC in the first place. Another workshop was on the Commission for Rites and Sacraments, which is consulting about the various types of these and whether we need to recognise other.

I attended the 'Love your Enemies' workshop. This was about how to love yourself and to love those around us. There was a ritual involving a stone, a stick, some dry leaves and a small empty bowl. Each person was asked to describe themselves in relationship to one of these objects in just a couple of words. I found this a moving and thought-provoking session.

The catering at lunch was spectacular! This was a great time for chatting to folk we had not seen for several years and getting to know some of the newer folk, too. In the afternoon, there was a discussion about the Commission on General Conference. This was an opportunity to express hopes and visions for the future of

our global gatherings and proved to be a fruitful discussion. I attended a workshop on 'Jewish Poetry and the Torah', which explored the biblical Song of Solomon, in Italian, with translation into German and English. The next workshop focused on the role of the Moderator, and another on 'Queer Ecumenism Between Deconstruction and Sacramental Communion'.

In the evening, the main worship service included a scratch choir and inclusive liturgy, followed by communion and an opportunity for prayer. I received a special token of recognition that I had graduated from the denomination's LEAD programme, which is a lay development training programme. I graduated in 2019, but this

opportunity had not arisen before. There were several other graduates, from England, Germany and Finland.

On Sunday, there was another morning devotional. Then MCC Hamburg led us on a pilgrimage of the city. The conference ended with a lively lunch and many goodbyes, until next time.

Thank you AUC for the financial support that we received to make attending the Network Gathering possible. It was a great experience and time for renewal.



# Saints, symbols and sweet peas

Stephen Hoare and Mandy Rathjen share their reflections on a year-long planting project.

**F**ebruary was cold and dark and wet when we planted a handful of small, dry, brown sweet pea seeds.

We sowed our seeds in optimism and hope of flowers and warm summer days.

According to the Sweet Pea Society ([sweetpeas.org.uk](http://sweetpeas.org.uk)), the sweet pea was first recorded by a monk, Franciscus Cupani, in 1695 in Sicily as a wildflower, and he sent seeds to plantmen in Europe.

Its tendency to mutate has created a myriad of colours and shapes, all characterised by its distinctive perfume.

Sweet peas have been popular for centuries and grown in many countries where different meanings have been given to them.

Victorians used them to say, 'Thank you' and, more poignantly, the sweet pea represented the departure of a loved one or bidding farewell.

In France, it was believed that it was impossible to speak ill of someone when they were in the same room as a sweet pea. In other cultures, such as the Chinese, the sweet pea is associated with good fortune, prosperity, and abundance.

The Japanese appreciate the ephemeral nature of sweet peas, as they bloom for a short period of time, reminding us to cherish the present moment and find beauty in the transient aspects of life.

Native American traditions value the sweet pea's climbing nature, representing the ability to overcome obstacles and reach for the sky, while

its colours symbolise the diversity and interconnectedness of different tribes and communities.

And back to our seeds... After two weeks the first shoots appeared and then followed weeks of giving these spindly shoots light and water and support, usually in the form of sticks, but some encouragement didn't go amiss.

**“Sweet peas have been popular for centuries ... different meanings have been given to them”**

Growth was slow and there were more weeks of bringing the seedlings in and out to get them used to being outside.

By May, a few unlucky plants were victims of gardener impatience and didn't survive being planted into the newly dug circular flower bed. Too cold, too wet, and then eaten and dug up by local wildlife.

The next plan was more sensible: protected seedlings in a large pot on the patio. They began to take off as daylight hours lengthened and cold winds subsided. The main challenge was watering even in the mixed-weather Scottish Summer.

Interestingly, in 1562, St Teresa of Avila wrote about four different kinds of watering as analogies for developing prayer in the 'garden of the soul'.

She described how drawing water from a well is the first stage of saying prayers and meditation. She then lists using a waterwheel, irrigation by a running stream, and finally rain, which

she says is when prayer becomes 'mystical and is not attained by human effort'.

We didn't have a water wheel or a stream but made do with a watering can and rain. July, August and September brought beautiful, scented flowers, enjoyed by the bees.

The final stage was leaving a few flowers to fade and make way for the seeds to form, which we will harvest and plant next year to complete the circle.

While we were watching, watering and worrying about our sweet peas, a few forgotten violas had quietly self-seeded. We finally took notice as tiny, perfect flowers opened up and we counted an astonishing 225 viola plants.

St Therese of Lisieux saw herself as 'the Little Flower of Jesus'. She did not see herself as a brilliant rose or an elegant lily, but simply as a small wildflower. Simple and hidden, but blooming where God had planted her.

**“St Therese of Lisieux saw herself as ‘the Little Flower of Jesus’. ... simply as a small wildflower, blooming where God had planted her”**

After enjoying months of gardening and companionship and scented sweet peas, to end, these words that Stephen found: apt words from Meister Eckhart. 'If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is "Thank you", it will be enough.'



▶ Seeds for hope – Stephen sows seeds in optimism and hope of flowers and warm summer days



◀ Signs of life – After two weeks the first few shoots appear

▶ A few unlucky plants can't survive the circular flower bed, but protected seedlings in a pot on the patio fare better



◀ July, August and September bring beautiful, scented flowers, then seeds complete the circle



# St Francis and the Tree of Life

Brother ant, cousin octopus – Taliesin Coleman and Matt Baines do the science.

**F**riday, 4 October marks the Feast Day of St Francis of Assisi, and the end of CreationTide in our Church calendar.

Francis was known for living simply and appreciating a deep bond with nature. His prayer, 'The Canticle of the Creatures', expressed this bond in terms of family relations, something that appeals to many environmentally minded believers today. In memory of this remarkable saint, we wanted to share some of the ways in which science illuminates an understanding of our relationship with nature.

We are all genetically part of one big family, going back hundreds of millions of years. Scientists often illustrate this idea with a 'phylogenetic tree', a diagram that depicts the lines of evolutionary descent of different species, organisms or genes from a common ancestor. Go back far enough and all branches of this 'tree' come down to a singular stem, or 'root', in an unknown single-celled common ancestor. This 'tree of life'

includes every living thing, from animals and plants to fungi and microbes. The closer you are related to another species on that 'tree', the more genetics you share in common. Chimps share 98.8% of our DNA, mice share 96%, most other mammals share between 89 and 95%, and even bananas share 47% of our DNA!

As a result, there are many examples of similarity between humans and our animal brethren – from having regional dialects (e.g. crows and orcas) to doing stuff merely for fun (e.g. crocodiles and bees).

One creature that is unexpectedly similar to humans is the ant. On their own, you might not suspect them of being very intelligent but, much like humans, it's when they work in large numbers that they achieve impressive feats. Some, like the *Oecophylla* weaver ants, are known to build complex living spaces out of leaves folded and glued together, high in the trees. These 'outposts' can develop into kingdoms stretching across 1,600 square metres. Species

like the European yellow meadow ant demonstrate good examples of agriculture, whether using dead plant matter as a form of compost to cultivate fungi or tending to large 'herds' of aphids or caterpillars in exchange for sweet, sugary honeydew, and occasionally meat, such as humans herd sheep, goats, and cattle for milk, wool or meat.

In some species, a crude form of 'democracy' takes place but, on the sad flipside, there are also ant-kingdoms that wage wars on other colonies. In fact, some species specialise in raiding other colonies. Using a 'propaganda-pheromone' to cause panic and disorder in the victim-colony, the intruders raid their supplies, be it food, livestock or, in some cases, the actual offspring of the victim colony. These hostages are then put to work as slaves, following the orders of their new colony and helping to raise the next generation of raiding ants. In some cases, this doesn't end well for the slaver ants because, much like in human history, sometimes the slaves rise up and overthrow their



Photo by Johannes Plenio





Photo by Joey Kyber

oppressors. Despite being tiny and simple in appearance, ants have whole societies and cultures that are remarkably complex.

The animal kingdom is, of course, vast and full of variety, with different body-structures, organ-arrangements, diets and ways of sensing the world or even thinking. One prominent example of an animal whose evolution went along a very different path than our own, is the octopus.

Unlike humans, who are mammalian vertebrates, octopi and their close relatives are *invertebrate* molluscs, without any form of hard support structures. This makes them incredibly flexible and able to squeeze through surprisingly small holes. The only solid structure they have is their beak, which also happens to be venomous! They have eight limbs, each covered with around 280 suckers per arm, meaning an average yet whopping total of 2,240 per octopus. Every single one of these suckers can taste, rotate and grip.

Unlike humans, their eyes don't have any ocular blind-spots. They are partly colour-blind, yet they seem

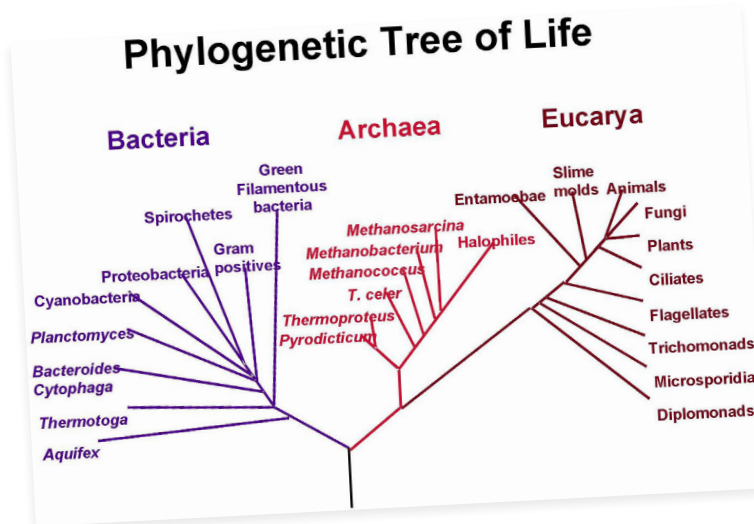
able to sense colour through touch, which they use for camouflage, while also communicating through colour pattern and texture changes. They have three hearts, and an octopus's central brain has no idea where and how each limb is positioned; its arms each act separately until the central brain sends a command requiring coordination, like swimming in a certain direction.

octopus literally crawled out of their tank and along the floor, just to throw a rotten fish at somebody who had neglected to give it fresh food. Others have been known to make and use tools or craft makeshift shelters out of coconuts.

It is incredibly humbling to recognise that we are not alone on the tree

of life and that we are certainly not the pinnacle of evolution. There are in fact very few behaviours (if any) that are uniquely human. We see variations on a theme throughout the family tree. It is awe-inspiring to see intelligence arise in other beings whose evolution happened in ways radically different from the pathway our own developed along. With the help of centuries of scientific investigation, we know

far more about the tree of life than St Francis ever could, but it is pleasant to imagine him observing sister wolf and brother bird and recognising kinship in unexpected places.



But for all the dramatic differences in the way an octopus's intelligence is structured, there is something remarkably human-like about some of the ways this intelligence is expressed. They have been known to show playful behaviour and appear to enjoy committing pranks. They can act with indignation and even out of spite. One

# Binocchio the Bisexual Tryer

**It's hard work being funny. AUC member Carol Joyner, a first time Fringe stand-up, came, sang, and conquered. But would she do it again?**

**have long since held a desire to do stand-up comedy, but it wasn't until two years ago that I felt led to pursue my goal for real.**

A few times after preaching or leading services, I have been asked if I'd ever considered a career in comedy (which I think was a compliment?). I have been told on more than one occasion that I bring joy into a room, which is kind of interesting, as we portmanteau-ed our maiden names to Joyner when I married my wife in 2022. And as one (actually) spiritually mature person pointed out at Taizé this year, intellectualism is not a gift of the spirit, whereas joy most definitely is.

So, I put down some of my sketches on paper and bagged myself some guitar lessons from Jacob, guitarist in the Gloucestershire based folk band Faeland. Perhaps it was all that 70s childhood exposure to Billy Connolly in his banana boots, but it seemed to me that stand-up needs an extra ingredient in the form of song. And while I need gazillions more guitar lessons before I'm even fit to lick Connolly's boots, it's a start!

I had an exploratory chat with the artist liaison team from Paradise Green, the Fringe company who use Augustine as a base during the festival. They were absolutely delighted at the prospect of an actual congregant performing with them and encouraged me to 'go for it.' Before I could talk myself out of it, I signed up to perform in The Snug, aka the Christian Aid back office at Augustine, during Week 1 of the Fringe.

I already had a couple of successful Open Mics under my belt performing stand up, but the Fringe would be the first time I'd unleash my own guitar-accompanied songs on the public. I got some practice in on the Royal Mile on Day 1 of the Fringe, belting out Come and See My Show for a Fiver to the tune of 'You Cannae Shove Your Granny off a bus' near St Giles. I can only apologise.

My nine-day stint at Paradise Green didn't begin too well, with a rather ropey preview show. (It's what preview shows are for!). There were five in the audience to hear me play

an untuned guitar badly, my fingers so sweaty with nerves and the heat from the intense spotlights that they wouldn't hold the frets down. I had also mistimed my practice runs at home, so had to omit a sizeable chunk of my material, making the whole thing rather disjointed. My humour also fell largely flat, mainly due to the demographics of those in the room, and the lighting was so bright that two of the audience members had to face away from me. Or at least, that was their excuse. I was mortified, though my wife and son assured me it hadn't been that bad, and at least I could use the experience at the basis for a future sketch. With supporters like this, who needs enemies?

I skipped Saturday's media events to sort my show – and myself – out. I wasn't anticipating being snapped up by the BBC's Head of Light Entertainment anyway. Saturday's performance was far slicker and eminently more enjoyable, and it was a pleasure to welcome several friends from Augustine to the show. The rest of the week proceeded smoothly. Though no official reviewers made it to the show,

despite my dogged attempts, I had verbal praise aplenty and a promotional article published in *The Scotsman*, as well as interviews with the *East Lothian Courier*, the *Get Your Coats On* blog, and an appearance on *Beyond the Podcast*.

According to a contact who'd been doing a tour of queer solo performer shows, my audience figures were significantly higher in comparison. I made a loss on the show, which was entirely anticipated – I did it for the craic, and to spread my message of progressive Christianity, and not for the money – but nothing like as bad as the losses made by comparable shows. A sobering thought, indeed. Probably the highlight of the week, alongside the presence of

so many Augustine pals and students of mine, was the surprise appearance of my good friend, Hilde Vossen, of the European Bisexual Network, who flew in from the Netherlands on Tuesday to catch my show.

Overall, I'm glad I did the Fringe. I'm not sure if I was brave or stupid to do the Olympics before the County Show – probably a mixture of both! Would I do it again? Probably not, or at least not without a committed team around me to assist with flyering and social media. It was exhausting producing and performing, and I couldn't have done it at all without my wife's assistance on the tech desk and setup. When I think that there were some 3,400 shows at the Fringe this year, it's kind of humbling that so many friends and acquaintances took the time to see my little performance. I also have a ton of friends back in Hampshire who want me to bring Binocchio down south... so I'm not hanging up my bi-tie just yet!





# Life and all that comes with it

A poem by Tony Chan

**A**mongst the monotony and drudgery, everyone is looking for peace for a solution to conflict; however, there is sheer thuggery and skull-duggery. We survived two world wars, will there be another?

Why can't we treat everyone as our sisters and brothers? How can we survive from violent attacks? How do we recover? I want peace, I seek peace in the world, where do I find it? On this I contemplate, meditate and sit. I know it's difficult; however, we should look for the good in others. To love appropriately is better and covers other people's faults and demeanours, born from a dream by the conceiver. No one is perfect, we all have a dark side that we hide, we like to be the centre of attention most of the time. However, this is not reality; this we will find, that life can be full of grind. Which can overwhelm our mind, as everything will be revealed over time, let the light in our spirit, soul and heart overcome the darkness inside. Let it heal the hurt, pain and absorb the fear so that your mind will be clear as you focus on what's important in life. To those that inspire confidence in you, as you look to your peers, you will feel better and it will be to the letter, as you are a go getter. You didn't sit on your backside and let the world go by. You worked hard at life, you did your best, you passed the test, you really did try, even though I understand that you sometimes feel down, depressed and cry. And you say to yourself, what's the point of it all? As you let out a big sigh. You, however, strengthen your resolve, you are humble, you ask for help when you need it, you talk to people, for them you involve.

**YOU ARE A SURVIVOR AND A FIGHTER**

**DO NOT GIVE UP ON LIFE, AND LIFE WILL NOT GIVE UP ON YOU**

With life you are certainly not through, because to yourself you were true  
And what I say next is I'm not just saying it, I really mean it:

**THAT YOU HAVE EMOTIONALLY MATURED AND GREW**

## Here's a question..

**Smartphones are in the news.  
Putting them on 'digital pause'...**

**T**he French government has outlined plans to lock away pupils' phones during school hours.

In England, the large Ormiston Academies Trust is phasing out access to smartphones for around 35,000 pupils at its 42 state schools, primary and secondary, across the country. A spokesperson said that 'teaching and learning, behaviour and children's mental health are all impacted negatively by mobile phones'.

Do you have a smartphone? Do you avoid them?

And is it all about young people?

What about their impact on the lives of adults of all ages?

What are the plusses, what are the minuses?

Should we all go back to 'dumb phones'?

If you have a view, why not share it with **Seeds**. Email [newsletter@augustine.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@augustine.org.uk). We'd love to hear your thoughts.

# What's On?

Most of our gatherings and resources are currently online. You can find out details on our website [www.augustine.org.uk](http://www.augustine.org.uk).

## STAYING IN TOUCH

If you wish to receive weekly updates of AUC events please register to receive the Friday email by contacting our Centre Manager ([centre.manager@augustine.org.uk](mailto:centre.manager@augustine.org.uk)).

Find us on 

Check our posts on the AUC Facebook page.



Giving made easier with AUC's QR code

# October / November '24

Every Sunday at 11am: Blended Sunday worship and after-service Zoom social.

Contextual Bible Study continues weekly, on **Wednesday** at 7.30pm, and on Thursday at 12 noon.

NHS Mental Health Drop-in cancelled until further notice.

October		
Tue 1	7:30pm	AUC Church Council online
Wed 2	7:30pm	Exploring the Synod Aspirations Together (online)
Thu 3	7:30pm	Our Tribe LGBTQI+ Gathering
Sun 6	12:45pm	Book Group: What White People Can Do Next
	1pm	TLC Youth
	3pm	Pet Blessing service at Greyfriars
Wed 9	7:30pm	Exploring the Synod Aspirations Together (online)
Thurs 10		<b>World Homeless Day / World Mental Health Day</b> (Theme: Wellbeing in the workplace)
Sun 13	12:15pm	Soup & Bread Lunch
	1pm	Church Meeting
Wed 16	7:30pm	Exploring the Synod Aspirations Together (online)
Sat 19	2pm	AUC Autumn Tea
Sun 20	12:45pm	Becoming a better Listener
	1pm	TLC Youth
Wed 23	7:30pm	Exploring the Synod Aspirations Together (online)
Sun 27	1:30pm	Coffee Social: Come OUT with Our Tribe (LGBTQI+), Coffee Saints, Little King St, Edinburgh
Wed 30	7:30pm	Exploring the Synod Aspirations Together (online)
November		
Fri 1		<b>All Saints</b>
Sun 3	12:45pm	Become a better listener
Tue 5	7:30pm	Church Council online
Wed 6	7:30pm	Exploring the Synod Aspirations Together (online)
Thu 7	7:30pm	Our Tribe LGBTQI+ Gathering
Sun 10	time tbc	Interactive Remembrance Worship
	12:15pm	Soup & Bread Lunch
	12:30pm	Church Meeting
Mon 11		<b>Remembrance Day</b>
Wed 13	7:30pm	Exploring the Synod Aspirations Together (online)
Sun 17	11am - 2pm	Transgender Remembrance Worship
	1pm	TLC Youth
Wed 20		<b>Transgender Remembrance</b>
	7:30pm	Exploring the Synod Aspirations Together (online)
Sun 24	1:30pm	Coffee Social: Come OUT with Our Tribe (LGBTQI+), Coffee Saints, Little King St, Edinburgh
Wed 27	7:30pm	Exploring the Synod Aspirations Together (online)
Sat 30		<b>St Andrew's Day</b>

The next issue of *Seeds* will be a double issue for December (Christmas!) and January. The copy deadline for the December/January edition is **Wednesday 13 November**.

If you're thinking of writing a longer piece for *Seeds*, we hope this information will be helpful. Roughly speaking, we find that a good length for a one-page article is c.570 words, allowing for an image as well. A two-page article will be no more than 900-950 words.