



The Greeting

CONGREGATIONAL MAGAZINE OF MAY STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BELFAST

VOL 104 NO 1

Web site: www.maystreetchurch.co.uk

FEBRUARY 2012

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PRAY FOR YOUR PASTOR

"Pray...that...words may be given me..."
Ephesians 6:19

Paul wrote to the believers in Ephesus: "Pray... that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me...that I will fearlessly make known...the gospel." Do you pray for your pastor? You should! After Wilbur Chapman's first sermon at Bethany Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, a man said: "You're pretty young to be pastor of this great church. We've always had older men. I'm afraid you won't succeed, but since you preach the gospel I'm going to help you all I can." Chapman thought, "What a crank." But the man continued: "I'm going to pray for you, and a few others have covenanted to join me." Later, Chapman wrote: "I didn't feel so bad when I learned that they were going to pray for me. Soon the three became fifty, and the fifty became two hundred who met before every service to pray for me. In another room eighteen elders knelt so closely around me that I could put out my hand and touch them. I always went into my pulpit confident that I would

have God's anointing in answer to the prayers of those people. It was easy to preach, a real joy. And what was the result? Eleven hundred people were saved and joined the church in the next three years, and six hundred of them were men. It was the fruit of the Holy Spirit in answer to prayer. Church members have much more to do than go to church as curious, idle spectators to be amused and entertained. It is their business to pray mightily that the Holy Spirit will clothe the preacher with power and make his words like dynamite."

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Word for Today.

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the annual business meeting of May Street Presbyterian Church will take place in the sanctuary at 12 midday on Sunday March 11, immediately following morning service. Notification of this meeting has already been given by means of the Sunday service intimations.

The various reports which will be presented are printed in this copy of The Greeting. They will not be read out at the ABM but members of the congregation will have an opportunity to ask questions and raise matters of concern.

An election was held in 2011, and the existing committee elected for a three-year term. As a result, no election will be held this year.

The agenda for the meeting is printed below. Copies of the accounts will be distributed to all present. Please make every attempt to be present at this important meeting.

AGENDA

- 1 – Opening Prayer
- 2 – Apologies
- 3 – Adoption of minutes of 2011 ABM (already circulated by means of publication in The Greeting); (proposer and seconder needed)
- 4 – Matters arising
- 5 – Report of Kirk Session for year ending December 31, 2011 (Arthur Acheson)
- 6 – Report of Congregational Committee (Robin Morton)
- 7 – Report of Weekly Freewill Offering (Barry Bell)
- 8 – Report of Finance Committee and presentation of accounts (Andrew Acheson)
- 9 – Appointment of auditors
- 10 – Adoption of reports (proposer and seconder needed)
- 11 – Reports from congregational organisations:
 - The Choir
 - Tuesday Circle
 - Peace Agent
- 12 – Any other business
- 13 – Closing prayers

ROBIN MORTON
Congregational Secretary

KIRK SESSION

OCCUPY MAY STREET? YES WE DO!

It is now 30 months since we wrote our Mission Plan and we see continuing progress. The “OCCUPY!” movement has come to Belfast. Although “vacant”, we remain firmly “occupied”.

We bring increasing numbers of people to the church for a huge number of events and activities. Some of these are religious, some social and some cultural. They are all important, they change weekly and are summarised in the report of Congregational Committee.

Regular detailed coverage is provided in our congregational magazine, The Greeting, thanks to our dedicated Congregational Secretary and magazine editor, Robin Morton. With its inaugural colour supplement this year, The Greeting did full justice to the Grace and Truth flower festival which was held in May.

The late Senator Robert Kennedy reminded Americans that numbers can be useful to measure certain things...

“Yet the gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education, or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages; the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither our wit nor our courage; neither our wisdom nor our learning; neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country; it measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile.”

Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs was first produced in the 1930s. Various scholars have added to and interpreted the work, giving us eight “Levels” of needs. Basic physiological needs are at “Level 1” – clean air to breathe, water and food to sustain us. Shelter forms part of “Level 2”, along with resources. Friendship, family, confidence and achievement take us up the hierarchy towards morality, creativity and spirituality on “Level 8”. If Maslow’s hierarchy were a tall building, we would want to spend most of our time and energy on the top floor – but we recognise that the penthouse would be isolated and topple without the lower levels to provide support.

We thank our members and many supporters who recognise that buildings and finances are important to our continuing operation. People are generous at all “Levels”; spirituality, creativity, morality, achievement, confidence, family and friends are also vital to our work. Our hon treasurer,

Andrew Acheson, and our Weekly Freewill Offering convener, Barry Bell, keep us regularly updated. Our auditor, Gordon Kirkpatrick, gives us a consistent reference point. Fellow elders and committee members (we generally meet jointly) along with members and friends of the Urban Soul community, all help to keep our doors open and our mission clear.

May Street has had another exciting year as a vacant congregation.....Rodger Crooks' commitment to pastoral care, worship and leadership of our vacancy has been most heartening. None of us is afraid of innovation – indeed we thrive on it. Members and friends of May Street and Urban Soul have been constantly innovative and we have developed stronger relationships in the city centre, joining for worship in Berry Street on Christmas morning and encouraging Laganside Ministries, who find Urban Soul a good location for evening worship. Financial difficulties aside, May Street is in good heart and looks forward to a future of collaboration with other city centre groups and institutions. We will continue to lead some initiatives. On other occasions, it will be more appropriate to support projects that are already in place and encourage leadership by others.

“Statistics” – the reducing numbers in our Sunday morning congregation and our declining income – do not discourage us. Support continues from members, friends, charitable trusts and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland who all recognise that May Street plays an increasingly valuable part in the social, cultural and religious life of Belfast. Kirk Session has developed a simple vision for presentation to Presbytery that we believe will encourage support to retain traditional worship while allowing for innovation in church planning and planting.

ARTHUR ACHESON
Clerk of Session

CONGREGATIONAL COMMITTEE

Two major events dominated life during 2011 in May Street – our Grace and Truth Flower Festival in May and the West Side Story musical put on by Music Theatre for Youth in October. Both events

were showstoppers in their own right but along the way we had other highlights, most notably a new venture called Celebrate Christmas which filled the sanctuary for two Thursday evenings in early December. Throw in activities such as the three nights of concerts as part of the Belfast Nashville Festival in February and the European Heritage Open Day and you will begin to see just how busy things were.

Although our core congregation is small, May Street continues to punch above its weight. This is due to the unstinting efforts of those members of the congregation who give up countless hours of their own time to help the church prosper and to convey its Christian message to the wider public. But we also owe a debt of gratitude to a number of key people from beyond the immediate congregation who give valuable assistance week in, week out.

Outreach is the name of the game and we have a variety of means of making contact with people and welcoming them to our church. Our Sunday and Thursday services remain the cornerstone but our Urban Soul Cafe is the main channel of communication during the week.

Our cafe manager Avril Gracey and staff member, Matthew Baird, with much-needed back-up from members of the congregation, perform wonders day by day. Not only do they serve refreshments but Avril and her team also provide a listening ear and a safe venue for those who require it.

The events that are staged in our sanctuary range from musicals to concerts, some with a Christian bent, some without, but the important thing is that by opening our doors we remind people that the church is still there and still active. Week by week, we bring new people across the threshold. On most of the big occasions Urban Soul Cafe also opens for business and we are finding that we get quite a bit of repeat business from people who had not previously realised the basement cafe was in operation – or that it was able to provide such an agreeable ambience.

From the congregational committee's point of view the other key aspect of opening our premises to outside groups is that we expect them to make

a donation to the church's running costs. With overheads rising all the time, and numbers in the congregation gradually declining, it would be impossible for us to balance our books without this means of fundraising.

We are blessed by the foresight of our forefathers to have a neutral city centre location and this means that we can provide an attractive venue for those organising events. And special occasions such as Grace & Truth – a Bible Story in Flowers provide an opportunity to spread the Christian message and let the public come in and see a marvel of Georgian architecture.

The Bible Story in Flowers was a particularly effective means of promoting the Gospel. Each decoration took its theme from a verse in the Bible, and we found visitors spending some time contemplating each exhibit as they made their way through the church.

The event was organised as part of the celebrations to mark the 400th anniversary of the King James version of The Bible. The then Lord Mayor, Councillor Pat Convery, came to open the festival and over the four days we estimate we had around 1,000 visitors.

The event also provided a valuable means for our own church members to engage with visitors and show off our church. It was empowering for all those involved, and the feedback was most encouraging.

Most people in May Street take our organ for granted. But not so the English-based Incorporated Association of Organists who were holding a congress in Belfast in July.

Once they had left their bags at the Europa Hotel the delegates made a beeline for May Street to marvel at the pipe organ, provided by JJ Binns of Leeds in 1914 at a cost of £822. They enjoyed playing the organ, much cherished because it is in its original state.

Our resident organist Colin Johnston and Charles Maginnes, who plays on Thursdays, were able to field all their questions and facilitated the visitors in their inspection of the organ loft. Through the eyes of outsiders we were able to

appreciate what a gem we have in May Street.

Music Theatre for Youth set up its office in the Parlour in May Street in February and uses the lecture hall and the sanctuary for practices and performances. Its goal is to develop musical talent among young people, and the organisation reached a high standard at its West Side Story show in October. The week-long series of performances formed part of the Belfast Festival programme and helped to put us on the map. It was marvellous to see the enthusiasm and ability of the young people. It was a performance worthy of the West End!

More musical talent was on display in December at Celebrate Christmas. Our friend Paul Boyd, an ardent Urban Soul supporter, managed to enlist the services of compere Tina Campbell from UTV along with myriad school choirs, bands and an array of theatrical talent.

From Christmas carols to sketches, the young people reminded us of the true meaning of Christmas and in the midst of the Christmas rush, it was a refreshing and enriching occasion.

One challenge of the sanctuary's dual role is that from time to time we have to have staging erected in our sanctuary, which masks the beautiful woodwork of the choirstalls. The congregational committee is aware of the concerns of the congregation on this score, and its endeavour is to have the staging up for as short a time as possible.

While most of the new visitors we are attracting are welcome, some are not. May Street suffered a series of break-ins during February 2011, during which damage was done to our property. Security is constantly under review and we have installed a roller shutter door at the foot of our spiral stairs to restrict access to the sanctuary. In addition, our policy is to have the back door monitored at all times when the door is ajar.

Our building continues to suffer from wear and tear and committee has had to devote some time to organising remedial measures to prevent roofs leaking and floors creaking.

To leave our premises empty from Sunday to

Sunday would be a dereliction of duty and it is committee's objective to keep the building open for as many hours as possible during the week.

With Urban Soul operating Monday to Saturday and a new cafe church starting to develop on Sunday evenings, we are evolving into a seven-day operation. We play host to groups such as Weight Watchers and Women's World Day of Prayer, to the Boys' Brigade and the Mandate delegates.

But keeping the doors open and the lights on requires money, and we are grateful to bodies such as the Board of Mission in Ireland and the TBF Thompson Trust for their valued support for Urban Soul. We have also appreciated the support of the UnLtd organisation which has offered funding for two of our members to start a drop-in club in Urban Soul, as well as providing finance for lighting.

May Street's future remains uncertain, and we are acutely aware that we do not tick the boxes that Church House generally applies to congregations. We are a small congregation but our premises attract people from far and wide. We feel it is important for the Presbyterian Church to retain a presence in May Street, in the heart of the city centre.

The congregational committee is blessed in terms of our vacancy convenor, Dr Rodger Crooks, and our clerk of session, Arthur Acheson. Both provide leadership and direction and help us as we seek to discern God's purpose for May Street. Thanks too to all those in committee and congregation who have helped to make a difference over the past year. Many shoulders have been put to the wheel and cumulatively, we have been able to achieve a great deal.

Despite all the challenges, we face the future with confidence. But crucially, we ask for God's blessing on our endeavours.

ROBIN MORTON
Congregational Secretary

WEEKLY FREEWILL OFFERING

The Congregation continues to subscribe generously to our WFO although some members

have diverted their WFO givings to Urban Soul as the cafe becomes more important to our outreach mission.

There was a small decrease in our WFO of £659 year on year but the total still amounted to £16,074.50, a very respectable amount considering our small numbers.

Urban Soul, United Appeal, World Development, and Flower Fund are all requiring support in the future.

BARRY BELL
WFO Convenor

HON TREASURER'S REPORT

Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2011

2011 was a busy year at May Street, in which we have again striven to keep our expenditure within our income. This report is prepared in the absence of any figures for Urban Soul Cafe. Our cafe manager recently suffered the misfortune of having her computer stolen from the cafe, and it contained all the data for the cafe for the year. She is currently reconstituting all the accounts so we hope to be able to publish the figures in our audited account for the Annual Business Meeting in March.

Provisional figures for the main church account show that income exceeded expenditure by £4,405. Please note that due to South Belfast Presbytery's handling of our potential partnership with property developers Barnabas Ventures, May Street has lost £18,000 of income from Barnabas Ventures to date. As a result, we have withheld our PCI assessments since November 2010, amounting to £13,390 and Presbytery Fees of £623.

We also have an outstanding bill from Northern Ireland Water for £2,873. We have recently fixed a leak in the kitchen and I have submitted a "Leakage Report" to NI Water. We are hopeful of receiving a credit against the £2,873, but we have no guidance as to how much this might be and so the amount remains unpaid until we hear from NI Water.

Our opening balance was £14,667 (2010 £8,281), receipts £57,145 (2010: £56,272), payments £50,677 (2010: £51,007) leaving a closing balance of £21,135 (2010: £14,667).

It should be noted that if we were to pay our arrears to PCI and South Belfast Presbytery, and receive no leakage credit from NI Water, our balance would stand at £4,249. The Congregational Committee is of a mind that this is an unacceptable financial position, hence we have withheld these payments until we have satisfactory responses from PCI/South Belfast Presbytery and NI Water.

May I take this opportunity to thank our honorary auditor, Gordon Kirkpatrick, for his continued insight to ensure that picture presented is coherent. May I also thank the other members of the finance committee, our Weekly Freewill Offering convenor Barry Bell and our Clerk of Session Arthur Acheson.

ANDREW ACHESON
Honorary Treasurer

THE CHOIR

The choir continues to lead the praise in May Street Sunday by Sunday and also at special services on Palm Sunday, Easter Day, Harvest Thanksgiving and Christmas. Even though we were displaced from the choir stalls for a few months (because of staging required for various events) we were able to sit together within the congregation. We all enjoyed having other members of the congregation in close proximity and feel that we all helped to encourage each other's singing.

All members of the choir contributed to many of the events held in May Street throughout the year. These ranged from the 7th Belfast Nashville Songwriters Festival, the Grace and Truth Flower Festival, European Heritage Open Day, to the celebrating Christmas evenings in December. Our organist, Colin Johnston, and Charles Maginess, who plays at our Thursday Services, contributed to some of these events by providing organ recitals. These were greatly appreciated by the many visitors who supported the events.

Choir member Ruby Fannin has been busy researching some aspects at May Street's history. Firstly she compiled a pamphlet about the history of our famous Binns Organ. In addition she created a file containing the original items of correspondence between May Street and JJ Binns of Leeds. These proved to be a great source of interest to the organists to the organists who visited May Street in July as part of the programme for the annual congress of the Incorporated Association of Organists.

Secondly, for European Heritage Day in September, Ruby compiled a brief life story of each of May Street's past ministers. The easily digested information was presented on a small display panel complete with photograph of the relevant cleric. This helped to bring their stories to life. Hence our visitors appreciated not just the architecture of our 1829 - built church but also began to absorb some of the social history associated with May Street.

In closing I would like to thank our organist, Colin Johnston, for keeping us in the tune week by week and for his contribution to worship in May Street.

VALERIE MORTON
Secretary

TUESDAY CIRCLE

The Tuesday Circle is reaching the end of another season and our numbers much as they were last year. We have had an entertaining programme with as always the emphasis is on camaraderie and fun. Our programme was as follows:-

September - Flower arranging had been organised for this Tuesday which was to be demonstrated by one of our members but due to sudden serious illness in her family it was cancelled. Janet Booker once again stepped into the breach and organised an evening of games.

October - This month has now been established as the annual ten pin bowling tournament. I realised it was not as easy as it looked and our younger members showed us how it should be done. Heather Johnston was the winner. So here's to next year.

PEACE AGENT

November - We had the toast master on this occasion. We heard how he came into this unusual job, and how now he carries out his duties at all the important events in the province. He has met most of the important people that we can think of including members of the royal family.

December - Our annual Christmas dinner. No snow, no frost, a perfect night for travelling and so no worries. Our meal went ahead and as usual was prepared by the ladies committee and again as usual it was delicious. Janet Booker and Ena Kirkpatrick arranged some light hearted entertainment.

January - A speaker from The Christian Blind Organisation spoke to us of this very worthwhile work. Everyone said it was a good evening.

February - Speaker still to be finalised at the time of writing. We hope to have a mini sale of superfluous gifts and extra items we may have at home. This is to raise some extra funds.

March - The flower arranging demonstration that was postponed from September will hopefully take place. This will be presented by one of our members. We also plan some swapping of plant cuttings, as we know that gardeners always love the challenge of trying to grow something from a cutting. We also hope to hold a short annual meeting to elect office bearers and committee.

In November we mourned the passing of Dorrie Morton. Dorrie was a long time member of the Tuesday Circle and a very faithful attender. She was not able to attend our meeting in the last few years as was in a nursing home due to ill health. We all valued her friendship and send our sympathies to her sisters Patricia McCrossan our president, and Kathleen Rea, our treasurer, also her nieces Janet Booker and Joanne Sims and the whole family circle.

We no longer carry out catering events in our own right but help out in Urban Soul when called upon. The fund-raising this year will be the mini sale mentioned earlier.

Again we send out an invitation to any lady who would like to join us on the fourth Tuesday in each month. You will be made most welcome.

ENA KIRKPATRICK
Secretary

Fr Michael McGinnity, the parish priest at our neighbouring St Malachy's Church, invited the inter agency group members of St George's Parish Church in High Street, Belmont, Fitzroy and May Street Presbyterian Churches to Alfred Street for a meeting to discuss future projects. Continuing co-operation was agreed.

St George's Church invited all comers to music in the church and Scottish Country dancing in the hall on Culture Night in September - Elizabeth and Arthur Acheson joined in.

Belmont Presbyterian Church invited members of the other churches to a Remembrance Day Sunday evening service attended by May Street members Robin Morton, Kathleen Rea and May Mercer, with Brian Gourley reading a lesson on behalf of May Street.

St Malachy's Church hosted a service of commemoration of St Columbanus in November at which Arthur Acheson was invited to read a passage of scripture.

A further joint meeting to plan activities will be called early in 2012 and I invite all May Street members and friends to suggest opportunities for joint events.

ARTHUR ACHESON
Peace Agent

URBAN SOUL

December was a busy month in the cafe and with two Celebrate Christmas concerts, on December 1 and December 8, it was a case of all hands on deck. The school choirs and music and drama groups all added to two wonderful evenings. The harps looked splendid on the stage and the BB drummers who played in the dark with illuminated drumsticks stand out. Our compere Tina Campbell from UTV really made the evenings so professional. Concert supremo Paul Boyd and cafe manager Avril Gracey are to be commended for organising these concerts and creating such happy evenings. One visitor said it was great value for a fiver.

CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS CONCERTS AT MAY STREET

May Street Church resounded to the sound of school choirs, a Boys' Brigade band, drummers, harpists and soloists on two never to be forgotten Thursday nights in December. It was Celebrate Christmas, which took place on Thursdays December 1 and 8, and it exceeded everyone's expectations. Thanks to Urban Soul stalwart Paul Boyd and cafe manageress Avril Gracey for organising and co-ordinating the event. It was a reminder of the true meaning of Christmas and with compere Tina Campbell in charge, it was a thoroughly professional occasion.

Pictures by Andy Boal



Harpists from the Belfast School of Music



Ruby Fannin from May Street does a Scripture reading.



A member of the BB band shows off his musical talent.



Members of Youth Lyric perform a sketch about Santa Claus and his sleigh.



The leader of Ps 150 Mersey Street band.



The drummer from 3rd Newtownabbey BB band keeps everyone in step.



A soloist from Grosvenor Grammar School sings out.



The choir from Assumption Grammar School, Ballynahinch, fills the stage at May Street.



Belfast Drum Circle entertains the audience at May Street.



Tina Campbell from UTV acted as compare at both concerts.

We shared the ticket sales with NI Children's Hospice and are delighted to have been able to present this good cause with a cheque for £500. We had sponsorship for the snacks for the young performers and additional donations that supported the event. Extensive voluntary help from all involved contributed to a memorable event at May Street.

The charity UnLtd, which supports social entrepreneurs, held its group meeting in the cafe following successful applications for grants from Paul Boyd and May Street committee member Chris Hewitt and Urban Soul chairman David McAuley. Paul is using his funding for lighting equipment and for setting up a training course at Urban Soul in stage management. Chrissie and David intend to use Urban Soul as a venue for their proposed "Urban Seniors" club, an initiative aimed at providing a social network for the older age group. The UnLtd grants will generate additional business this year for Urban Soul.

In the run-up to Christmas we hosted a supper for a ladies group from Kells and another group from High Kirk Presbyterian church when they were visiting the Christmas markets. We continue to have regular morning coffee groups and are growing the daily regulars and friends of Urban Soul.

January started with an evening with Joy Ryan and singers in a fundraising evening for her trip to Malawi.

Looking ahead the PCI young adults group came along for another acoustic evening at the end of January. We are looking forward to the regular Sunday evening Underground cafe church sessions which the Rev Lee Eagleson has planned for the twentysomethings.

During 2011 Urban Soul received less grant funding than previous years but cafe sales have increased by a commendable 49% year on year. That said, overheads rose by 8% and grant funding is still required.

We were able to bring in a lot of revenue as a result of special events such as Grace and Truth and the Christmas Concerts. We also provided catering for performers and the public during the

MT4Uth production of West Side Story. These were major fundraisers in association with May Street church and were only made possible by the willing involvement of church people. These efforts went a long way towards the grant funding shortfall.

A new BMI funding application was submitted in early February. In addition, we have been offered further assistance from our friends at TBF and KL Thompson Trust, both in terms of finance and help with the BMI application.

RUBY HUTCHINSON
Urban Soul Group

CHRISTMAS GIFT SERVICE



Christmas spirit: Harry, Sophie and William Booker give their presents to Alexandra Woodford of the Thorndale Family Centre at the May Street Gift Service, which took place on Sunday December 4. Pic: Julie Wilson

May Street's Gift service was held, as usual, on the first Sunday of December, and we were most grateful to everyone who donated presents. This year the recipient was Alexandra Woodford, who

is chaplain to the Salvation Army's Thorndale Family Centre at Duncairn Avenue in north Belfast.

The gifts and toys which were brought up to the Christmas tree went to help needy families at Christmas time. Up to 38 families live in Thorndale and there they receive help, housing and counselling.

I am always impressed by the number of gifts that the good members of May Street donate each year. It is quite overwhelming. Thank you all so much for your terrific support. I think the ministry that we supply in this way is something we can take pride in.

JENNY WILSON

THANKS TO MAY STREET

A letter to May Street from Alexandra Woodford re the donation of toys

Dear Friends

On behalf of the management, staff and service users (especially the children) of the Thorndale Family Centre I am writing to thank you all for the wonderfully kind and generous donations of toys for families in our care.

This enabled us to give the families we work with a Christmas they may not have otherwise been able to provide and share.

We make great efforts to individually provide gifts for the children to suit their age and gender. We were also able to help in the wider community with the Salvation Army 'Toy Appeal' providing for families that are struggling at this time, which is becoming more and more of an issue in this present financial climate.

Thank you once again; we were blessed by all your generosity

May God bless you,

ALEXANDRA WOODFORD
Chaplain
Thorndale Family Centre

CHRISTMAS THANKS

Thanks to all those who helped to decorate May Street sanctuary so tastefully for Christmas – and for taking down and putting into store all the decorations after the Christmas season was over.

And once again, many thanks to Elizabeth Doran for running the May Street Christmas post office. All the cards were safely delivered – and they all reached their recipients in time for Christmas. Well done, Elizabeth and thanks to those members of the congregation who made a donation of the May Street Flower Fund in lieu of postage costs.

LET JUSTICE PREVAIL

May Street will again be playing host to the annual World Women's Day of Prayer service, which takes place at 11am on Friday March 2. This year the theme is "Let Justice Prevail" and the services have been planned and written by the Christian women of Malaysia.

DEADLINE

The deadline for all contributions to the next issue of The Greeting is Sunday
April 1

MUSIC THEATRE FOR YOUTH

Music Theatre 4 Youth, which is based at May Street Church, was honoured to be invited by Tourism Ireland to perform at the launch of its NI 2012 programme – 'Our Time Our Place'. It was billed as an evening to promote a unique programme of world-class events and activity taking place in Northern Ireland in 2012. Tourism Ireland showcased Northern Ireland as a thriving cultural location and a tourist destination with a plethora of exciting events happening here in 2012 such as the Titanic Centenary, Belfast Festival 50th Anniversary, the new Giant's Causeway visitors centre and much more.

Hosted by television presenter Eamonn Holmes

the event was attended by high profile guests such as the First and Deputy First Ministers, Peter Robinson and Martin McGuinness, along with the Tourism Minister, Arlene Foster. Many of Northern Ireland's best known celebrities, including Christine Bleakley, Patrick Kielty, Barry McGuigan and John Lynch were joined in the audience by a host of high profile business people. They all enjoyed the headline act, Belfast's own Van Morrison, and a programme of speeches and performances from MT4Uth and three tenors from Northern Ireland.



Regal occasion: *The MT4Uth Alumni Choir with Tim Sutton, musical director and composer after their performance at St James Palace on London's Pall Mall on January 18.*

This really was MT4Uth's time to shine, being the most high profile event the charity has performed at since its inception in 2005. MT4Uth gathered 17 of their alumni students who are now studying or working in London to perform our song 'Be The Change' written by Tim Sutton in memory of Vernon Mound, the late founder and artistic director of MT4Uth. Dressed in tuxedos and stunning custom-made dresses from Irish designer Una Rodden, the choir lit up the room with the positive message that 'Be The Change' evokes.

West End star Niamh Perry, MT4Uth's Young People's Patron commented: "MT4Uth's 'Be The Change' is the message that our generation needs. We are the future. It is our duty to move forward and be the best that we can be, a very relevant message for the future of Northern Ireland" The alumni choir were supported by MT4Uth's current participants who recently starred in West Side Story, which was staged at May Street in October as part of the Belfast Festival at Queen's.

The group performed two favourites from this hit musical - 'Tonight' and 'Somewhere' - a great opportunity for the young cast, some of whom had never visited London before let alone set foot in a palace!

MT4Uth received glowing feedback from its stunning performances. It was a once in a life time chance to show how far the small charity has come and how much it has achieved in six years. Music critic Martin Chilton, digital cultural editor of The Daily Telegraph, commented: "It was a fascinating evening all round. This is a new age for Northern Ireland. Perhaps the most eloquent moment of the evening was provided by Music Theatre for Youth.

"St James Palace houses Mortlake tapestries ordered by Charles I and a range of Royal portraits from the time of Henry VIII but the positive message from the musical youngsters was that history needn't weigh us down. The future can be brighter and this is a very exciting time for Northern Ireland."

ERIKA REID
Operations Manager
MT4Uth

BELFAST NASHVILLE



Welcome back: *Ever popular Nanci Griffith, who plays May Street on February 24.*

May Street is to be one of the venues for the 8th Belfast Nashville Songwriters Festival and Song Writing Convention which takes place at the end of February. May Street will host three

concerts – American John Oates (of Hall & Oates), Iain Archer and Gareth Dunlop in the round on Thursday February 23, the legendary Nanci Griffith & band on Friday February 24 and Fionn Regan on Saturday February 25.

For each of the concerts, doors open at 7.30pm and the music starts at 8.15pm (8.30pm on February 24). Urban Soul will be on hand to sell refreshments to the concert-goers. For the event, a stage will be set up over the choir stalls which means fans should get a good view. Members and friends of May Street congregation who wish to assist with the catering operation should contact Avril Gracey at Urban Soul for details.

Tickets cost between £15 and £22 per person, depending on the concert, and for further details check on the web at www.belfastnashville.com.



Star turn: The acclaimed American musician John Oates, who will be performing in May Street Church on February 23.

Now for more details of the concert programme:

John Oates is one half of Daryl Hall & John Oates, an American musical duo who achieved their greatest fame in the late 1970s and early to mid-1980s. Both sing and play instruments. They specialized in a fusion of rock and roll and rhythm and blues styles, which they termed “rock and soul.”

The evergreen Nanci Griffith, who will be back in May Street for the fourth time. With 18 albums to her credit, Nanci is an illustrious songwriter. She remains one of America’s most enduring artists, a writer who’s never been shy about sharing her deeply-rooted sense of conviction. In 2010 Nanci was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award at BBC Radio 2’s Folk Awards.

Fionn Regan is an Irish singer-songwriter and artiste who hails from Bray in Co Wicklow. He came to prominence in 2006 with the release of his Mercury-nominated debut album, *The End of History*. In 2010, Regan released his second album, *The Shadow of an Empire*, with a third, *100 Acres of Sycamore*, appearing in 2011. Regan cites Bob Dylan and Neil Young as key influences on his music.

ROBIN MORTON

MAY STREET TO THE FORE



Numbers game: Celebrating the fact that 58,635 visitors were attracted to historic buildings across Northern Ireland as a result of the European Heritage Open Day event last September are Kathleen Rea (3) and Ruby Fannin (!) from May Street. They are pictured with the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Newtownabbey, Alderman Billy Webb and his wife Pat, Michael Coulter, director of built heritage, along with Dorothy Mayneaux and Irene McIlwaine from St Catherine’s Church, Killead, Aldergrove.

Kathleen Rea and Ruby Fannin represented May Street at an event hosted by the DoE’s Environmental Heritage Service organised in Mossley Mill on Saturday November 26. The objective of the event was to say thanks to organisations which opened their premises for the European Heritage Open Days in September.

May Street took part in the event and welcomed some 140 visitors over two days. Many church members were on hand to greet the visitors and show them around the church. We also had organ music playing.

Tracy Crawford of the Historic Buildings Unit said: "We are pleased that your representatives from May Street Church enjoyed the event at Mossley Mill. It is our way of thanking all the participants for their time and effort in opening their premises for EHOD. I hope May Street Church will open its doors for EHOD 2012."

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY



Ruby Red: *May Street Clerk of Session Arthur Acheson and his wife Elizabeth celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary in style with a reception for family and friends on board the Royal Yacht Britannia. The party took place on board the vessel, which is berthed at Leith in Edinburgh, on the evening of Friday December 2. Visitors were piped on board by a bagpipe player, and given a conducted tour of the historic yacht. After a reception in the main lounge, dinner was served in the state room, used for so many years by the Queen to entertain heads of state and other dignitaries. Speeches were made by Arthur and by his best man, fellow architect Guy Butler. Congratulations and best wishes to Arthur and Elizabeth. Pic Robin Morton.*

CONGREGATIONAL COMMITTEE

A meeting of the congregational committee will take place at 7.30pm on Thursday March 15, followed by a meeting of Kirk Session.

STREET PASTORS

May Street Church is set to play host to the Street Pastors organisation. The group intends to use Urban Soul Cafe as its city centre base on Friday and Saturday nights. The role of the Street Pastors organisation, an inter-denominational Christian grouping which has been endorsed by the Chief Constable, Matt Baggott, is to defuse potentially ugly situations at various Belfast nightspots and to assist young people who are at risk to get home safely.

The pastors, who wear distinctive tabards and baseball hats, go out in teams of four and provide a presence on the ground. They engage with young people and intervene if people are considered to be placing themselves at risk. They also provide flip-flops for girls who have mislaid their shoes and are in danger of getting their feet cut by walking on glass. Street Pastors liaises with the PSNI and is complementary to existing outreach programmes in the city centre, such as the Presbyterian Church's Night-Light scheme and the SOS bus, which is located each weekend night at Shaftesbury Square and the Odyssey. We wish Street Pastors well in their endeavours and are happy to facilitate the organisation.

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

During the vacancy at May Street, the now familiar rotation of visiting preachers for Sunday services week by week has been established and is working well. Details are printed below. The Sunday morning service runs from 11am until 12pm.

Dr Rodger Crooks, convenor of the vacancy, is continuing to handle the Thursday services, which run week by week from 1.05pm to 1.30pm.

All welcome.

Sunday services (11am)

February 19 – The Rev Alistair Kennedy

February 26 – Dr Godfrey Brown.

March 4 – The Rev Lee Eagleson

March 11 – Dr Rodger Crooks

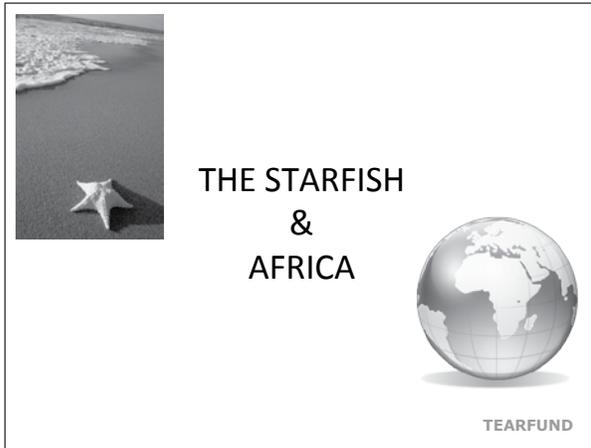
March 18 – The Rev Alistair Kennedy

March 26 – Dr Godfrey Brown

April 1 – The Rev Lee Eagleson

April 8 (Easter Day) – To be confirmed
April 15 – The Rev Alistair Kennedy
April 22 – Rev Jimmy Johnstone
April 29 - Dr Godfrey Brown

THE STARFISH AND AFRICA



African odyssey: *The intriguing title of Valerie Morton's talk was "The Starfish and Africa".*

The May Street lecture hall was well filled on the evening of Thursday February 9 when choir secretary Valerie Morton presented a talk about her recent trip with Tearfund to Africa. The talk was entitled "The Starfish and Africa" and Valerie said it was inspired by the book Highland Inspiration by the Rev Jim Lamont. The story tells of an elderly man who walks along the beach, occasionally stopping to pick up a stranded starfish before tossing it back into the ocean. He tells a curious passer-by that if the starfish are not returned to the sea, they will die when the sun comes up. "There are so many, what possible difference can that make?" asks the passer-by. Pausing to hurl another starfish towards the waves, the old man replies: "Well, son, I guess I made a difference to that one's life. If I can stop one heart from breaking, or cure one pain, or help one fallen robin back into its nest again, I shall not live in vain." Valerie said the message was that everyone was called to be a "difference maker" in life.

Valerie told how during her trip to Uganda and Rwanda she had seen how Tearfund, in conjunction with local churches and communities, was making a real difference to the lives of those who were in need. She told of new water supply schemes which meant families had ready

access to clean water supplies for the first time in their lives; of how people living with HIV/AIDS were being helped to come to terms with their condition; how "child-headed families", where the parents had died, were being encouraged to be independent; and how people were being given new skills which enabled them to farm the land.

She said: "We cannot change the world on our own but together we can begin to make a difference to the lives of people who face a daily struggle for survival. It was great to see the church in action and to see how the money donated to Tearfund can really transform lives."

TARTAN TREAT



Hoots, Mon: *May Street member Derek Gourley lets his hair down at a New Year Party. Pic: Kathleen Rea.*

REFRESHMENTS ROTA

Coffee and tea were to be served after morning service at May Street on Sunday February 12, courtesy of the Tuesday Circle. Our thanks to the ladies for providing this welcome get-together for members of the congregation and visitors. It is hoped that this will become a regular fixture.

And advance notice that a brunch will be served in May Street on Sunday April 1, after morning service. This will be the occasion of a joint service in May Street with members of Berry Street, our fellow city centre congregation. Members and visitors are invited to stay behind and enjoy some fellowship.

COLLECTORS

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

PEACE AGENT

Our cross-community group will be attending a performance of a play which is being staged by the Centre for Contemporary Christianity on the evening of Tuesday March 13. We are joining with the Fitzroy/Clonard group and the play is entitled 1912 – 100 years on. It will be followed by a discussion. Please contact Arthur Acheson if you would like to join the group.

CONCERT TIME

Ballyclare Male Voice Choir is using May Street on the afternoon of Sunday April 22 for a concert. All welcome.

CENSUS COUNT

May Street took part in a census which was ordered by South Belfast Presbytery. The figures showed attendances of 28 on November 27 and 34 on December 3. The data has been forwarded to Presbytery.

THE SIN OF OMISSION

It isn't the thing you do,
It's the thing you leave undone,
Which gives you a bit of heartache
At the setting of the sun.

The tender word forgotten,
The letter you did not write,
The flower you might have sent,
Are your haunting ghosts at night.

The stone you might have lifted
Out of a brother's way,

The bit of heartsome counsel
You were hurried too much to say.

The loving touch of the hand,
The gentle and winsome tone,
That you had no time or thought for
With troubles enough of your own.

The little acts of kindness,
So easily out of mind,
Those chances to be helpful
Which everyone may find.

No, it's not the thing you do,
It's the thing you leave undone,
Which gives you the bit of heartache
At the setting of the sun.

THE CHOICE

I'd rather have Jesus
Than silver or gold.
I'd rather be his
Than have riches untold.
I'd rather have Jesus
Than houses or land.
I'd rather be led
By his nail pierced hand.
Than to be the King
Of a vast domain.
And be held in sin's great sway.
I'd rather have Jesus
Than any fame
This world affords today.

HOW WIDE ?

Wide, wide as the ocean,
High as the heavens above.
Deep, deep as the deepest sea
Is my Saviour's love.
I am so unworthy ...
Still, I'm a child of his care.
For his word teaches me
That his love reaches me
Everywhere.

Poems contributed by Elizabeth Doran