

# Augustine's New Times

"Ants are creatures of little strength, yet they store up their food in the summer" Prov. 30:25 NIV



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## Moving Forward



The last 16 months have not just been about Coronavirus, but also mental and spiritual health. Isolation, restriction of movement, and lack of physical contact have all taken their toll. Now all around us there seem to be mixed messages; on the one hand, bit by bit we seem to be easing the restrictions, and then on the other hand we are hearing of spikes and outbreaks of COVID19 variants around the country and around the globe. Weary of restrictions we seek release, energy, and excitement in life again, though entering uncharted waters and, not knowing what the future will hold. But we move forward with hope... Now I don't mean a wishful thinking kind of hope, but a hope which is

all about an inner conviction concerning our future, the assurance that our future is secure in God's hands. As people of faith we believe that after devastation comes renewal, after sorrow comes joy, and after darkness comes light... after loneliness will come companionship, and after social distancing will come shaking hands, feeling the embrace of family and friends again, those hugs and kisses that may now seem a thing of the past. We can look at the first Pentecost Sunday: the disciples waited as we do; they hoped as we do and they prayed as we do; and then the Holy Spirit came and life was never the same again. Yes, God makes the impossible possible. Who has the last word? After all God has shown how situations can be turned around – countless times. That expectation of an abundant life can be ours too; that promise of flourishing can be ours too. As the disciples waited and opened their hearts to Jesus to do a new thing – then so do we. Holy Spirit, as you came at Pentecost come again to us today. During this Trinity Season may we be filled with all hope in believing.

*Heller*

## 'Wait Till I Tell You....'

### A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

June began with so many dreams – dreams that we so much wanted to believe. But we should have heeded the Shakespeare version in which Puck, a mischievous fairy who tackled all life's challenges with magic, announces 'Lord, what fools these mortals be!' That's us – the numpties! By midsummer England's Freedom Day and Scotland's Zero Levels were to be delayed with confusing inconsistencies. And those dreams of summer holidays in the sun could now be only available to Puck when the green traffic lights of Portugal turned to amber. Remember Puck's famous line about travelling? 'I'll put a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes! Not for him the testing, the quarantine, the isolation and the queues. Then there was the great Euros dream – Scotland in the knockout stages. Now that's dreaming in excelsis! Shakespeare used magic to make dreams come true – potions, spells and a wand or two. Added to the vaccine it could save our summer!

### THE RETURN OF THE SATURDAY COFFEE MORNINGS.

On Saturday 12th June it was great to welcome Friends back after those fifteen gossip free months. The favourite delicacy is fruit bread toasted – this reminded me of the advert for Warburton's Bread in which the boss is making toast when the receptionist bursts into the room to announce 'George Clooney is on the line!' She receives the answer- 'it can wait!' No – not the toast – the gorgeous George! If he ever phones St. Augustine's Hall the toast will be left to burn, the plate will be smashed and the phone grabbed with trembling rubber gloved hands. You have been warned!

### WHAT DID YOU WIN IN THE RACES, GRANNY?

It is being recommended by the Education Convener that schools should consider themed 'picnics in the playground' to mark the end of term. Perhaps the old style Sunday School Picnic could be a feature since it is perfect for Covid times. Some of you may remember the 1940's or 50's versions when the entire congregation was transported about ten miles away to a specially selected cows' park and seated on tartan travelling rugs arranged on the ground in socially distanced groups. The usual occupants of the field had been decanted by the friendly farmer though evidence of their presence remained. The main event was the Races – the Ladies' Race being a highly competitive skirmish! Prizes included ½lb sugar, ¼ lb tea and a bar of chocolate – all very desirable with rationing still in force. Then St. Auggie's tea urns arrived from the Hall with hot stewed tea for the adults and paper bags of buns for everyone. The farmer returned with metal churns full of milk straight from the cows for the 'weans'. 'Aye, that'll pit some colour in their wee white faces!' The annual event ended with the emergence of the midges.

### WANTED DOWN UNDER.

On Tuesday 16th June the news of our first après- Brexit trade deal was announced excitedly. Our Prime Minister had had discussions with the Australian PM during dinner the previous night. Wow! It's tough at the top! Only the broad details are available at present – this makes it easier to overturn when things start to go dodgy. But.....it states that a pound of Scottish square sliced sausages and a plain loaf will appear in every barbecue episode of 'Neighbours!'

### ONWARDS INTO JULY.

Yes, the good news is there are two more months of our 'new normal' summer 2021 to enjoy. So have an adventure and write about it for the next issue of A.N.T.

*Janette*

## Three special COVID "Thank you"s



As restrictions all too gradually ease, I've been thinking back about the COVID pandemic and getting through it reasonably sane. There have been some down times yet there have also been some highlights that would never have happened otherwise.

In the early days, I recall using Whatsapp to share a crafting bible study course, then progressing to Zoom for all sorts of contact with friends, family and church (including Heller's interview). Reopening the church for worship on August 9th, despite the cynics, was also memorable.

Yet it's not just the big things – sometimes it's the smallest that remain in one's mind. Morrisons handed out packets of 'Seeds of Hope' and despite my lack of gardening skills they're growing into what I think will be stumpy sunflowers. Actually I don't care what they grow into – it's the life that has emerged from the small dry seeds that amazes me.

BAVS (ie Berkshire Association for Voluntary Service) produces wonderful, frequently updated guidelines to help us deal with the COVID regulations. It's such a relief to be able to get access to reliable information.

And then there are the unexpected little acts of kindness, like the lady who took pity on me after I had struggled to the entrance of the indoor market in Clydebank, vacuum cleaner in hand, only to find I had left my mask in the car. She realised my plight, dug deep in her bag, brought out a packet and gave me a new mask. Such a surprise, no fuss, just empathy and humanity. So thank you God for showing me new things to be thankful for.

*Fran*

## Photo Quiz!

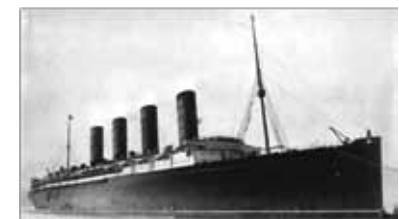
### Name the Ship

Answers on the next page!

1. Built in Dumbarton in 1869. Now a tourist attraction in Greenwich.



2. Built in 1907 by John Brown & Co., Ltd., Clydebank. Sunk by German U-Boat 1915



3. Built at Clydebank, she is now a floating hotel in Long Beach, California.



## Saying Welcome... and Saying Goodbye



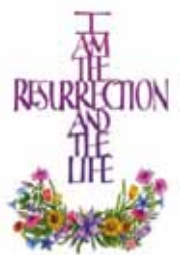
St Augustine's Episcopal Church, Dumbarton said Welcome to **Hamish John Wiggins**, grandson of John and Kirsten Wiggins on May 30th. We give thanks to God for the new life in Christ offered to Hamish.

We pray he may grow up to be healthy and strong, come to know Jesus in his hearth and follow him all the days of his life.

And we said Goodbye to:

**Steward Murdoch, Thomas Adams Caldwell, and Sylvia Black.**

We give thanks for their lives as we leave them in the care of Jesus our Lord.



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## The Praise Band's Back!

It was with a fair bit of fear and trepidation that the St Aug's Praise Band resumed our role in church on the 23rd May. However, any anxiety was quickly erased when we got together on the Saturday for a rehearsal and it was like we'd never been away!

Some of the band hadn't played their instruments for over a year! (my clarinet & I definitely hadn't seen each other for that long) So when First Minister Nicola said praise bands could be back doing what we do best, Heller was straight on the phone to ask if this was possible!

It seemed a long time since Christmas Eve when a few of us were allowed to lead the congregation in worship celebrating Jesus' birth.

It is a privilege to be part of the praise band and one that we do not take lightly. We hope you are enjoying singing with us (albeit behind your masks) and we are delighted to be back playing together and leading you all in praise to our amazing God!



Sharon

## Thin Places



No, don't skip to the next article- no need to panic! I'm not going to be waxing lyrical about the latest diet or fitness fad which promises to help you shed those extra Covid pounds- I'm talking about places where it seems that the barrier or gap between heaven and earth is "thin", those places where it seems somehow easier to encounter God.

For me, one such place is in the woods, surrounded by trees, birdsong and with the brook tinkling in the distance or up on the hill where the sky opens out before me and there is nothing but creation singing out its praise to God. I am at peace in these places, so it becomes easy to listen and hopefully to hear the quiet prompting of the Spirit. For you, a thin place may be elsewhere- some people find they can listen best for His still small voice sitting quietly in a church building and are drawn to come in, still others find the thinnest place to be their own bedroom. It really doesn't matter where you meet with God!

The wonderful promise of scripture is that God is not a distant deity but an ever-present help in time of trouble, a God who walks with His people in the words of the Gospel, to the very close of the age. Take heart - He will do the thinning!

"Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest." (Mt 11:28).

Kirsten Wiggins

## Dance and Church go together well ... says Sarah



Liturgical dance is a way to offer prayer, praise and worship in the context of a set liturgy.

People have engaged with their faith through this ancient art form for many centuries. The book of Exodus gives an account of women dancing to celebrate God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt after the Red Sea crossing. King David danced in worship ahead of the Ark returning from Jerusalem. The early church fathers record that dance was part of the culture and liturgies of the first century church, and into the late middle ages there are records of dance being used in the Liturgy of the church.

Most types of dance are usually choreographed, rather than improvised, that's why an investment of time is needed for rehearsal in order to prepare a dance well.

*'It can be very powerful and meaningful, both for the dancer and for those watching in the congregation', said Sarah J. Black, Ghislaine's daughter, who admitted she felt touched while dancing... 'I felt so filled with the Holy Spirit, felt I had Jesus living within my heart calling me to follow Him more closely'.*

Sarah added: *'I chose to wear a green dress for the Pentecost dance as a symbol of new birth, new life and growth, honouring the resilience of the people of faith at St Augustine's, a place of welcome and encouragement for everyone. Now I am considering getting baptised this summer, please keep me in your prayers'.*

## Remembering those behind bars...

Who today are the metaphorical lepers in our society? Who are forgotten about? Who are locked away? Who are denied their rights and freedoms?

Chances are, you thought of refugees, ethnic minorities like minceir travellers and gypsies or groups that are widely represented such as BLM and LGBT groups, but what about prisoners? They may be out of sight, but they should not be out of mind.

Caroline Delaney, writes: *"It was not that long ago that I came across to Prison Fellowship through a daily prayer calendar, a group whose purpose is to show Christ's love to prisoners by coming along side them and supporting them. When I first read about the charity I was inspired by their vision and mission. I immediately felt that I wanted to become involved... Prison Fellowship opened my eyes to people feeling trapped, lonely and guilty. It brought also new meaning to Matthew 25: 36 "I was in prison and you came to visit me".*

Caroline now asks us to remember the Prison Fellowship in our prayers: *"Pray that prisoners will sign up to the services offered by Prison Fellowship. There are volunteers waiting for prisoners to come forward, but there are many barriers for the prisoners to take a leap of faith. Prayers can stir hearts, prompting action".*

Some of the good works Prison Fellowship do is organising pen-pals, arranging gifts for children from parents in prison, running prayer groups, a prayer line service, and restorative justice sessions. Any prisoner can ring a number anonymously and leave a prayer request. You can sign up to listen to the prayer requests on the website.

*"For an insight into prison life I recommend the current BBC series, "Time", as a good place to start. It is fictional but portrays the terrible dilemmas faced by prisoners and prison guards in a realistic way. It also touches on the hope provided by the pastoral team in the prison", said Caroline.*

In Psalm 146:7 we read "The Lord sets the prisoners free". Let's pray for the coming kingdom without criminality and violence, where there will be no need for prisons. In the meantime let's remember those behind bars in our prayers, and support all those connected to prisons.



## A Missed Opportunity



A couple of weeks ago St Aug's missed out on a fund-raising opportunity - selling seagull eggs! £8 each to order online or from Fortnum and Masons, much more if you wish to eat one at a posh London restaurant. How the eggs arrived in the church front garden or on the decking, unsmashed, remains a mystery.

The season for seagull eggs is now over. Should you find any next spring and wish to enjoy this "delicacy for discerning diners", with its "intriguingly delicate flavour", all you need to do is soft boil them and serve with celery salt and asparagus dips. At least you'll know you're not getting a scorpion (Luke 11:12).

## And now let's raise a smile...!

I washed my hands so much due to Covid19, that my exam notes from 1995 resurfaced!



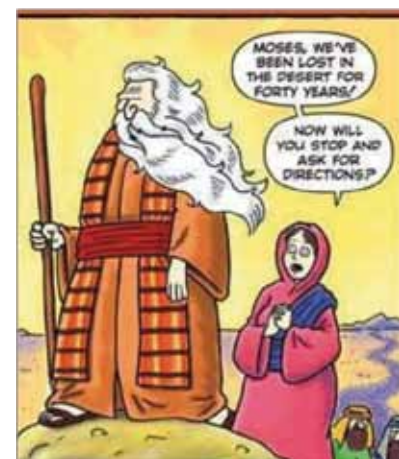
## Weddings in a Pandemic

Weddings were challenging during the pandemic. Lots of ideas came forward though.

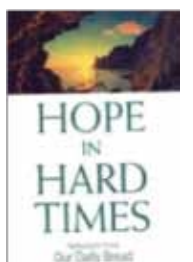


## Moses and Me

When we are lost in the car, Montse, my wife says that I am the world's worst at not asking for directions...it seems Moses had the same problem!!-



The threat of Coronavirus has left many of us feeling unsettled and lonely. If you have Internet or a mobile you can download this little booklet which gives a reading and prayer for each day. [www.ourdailybread.org/hope](http://www.ourdailybread.org/hope)



**Photo Quiz:** Answers (1). The Cutty Sark. (2). RMS Lusitania (3). Queen Mary.