



The Greeting

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THE LONG SILENCE

At the end of time, billions of people were scattered on a great plain before God's throne. Most shrank back from the brilliant heat before them. But some groups near the front talked heatedly: not cringing with shame, but vocal in their belligerence. "How can God judge us? What does he know about suffering?" snapped a young woman as she ripped open a sleeve to reveal a tattooed number from a Nazi concentration camp. "We endured torture, beatings, terror and death."

In another group, an Afro-American boy lowered his collar. "What about this?" he demanded, showing an ugly rope burn. "Lynched for no other crime than being black! We were suffocated in slave ships; wrenched from our loved one; and toiled until only death gave us release." In another group a young woman stared with sullen eyes. On her head was the stamp 'Illegitimate'. "To

endure my stigma," she murmured, "was beyond, beyond ..." Her voice trailed off to be taken up by others. Far across the plain were hundreds of such groups. Each had a complaint against God for the suffering and evil he permitted in his world. How lucky God was to live in heaven where all was sweetness and light – no weeping, no fear, no hunger and no hatred. Indeed what did God know of what people had been forced to endure in this world? After all, God leads a pretty sheltered life, they said.

So each of each group sent out a leader, chosen because he had suffered the most. There was a Jew, an Afro-American slave, an untouchable from India, a horribly deformed arthritic, a person from Hiroshima, a victim of a terrorist suicide bomb and a refugee whose village had been ethnically cleansed. In the centre of the plain they consulted with each other. At last they were ready to present their case.



*A Blessed Christmas
and a Happy New Year*



It was rather simple. Before God would be qualified to judge, he must be sentenced to live on earth as a man. But, because he was God, they set certain safeguards to make sure he did not use his divine powers to help himself.

Let him be born a Jew. Let the legitimacy of his birth be doubted so that no one will really know who his father is. Give him a work to do so that even his family will think he is insane when he tries to do it. Let him describe what no one has ever seen, tasted or smelt. Let him describe God to people.

Let him be betrayed by one of his close associates. Let him be indicted on false charges, tried before a prejudiced jury in a kangaroo court and convicted by a cowardly judge. Let him experience what it means to be completely alone, totally abandoned by every living creature. Let him be tortured and let him die. Let there be a great crowd to witness his humiliation. Let him die so publicly that there can be no doubt that he died.

As each leader announced his bit of the sentence, loud murmurs of approval went up from the crowd. When the last had finished speaking, there was a long silence. Those who had spoken their judgment against God left quietly. No one uttered a word. No one spoke. No one moved. For suddenly all knew God had already served his sentence!

RODGER CROOKS
Vacancy Convenor

CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS

May Street Church will be hosting two Celebrating Christmas concerts as part of its programme of Advent events in December. The concerts will be hosted by television presenter Tina Campbell and are fund-raisers for the Northern Ireland Children's Hospice and the church's Urban Soul Cafe.

The concerts, at 7.30pm on Thursday December 1 and Thursday December 8 feature BB bands and choirs from a variety of schools and youth organisations. The programme will feature a range of familiar Christmas songs and music and the

church will be decorated for the Christmas season.

Among the schools which are participating are Hazelwood Integrated College, Grosvenor Grammar School, Wellington College, Millburn Primary (Coleraine), and Assumption Grammar School from Ballynahinch. Other organisations which will be taking part include Belfast School of Music, Youth Lyric, and PS150 Mersey Street along with members of 3rd Newtownabbey Boys' Brigade Band.



Sounding forth: Television presenter Tina Campbell hears all about the Celebrating Christmas programme of concerts at May Street Church in Belfast from Joshua Doig (15), a member of 3rd Newtownabbey BB company's band. The band will be playing at the concerts, which take place on the evenings of Thursdays December 1 and 8. Also starring are the choirs from a number of schools. The concerts are being held to raise funds for the NI Children's Hospice and May Street Church's Urban Soul Cafe.

Tina Campbell said: "These concerts will provide a chance for the public to enjoy some of the best talent on offer at present from the schools and youth sectors in Northern Ireland.

"May Street Church, which dates from 1829, is noted for its fine acoustics and the choirs will be shown off to best effect. It will be a chance to opt out of the Christmas rush for an evening

CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS

At May Street Church

**JOIN US FOR A MAGICAL CHRISTMAS EVENING
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CAROLS PERFORMED BY A SELECTION OF
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AND PRESENTED BY SPECIAL GUEST

TINA CAMPBELL



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May Street
City Centre Church 

URBAN SOUL

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Ireland
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and to sit back and reflect on the true meaning of Christmas.”

Arthur Acheson, clerk of session at May Street Presbyterian Church, said they were delighted to be providing a venue for the concerts. He said: “Our church is increasingly in demand as a location for events such as the recent West Side Story show performed by Music Theatre for Youth. We are grateful to the schools and other organisations for making their choirs available for this event at what is a busy time of year for them.”



Making music: Television presenter Tina Campbell launches the upcoming Celebrating Christmas programme of concerts at May Street Church in Belfast in company of four members of 3rd Newtownabbey BB company's band. From left are flautists Simon McCartney, Joshua Doig and Ashley Sofley, along with drummer Neil Daconceicao. Also pictured are Matt Baird from Urban Soul and Erika Reid from Music Theatre for Youth.

Avril Gracey, manageress of Urban Soul Cafe, the church's outreach project, said they would be providing seasonal fare for the concerts. She added: “Our cafe opens six days a week and we are finding increasing numbers of people coming in to take a breather from the Christmas shopping. We pride ourselves in providing an oasis in the midst of a bustling city centre and people just love the calming atmosphere which the basement cafe creates.”

May Street is grateful to Paul Boyd, an active Urban Soul Cafe supporter, who has taken on the responsibility of organising the concerts, co-ordinating the programme, handling lighting and sound and overseeing health and safety.

Paul said: “It's very important to me that everyone realises (by the very name) our purpose of gathering is ‘to respect and celebrate the true meaning of Christmas’ and ‘to respect the church as a place of worship’ in which we are staging these two concerts.

“This is a real team effort and I'm grateful for the support I have received so far. On the night we will need more people to help, both in terms of providing refreshments and acting as stewards, so don't hold back.

“I hope that with lots of people coming, we will really put May Street Church and Urban Soul Cafe on the map, and be able to show off the superb work being done by everyone. We want to underline to everyone just how wonderful May Street Church is, every single day, with so much to offer.”

- Please give this venture your support. Tickets for the concerts, priced at £5 per person, are available from Urban Soul Cafe at May Street Church, telephone 028 9032 5554, or by email from urbansoulcafe@live.com

ROBIN MORTON

URBAN SOUL CAFE

What a month it has been in Urban Soul Cafe at May Street. The cast of the Music Theatre 4 Youth (MT4Uth) musical, West Side Story, brought a buzz to Urban Soul at the end of October with all their youthful energy and noise. We were working with MT4Uth to cater for the cast during rehearsals and their performances. We catered for over 500 meals during that time and it was a very definitely “all hands on deck” time.

Jean McCrum from May Street organised a rota for extra help from the ladies of the church, and they got involved in everything from making the lunchtime sandwiches, loading the dishwasher, clearing tables, cleaning up the kitchen and putting out the waste. We could not have done it without them and it was great to have a real team effort.

We were busy not just during the day but also during the afternoon and evening performances. We opened the cafe to provide refreshments for those attending the performances and also sold soft drinks and confectionery from tables set up in the vestibule.



Grub's up: Delegates from Mandate refuel during their dinner date at Urban Soul on November 12.

It was a useful fundraiser but also a valuable opportunity for new visitors to discover the delights of the cafe. We got much favourable feedback and we hope that many of those who were suitably impressed will call in again for coffee or lunch.

It was a daunting prospect but the whole week worked out really well, thanks in great measure to so much voluntary help from so many May Street members, along with other friends and family.

It is always dangerous to name names and please forgive us if we have left anyone's name out. But we cannot let the occasion pass with expressing special thanks to the May Street team - Betty McKeown, Bertha Rowe, Valerie Morton, Elizabeth Acheson, Valerie Condy, Ruby Fannin, Kathleen Rea, Chris Hewitt, May Mercer and Winifred Connor. We are so grateful for their time and enthusiasm in being part of Urban Soul team operating the dining room in the schoolroom.

Thanks also to the gents who gave up their time to steward the event and to man the soft drinks stands in the vestibule – Arthur Acheson, Arthur Fannin, Robin Morton, Brian Gourley, and Colin Johnston. Then we also had help from supporters David McAuley and Charlotte Murtagh. It all helped give the right impression of Urban Soul to a new audience.

Life goes on with the usual daytime customers and regular groups who pop in for their coffee or lunch. We have maintained the morning offer of £2 for a coffee and scone, and it continues to be a popular choice. Lunch offers of homemade soup and sandwich and the toasted sodas with bacon and scrambled egg have regular customers too.

In addition to our daytime duties we have entertained a number of evening groups recently. The bookings have included a Girls Brigade youth leaders evening, the objective being to use the cafe to give the young GB leaders time out for training and encouragement.

Carol Johnston, the young adults coordinator in Church House used the cafe for an acoustic evening with the GAP year team. They are planning a further event in the New Year. We are delighted to have such groups involved with Urban Soul and look forward to organising more events with them.

Mandate always is a day we look forward to every year as the annual Saturday lunchtime booking means we need man-size sandwiches and warm soups and stews. Catering in the evening involves delivering a hot dinner to a large group in quick order so that they can return for their last session in the Waterfront Hall. This year the event took place on the weekend of November 12. We catered for 50 in the cafe over lunchtime and 30 for dinner. Thanks again to Jean McCrum, Ruby Fannin, Arthur Fannin and May Mercer. We even roped in Erika Reid and Laura Boyd from MT4Uth at lunchtime. Everyone was needed to help make things run smoothly.

We were pleased to hear that some of the Mandate group returned to May Street on the Sunday morning to take part in the Remembrance Day service. Evidently they contributed manfully

to the singing, so the refreshments they received must have gone down well!

Because of Urban Soul's proximity to the City Hall, we usually get bookings for ladies groups during December. The groups usually combine a visit to Urban Soul with a trip to the Continental Market or a visit to the shops. This year we are looking forward to hosting the Alpha away day for Willowfield and Mount Merrion Parish Church groups, and to entertaining a group from Ballymena.

Looking ahead, the Celebrating Christmas plans are being finalised and a wide variety of school choirs and BB bands will be taking part in the concerts on the evenings of Thursdays December 1 and 8. Urban Soul supporter Paul Boyd has been leading this event with Avril Gracey, the cafe manager, and they have connected with schools and youth groups from Belfast and from as far afield as Ballynahinch and Coleraine.

This is going to be a great Christmas Celebration with so many young people seeking to share with their audience the beautiful message of Jesus coming to bring salvation to all and leave lasting melodies in their minds. Don't miss it as there are almost 400 young people performing. See details on page three of The Greeting and make sure you buy your tickets from Urban Soul before they are all gone.

AVRIL GRACEY AND RUBY HUTCHINSON

TUESDAY CIRCLE

We start this month with the sad news that one of our members, Dorrie Morton, has passed away. Dorrie was a member of the Tuesday Circle for many years and a very faithful one. She and I travelled to our meetings together, as we lived close to each other in the country. It was lovely having her company on the way to the meetings at May Street.

It was usually an uneventful trip but one cold night we left Belfast to drive home and as we left the city lights behind it got very frosty - and then snow started to fall and we found the car could not negotiate the hills. We had to abandon the

vehicle and call in reinforcements in the form of a husband who had to come to our rescue. We were both transported home safely but we often would recall that night and laugh about it although it was scary at the time.

In recent years Dorrie had been unable to attend our meetings as she was resident in a nursing home, due to failing health. We all have very fond memories of her and her years with us. Our members Kathleen Rea and Patricia McCrossan have lost their dear sister, Joanne Simms and Janet Booker an aunt and we want them to know that we remember them with love and sympathy.

In September our meetings were to start with a flower arranging night but as I was the one doing the demonstration and had sudden illness in my family we had to make other arrangements but as we know the Tuesday Circle ladies are versatile and alternative plans were quickly made.

The October night has become a regular sports occasion when all the ladies descend on Dundonald Ice Bowl, not to ice skate as you may imagine but to have an evening ten pin bowling. We all arrived full of enthusiasm and I think some had been putting in some practice as I heard comments of recent outings to the venue! However we soon sorted out the teams and captains, and the fun started.

Some showed that the practice had paid off and others vowed that next year they would prepare better. A great night was had with Heather Johnston proving to be the best player on the night and going home with the prize. We finished off our time there with a welcome cup of tea and biscuits. To all those who did not win - better luck next year!

For our meeting in November we had a toast master to speak to us and he brought us some interesting tales of the many functions at which he has officiated and the famous people he has met. More details in the next issue of The Greeting.

As usual December will be another fun night only we will also have a lovely meal prepared by our own ladies and served in the lecture hall and

I am sure there will be some lively entertainment as well. We look forward to that and take this opportunity to wish all our readers a very happy Christmas and a healthy new year.

ENA KIRKPATRICK
Secretary

DORRIE MORTON

It is with regret that we record the death of May Street member Dorrie Morton, who passed away peacefully on November 4. Dorrie had been in residential care at a home in Carryduff for the past nine years and had been faithfully visited by the family circle throughout that time.



Happy memories: Pictured at Portballintrae is Dorrie Morton, who died on November 4.

We extend our sympathy to her husband Stanley and to her siblings, Margaret, Patricia, Kathleen and Ernest. She was pre-deceased by her twin sister, Betty. May Street was well represented at the funeral service, which took place at the Ravenhill Funeral Church on November 8.

In her teenage years, Dorrie was a keen member of the May Street girls' club and was a captain of the May Street tennis club, which had courts at Rosetta Drive. In later years she was actively involved in all aspects of catering at the church, including the weekly Thursday lunches and the monthly BB Officers' lunch.

The funeral service was conducted by Dorrie's

brother, the Rev Ernest Rea, who is a regular broadcaster on BBC Radio 4. Colin Johnston, the May Street organist, played at the service.

In his address Ernest acknowledged that the last years of Dorrie's life had been very difficult, but he recalled earlier years in which she had been a "vibrant lovely person who brought joy to so many lives".

He said: "Dorrie was a wonderful home maker and her home was warm, elegant and welcoming. I think back to the dinner parties which Stanley and she hosted at Drumbo. She took such pride in these gatherings, in providing hospitality for people whom she loved and who loved her."

Ernest highlighted his sister's creative side, and recalled that Stanley and she had undertaken classes in order to restore antique furniture. He said they managed to create things of beauty from items of furniture which other people might have consigned to the scrapheap.

"I remember the happy summers Dorrie and Stanley spent in their caravan in Cloughey," he said. "She loved the simplicity of it, and it gave her enormous pleasure to sit on a summer's evening, looking out across the sea. She and Stanley generously made that experience available to all of us, inviting us to share time down there."

Dorrie, he added, loved being part of a large family, and revelled in the huge collection of uncles, aunts, cousins, nieces and nephews. But Ernest recalled that Dorrie was much affected by the death of Betty, her twin sister. He said: "A little bit of Dorrie perished with Betty."

In conclusion, Ernest said that despite the impact of dementia on Dorrie, it was important to realise that God had not forgotten her. This, he said, was one of the realities he tried to hold onto when he visited Dorrie.

He said: "Now that her anguish is over, and Dorrie is herself again, we can entrust her to the love of the God who said: 'Even though you walk through the valley of death, I am with you.' May she rest in peace and rise in glory."

ROBIN MORTON

CONGREGATIONAL REGISTER

DEATH

November 4: Mrs Dorrie Morton

Blessed are those that die in the Lord

THE CHOIR

In October the choir sang an introit and then a short anthem as part of the Harvest Thanksgiving service. We were pleased to take part in the service and give thanks to those who took time and trouble to decorate the church so effectively for the service.

We are now starting rehearsals for the carol service which takes place in May Street on Sunday December 18 (11am). We look forward to seeing a good congregation for this special service.

We express sympathy to choir member Kathleen Rea on the loss of her beloved sister Dorrie. We want Kathleen to know that she is very much in the thoughts and prayers of the choir at this difficult time.

As members of the congregation will be aware, the choir has been temporarily displaced from the choir stalls, which have been covered over by the staging for West Side Story and for the Celebrating Christmas events in December.

We appreciate the need for May Street to reach a wider audience and raise funds by providing a venue for concerts and in the interim, the members of the choir have taken seats within the congregation. However, we look forward to the day when we can resume our normal perch in the choir stalls.

We particularly appreciate the efforts of our organist, Colin Johnston, who in common with his Thursday counterpart Charles Maginnes, has had to clamber in through the scaffolding to reach his seat at the organ Sunday by Sunday. It takes more than an obstacle course to deter the May Street organists!

And congratulations to Colin on celebrating his 60th birthday on November 21. The birthday boy was congratulated by Arthur Acheson, our clerk of session, at morning service on November 20 and later an impromptu chorus of "Happy Brithday" was heard resounding from the kitchen. As Arthur says, 60 is the new 40 and Colin is living proof of that.

Finally, thanks to my fellow choir members and also the many members of the congregation who extended good wishes to me on my recent trip with Tearfund to Uganda and Rwanda. It was a most moving experience and I was greatly strengthened by the knowledge that so many people were remembering me in their prayers. I look forward to sharing something of what I saw with the congregation in due course.

VALERIE MORTON
Secretary

BIRTHDAY BOY



Number's up: Many happy returns to May Street organist Colin Johnston who celebrated his 60th birthday on November 21.

VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY

As intimated in the last issue of The Greeting, choir secretary Valerie Morton has been taking part in a Tearfund trip to Africa. Valerie was a member of a party of 10 from Northern Ireland which spent 10 days during November in Uganda and Rwanda inspecting various projects which Tearfund is backing.

Before she left, Valerie used the occasion of the Harvest Thanksgiving service at May Street to share some details of the forthcoming trip with members of the congregation. She said Tearfund's philosophy was to work with its partner churches in both countries, the idea being to empower local people and to support their work.



Departure time: Valerie Morton (left), journalist Alf McCreary and Caroline Bradley, Tearfund Northern Ireland's volunteer coordinator, make final preparations before their departure from Belfast City Airport for Kigali in Rwanda on November 12.

Valerie said that her decision to embark on the Tearfund trip had been sparked by a Thursday lunchtime service at May Street which was addressed by a Dr Mathew, who had set up Emmanuel Christian Hospital in northern India. Tearfund had backed the initiative, other funders came on board and suddenly a project which had looked hopelessly ambitious became a reality. With prayer, support from the right people and a sense of purpose they had managed to raise enough money. Today, a modern hospital was helping to turn people's lives round in India.

This, Valerie said, was a story of hope and one which had inspired her to find out more about Tearfund. She told how she had prayed for guidance and felt directed to pursue my interest.

The result was that she had decided earlier

this year to step outside her comfort zone and join the Tearfund trip to Uganda and Rwanda. The party included two Tearfund representatives, two businessmen, a solicitor, a human resources manager, a pastor, a full-time church worker and journalist Alf McCreary. All the volunteers were self-financing.



Fresh supply: A local person fills a container with fresh water thanks to one of the schemes in Uganda backed by Tearfund.

Valerie told the congregation that Tearfund's philosophy was not to rely on "hand me outs" but to use "hand me ups" to help those in need. She said: "You will have heard this saying before: Give a man a fish and feed him for a day. Give him a fishing rod, teach him how to fish and you will feed him all his days. But Tearfund goes beyond that, because we all know that the rod can snap.

"Tearfund's aim is to show the fisherman how to make another rod. Its strategy is to facilitate local churches to unlock the potential of every individual. And its vision, over the next 10 years, is to see 50 million people released from material and spiritual poverty through its network of 100,000 congregations."

Valerie said that despite the challenges, the situation in Rwanda and Uganda was far from hopeless. The projects she was to visit included water purification and sanitation schemes, an HIV/AIDS project, educational programmes, agricultural developments and small business start-ups.

CHRISTMAS GIFT DAY

May Street's annual Christmas Gift Day will take place on Sunday December 4, so please come to church armed with your presents. As usual we will place our presents under the Christmas tree but you don't need to wrap them up.

A representative from Thorndale Families Centre and Women's Hostel, which is based at Duncairn Gardens in north Belfast, will be present to receive the much needed presents, and to tell us something of the work of the centre.

Thorndale is a residential family centre which provides accommodation and support for 38 families. It provides intensive parenting capacity assessment and resettlement support. It is a voluntary housing association and is faith based, being run by the Salvation Army.

The age range of the children they assist runs from babes in arms to teenagers, so please bear that in mind when you are deciding which presents to donate. The children and their mothers are much in need of our support.

As someone said to me: "They haven't got much." But I know that, based on previous years' experience, the members of May Street will respond generously on December 4.

Very many thanks in advance.

JENNY WILSON

CHRISTMAS POST

Thanks to Elizabeth Doran who is organising the Christmas post at May Street once again. This enables members of the congregation to exchange cards without having to go through the channels of the Post Office.

This year, the posting dates are Sundays December 4 and 11. Please note that the cut-off date for posting cards is December 11. Deliveries will be made on December 11 and 18, but no cards can be accepted on December 18.

Please ensure that the recipient is likely to be in a position to receive your card, and please address all envelopes clearly. We are very grateful to Elizabeth for undertaking this role. There is no charge, but those who are using the service are invited to use one of the WFO envelopes to make a donation to the May Street Flower Fund in lieu of postage costs.

CHRISTMAS DAY

This Christmas May Street is joining forces with the fellow city centre congregation of Berry Street for a united Christmas Day service. The service will take place in Berry Street and starts at 11am on December 25 and will be conducted by the Rev Robert Love, minister of Taughmonagh and vacancy convenor at Berry Street. We invite all members of the congregation to give this service their support.

PRESIDENTIAL GREETING

May Street congregation sent a letter of thanks to President Mary McAleese for the role she had played in promoting peace and reconciliation during her 14-year term as President of Ireland. In the letter, congregational secretary Robin Morton recalled the visit made to her official residence of Aras an Uachtarain in Dublin by a joint group from May Street and St Malachy's. He also made mention of the occasion on which the President was welcomed to May Street lecture hall where she met a group comprising members of May Street and St Malachy's.

The letter was acknowledged by the President's secretary, who said: "President McAleese has asked me to convey to you her deep appreciation of your very kind remarks about her time in office. The President has asked me to let you know that it has been her great privilege to represent the people of Ireland, home and abroad, who sense of community, creativity and generosity have been a constant source of inspiration throughout the last 14 years."

PEACEMAKING GROUP

Thanks are expressed to Brian Gourley, who read a lesson behalf of May Street at the annual cross-community Prayers for Peace service at Belmont Presbyterian Church on Remembrance Day, November 13.

May Street was also represented at an inter-denominational service entitled In Joyful Hope which was held at St Malachy's Church in Alfred Street on Wednesday November 23.

Plans are in hand for a visit to Parliament Buildings in the New Year. This event is being organised in conjunction with DUP South Belfast Assembly member Jimmy Spratt.

REMEMBRANCE DAY



Colour party: Pictured after the wreath laying ceremony at the World War One memorial in the vestibule at May Street are (from left) Patrick Ferguson, Alan McCrum and Barry Bell.

Two wreaths were laid at May Street on Remembrance Day, Sunday November 13. Thanks to Barry Bell and Alan McCrum for laying the wreaths, and to the Boys' Brigade buglers who joined us for the ceremony after participating in the act of remembrance at the City Hall.

As part of the service, May Street member Winifred Connor recited a poem entitled Remembrance Sonnet, written by her late brother, George Haslett Connor.

CONGREGATIONAL CENSUS

Members of the congregation and visitors are being invited to take part in a census being conducted on behalf of South Belfast Presbytery. The forms will be handed out by stewards in the vestibule on the mornings of Sundays November 27 and December 4. Please take one on both Sundays and return it to the stewards.

FIELDS OF LIFE

Plans are being made by Basement Worship for two concerts in May Street which will be fundraisers for Third World charity Fields of Life. They are scheduled to take place on Friday December 16 and Saturday December 17. Please ask at Urban Soul Cafe for more information.

WEST SIDE STORY

Music Theatre 4 Youth has just completed its most high-profile production to date when a 40 strong cast of 16-24 year olds from all over Ireland performed West Side Story in May Street Church as part of The Ulster Bank Belfast Festival at Queen's in October.



All action: Some of the cast of West Side Story in action on the stage that was specially erected in May Street Church for the Music Theatre for Youth production in October.

We were delighted to have been invited to perform in the Belfast Festival. We received rave reviews and became one of the festival highlights of 2011 as the excellent review in the Belfast

Telegraph proved. Gratifyingly, it even referred to the “toasty hot” church.

This production of West Side Story was a full blown, site specific show with set, lights, costumes and much more. We were delighted to have gained sponsorship from Goldblatt McGuigan, funding from Arts Council NI and Foyle Foundation along with in-kind support from Production House Ireland, MGTV, Boyd Partnership Architects and The Tech Factory amongst many others.

We are also very grateful to Mark Huffam, MT4Uth board member, for involving HBO’s Game of Thrones Construction Manager, Tom Martin, in the construction of the fabulous set in the church. The church provided a fantastic setting for this production, giving atmosphere and something a little different for theatre goers. These elements all came together to make an amazing piece of musical theatre for this year’s festival.

Brian Martin, Acapple Construction, commented: “I just wanted to say a huge congratulations on a successful production of “West Side Story”. We were blown away by the performance. The band were wonderful, lighting was great, everything was executed with professionalism, and the talent was amazing. I would have considered them very confident and mature performances even for people twice their age. It was obvious that an incredible amount of time and energy went into the production. Well done again, and good luck with future productions!”

May Street Church offered an excellent site specific venue for this musical production. MT4Uth is working closely with May Street Church to make this venue a real asset to Belfast’s cultural landscape.

Arthur Acheson, May Street clerk of session, commented: “With MT4Uth charity now working out of the extensive church premises there is a growing sense of purposeful co-operation with the city centre’s cultural and artistic life - the new life that continues to keep the spotlight on Belfast. We thoroughly enjoyed West Side Story, it was the

biggest, brightest and loudest event in the church - ever!”

Jenny Cooke, CEO of MT4Uth, said: “To produce a production with an all-Ireland cast given only two weeks of rehearsals instead of our usual “Musical in a weekend” is what we have always dreamt of. West Side Story in May Street Church was a production that thoroughly delighted and entertained an audience of over 1,500 people from across Ireland and even Europe. The charity is going from strength to strength and we look forward to the exciting 2012 programme and beyond.”

ERIKA REID
Production & Communications Manager
Music Theatre for Youth

TWIN TREASURES



Scottish connection: May Street clerk of session Arthur Acheson and his wife Elizabeth with their grandson Elliot and their newly born grandchildren, Bethanie and Isabelle, just a week after the babies were born in Edinburgh on September 27. Parents Graham and Melanie Acheson are being kept busy and all three children are thriving. To help tell the twins apart, the hospital put a little daub of nail varnish on one baby’s toenail.

DEADLINE

The deadline for all contributions to the next issue of The Greeting is Sunday
February 5

COLLECTORS

- Dec:** Kathleen Rea, Robin Morton,
Jenny Wilson, Arthur Fannin.
- Jan:** Gordon Kirkpatrick, Brian Gourley,
Valerie Condy, Clive Gilmour.
- Feb:** Kathleen Rea, Alan McCrum,
Barry Bell, Robin Hewitt.

BELFAST NASHVILLE FESTIVAL

Plans are taking shape for the 8th Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Festival and Songwriting Convention, one of the venues for which will be May Street Church. The concerts are due to take place on the evenings of Thursday February 23, Friday February 24 and Saturday February 25 (7.30pm doors open, 8.15pm concert starts).



Music man: John Oates of American musical duo Hall & Oates who will be playing May Street Church on Thursday February 23.

The Thursday evening event will take the form of an "In the Round" concert, and will feature John Oates (of American duo Hall & Oates), Iain Archer and Gareth Dunlop.

On Friday February 24 we will welcome back Nanci Griffith and her band in concert. Legendary singing star Nanci Griffith has played May Street

at several previous Belfast Nashville festivals and loves the venue.

Still to be announced is the line-up for the third concert, on Saturday February 26. Details will be announced in the newspapers, or else check it out at www.belfastnashville.com or ring 028 9024 6609.

Panarts director Colin Magee said: "We are delighted to be able to use May Street Church once again – it is a beautiful building with excellent acoustics and a popular venue with artistes and audiences.

"We started these unique music events in Belfast and Nashville eight years ago and work with international performers who are willing to share a stage with great local artistes. The 'Songwriters In The Round' gigs have become our most popular events and give a real boost to emerging writers. We also attract an audience from many different countries, helping the local economy during the quiet winter months."

Rosa Solinas, head of music, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, commented: "The Belfast Nashville Festival places songwriters centre stage, providing a platform for them to develop their craft and perform alongside some of the most celebrated names in the business. It raises the international profile of the music and musicians emerging from this island, which is very good news for Northern Ireland."

CONGREGATIONAL COMMITTEE

A meeting of the congregational committee will take place at 7.30pm on Thursday January 12, followed by a meeting of Kirk Session.

THORNS IN THE STRAW

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Since the day the angel came
It seemed that everything had changed

JESUS LOVES ME

The only certain thing
Was the child that moved within
On the road that would not end
Winding down to Bethlehem
So far away from home

Just a blanket on the floor
Of a vacant cattle-stall
But there the child was born
She held him in her arms
And as she laid him down to sleep
She wondered - will it always be
So bitter and so sweet

And did she see there
In the straw by his head a thorn
And did she smell myrrh
In the air on that starry night
And did she hear angels sing
Not so far away
Till at last the sun rose blood-red
In the morning sky

Then the words of ancient seers
Tumbled down the centuries ...
A virgin shall conceive...
God with us... Prince of Peace
Man of Sorrows - strangest name
Oh Joseph there it comes again
So bitter yet so sweet

And as she watched him through the years
Her joy was mingled with her tears
And she'd feel it all again
The glory, and the shame
And when the miracles began
She wondered, who is this man
And where will this all end

'Til against a darkening sky
The son she loved was lifted high
And with his dying breath
She heard him say 'Father forgive'
And to the criminal beside
"Today-with me in Paradise"
So bitter yet so sweet

Jesus loves me, this I know
Though my hair is white as snow.
Though my sight is growing dim
Still He bids trust in Him.

Though my steps are oh! so slow
With my hands in His, I'll go.
On through life, let come what may,
He'll be there to lead the way.

Though I am no longer young,
I have much which He's begun
Let me serve Christ with a smile,
Go with others the extra mile.

When the nights are dark and long,
In my heart He puts a song,
Telling me in words so clear,
'Have no fear, for I am near.'

When my work on earth is done,
And life's victories have been won,
He will take me home above,
Then I'll understand His love.

I love Jesus, does He know?
Have I ever told Him so?
Jesus loves to hear me say
That I love Him every day.

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THURSDAY SERVICES

The May Street Thursday service on December 15 will take the form of a carol service, so please come along and join the regulars. The service starts at 1.05pm and refreshments will be available beforehand and afterwards at Urban Soul Cafe. The service will be conducted by Dr Rodger Crooks, the May Street vacancy convenor, and the organist will be Charles Maginnes. So don't miss this occasion.

There will be no Thursday service on December 22 or 29, but the programme of lunchtime services will resume on Thursday January 5, when Dr Crooks will again be the preacher.

NEW GENERATION



Helping hands: *May Street members Gordon and Ena Kirkpatrick with their grandchildren Holly (aged three) and Charlie Sam Kirkpatrick (aged seven weeks). Charlie, son of Colin and Pamela Kirkpatrick from Saintfield, was born on August 24 and weighed 7lbs 11oz. According to Pamela, Holly is delighted to be a big sister and has been fantastic with Charlie!*

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

A woman was posting an old family bible to her brother abroad and you know all the questions you get asked when you are at the wrong side of a desk.

At the Post Office the clerk asked her "Is there anything breakable in this parcel?"

Quick as a flash she replied: "Only the Ten Commandments."

Someone said: "The Ten Commandments are not like an examination paper you know, ten questions attempt any four!"

The Ten Commandments are like a chain - break one link and the whole chain is broken.

Sadly, many people today do not know the Ten Commandments-

God's basic laws for human life.

Children are no longer taught them.

Elton Trueblood turned them into a poem:

1. Above all else love God alone;
2. Bow down to neither wood nor stone.
3. God's name refuse to take in vain;
4. The Sabbath rest with care maintain.
5. Respect your parents all your days;
6. Hold sacred human life always.
7. Be loyal to your chosen mate;
8. Steal nothing, neither small nor great.
9. Report, with truth, your neighbour's deed;
10. And rid your mind of selfish greed.

Contributed by the Rev Alastair Kennedy

GO YOU

If you have been wandering down many dark and doubtful ways.

Let the babe of bethlehem lead you back to childhood days.

If life's treasure you would find -

The peace that lasts forevermore,

Go you with a childlike heart

And knock upon the stable door.

THIS IS THE TIME

This is the time to think of giving.

Nigh two thousand years ago

To the world God gave his Son.

What greater gift could love bestow ?

We, then, with a willing hand

Should share the goods that we possess -

Passing on our boons and blessings,

Giving help and happiness.

CHRISTMASTIME

Christmastime is like a lamp that lights the closing year.

A lamp that radiates a glow of charity and cheer.

A lamp that burns at every window with a golden ray,

And warms the heart in winter when your world seems cold and grey.

LOVE AT CHRISTMAS

There is a love that heralds Christmas
That transforms every heart,
And people in this whole wide world
Can really be a part.

Of sharing in the knowledge
That God loves them every one,
And came to dwell among them
In the presence of his son.

He came to earth a tiny babe,
His birthplace was a stall
Because for him there was no room,
Yet he was lord of all.

The shepherds came to welcome him,
His star had led them there.
The magi too brought him their gifts,
Gold, frankincense and myrrh.

We too can honour him today
If we would play our part,
And give to him our offering
Of humble thankful hearts.

THINK ON THIS:

Let us with humble hearts repair,
Faith will point out the road
To little Bethlehem, and there
Adore our infant god.
In swaddling bands the saviour view -

Let none this weakness scorn:
The feeblest heart shall hell subdue,
Where Jesus Christ is born.
No pomp adorns, no sweet perfumes
The place where Christ is laid;
A stable serves him for his room,
A manger is his bed.
The crowded inn, like sinners' hearts,
(Oh, ignorance extreme!)
For other guests of various sorts
Had room, but none for him.

THERE'S A SONG IN THE AIR

There's a song in the Air!
There's a star in the sky!
There's a Mother's deep prayer
And a Baby's low cry
And the star rains its fire while the beautiful sing,
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!

There's a tumult of joy
O'er the wonderful birth,
For the Virgin's sweet boy
Is the Lord of the earth.
Ay, the star rains its fire while the beautiful sing,
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!

In the light of that star
lie the ages impearled,
And that song from afar
Has swept over the world:
Every hearth is aflame, and the beautiful sing,
In the homes of the nations, that Jesus is King!

We rejoice in the light,
And we echo the song
That comes down thro' the night
From the heavenly throng.
Ay, we shout to the lovely evangel they bring,
And we greet in His cradle our Saviour and King!

Poems contributed by Elizabeth Doran