



The Greeting

CONGREGATIONAL MAGAZINE OF MAY STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BELFAST

VOL 101 NO 5

Web site: www.maystreetchurch.co.uk

DECEMBER 2009

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ROOM AT THE INN

If you were compiling two lists, one of Christmas' bad guys and the other made up of Christmas' good guys, into which column would you place the innkeeper? Obviously Herod and the Jewish religious authorities would be listed under 'Bad Guys', and you do not get a prize for working out into which one the Wise Men, the shepherds, Joseph and Mary, and the baby Jesus go. But what about the innkeeper? He is hard to categorise.

Traditionally, he is lumped in with the bad guys, Herod and the Jewish religious authorities, and here is why. Augustus, the Roman Emperor, was experiencing a downturn in his finances, and the simplest way to raise revenue was to introduce a poll tax. But, in order to calculate how much cash would flow into his coffers, he needed to know how many people there were in his sprawling empire. So he decided to have

a census and the order went out that everyone had to return to their place of birth, where imperial officials would carry out the headcount.

Bethlehem's population was swollen by all the people returning there to take part in Augustus' census. Accommodation was hard to come by and prices were hugely over-inflated. As the owner of a local hotel, the innkeeper was making a killing. Reservations were way up on last year and all his rooms were booked for the foreseeable future. "When the census is over," he told his wife, "I will take you on that holiday I have been promising you." She rolled her eyes and muttered something about not holding her breath.

The innkeeper got his bad press from the fact that Joseph, one of the returnees, turned up at his hotel's reception desk looking for a room for himself and Mary, his wife. They had travelled down on foot from Nazareth, a town



*A Blessed Christmas
and a Happy New Year*



located about one hundred miles north of Bethlehem, and, apart from the fact that they were exhausted after such a long journey, Mary was heavily pregnant. But he had no rooms available and was far too busy making money to take time out to fix up yet more people with accommodation. As Joseph and Mary stared at each other, wondering what they would do, he shouted at them: "You can bunk down in the stable, if you want," and then rushed off to make up a room for a customer.

That is the traditional take on the innkeeper and why he finds himself in 'The Bad Guys of Christmas' column. But I want you to think again about him and to revise your view of him so that you shift him into 'The Good Guys of Christmas' list. When he saw Joseph and Mary standing in front of him, there was no way he could turn them away. He was not a turning-people-away type of person. She was only a wee slip of a girl and looked as if she was going to give birth at any moment. Besides, if his wife found out that he had turned away a heavily pregnant teenager, she would go through him for a shortcut. What could he do? All the rooms were occupied, but this pair needed accommodation and quickly. You could see his brain working overtime, and then he had a plan. It was a bit off the wall but it might just work. There was a little stable attached to his inn. Perhaps he could clear a space in one of its corners for the young couple. It was a bit of a mess, but nothing that an hour's work could not sort out. "You sit there, love, and rest yourself," he said to Mary, "and I will see what I can do." He and his wife set to work, and later that day Joseph and Mary moved in. It was not the Bethlehem Hilton, but it was private, and there Jesus was born.

Usually the innkeeper is portrayed as having turned Jesus away because he was too busy, but I think the real deal is that, in the middle of his busyness, he actually found space for Jesus. What he did is not a warning about rejecting Jesus, but is, in fact, a challenge to us to give Jesus the space in our lives he deserves. Here is a poem that sums up the revised view we should have of the innkeeper.

"I knew them not, and I had never seen a man whose face was quite so trouble-lined; nor any woman, who, so great with child, possessed an air of such angelic ease.

The inn was full; and even had they been from Herod's court, I knew I could not find a room for them. But around her face so mild a strange light seemed to glow when she said:

"Please."

What could I do? For I was never keen at turning folk away. Then, in my mind my little stable flashed. The thought was wild, but shelter must be found for such as these.

And so it was; there in the manger mean began the greatest life of humankind.

The inn was full; and so I am reviled, and so shall be for all eternities.

And yet I think one question is my due: I found a place for him. Have you? Have you?"

© Vic Jameson

RODGER CROOKS
Convenor

MAY STREET'S FUTURE

Progress is being made on the vacancy front at May Street. South Belfast Presbytery Vacancy Commission had a very productive meeting with representatives of Barnabas Ventures on Tuesday November 17. Solicitors acting for the South Belfast Presbytery, Barnabas Ventures and May Street Presbyterian Church have been asked to meet and draw up an agreement about the future of the May Street buildings by the end of December.

Hopefully this will bring clarity as far as the future of the buildings are concerned, and when this is achieved, work can begin on the other matters related to the vacancy. At this time, we ask for your prayers and support as we seek to define the future of May Street Church.

URBAN SOUL UPDATE

Urban Soul is the mission of May Street Church, primarily through the cafe environment of getting to know people and using the relaxed



An evening with the

New Lyric Operatic Company

performing songs from the shows
and Christmas classics

on Friday 11th December 2009
at 7.45pm in May Street Church, Belfast

tickets available from Urban Soul Café
or telephone 028 9032 5554

Donation £10 including light refreshments
proceeds towards outreach projects of Urban Soul

environment to develop friendships and share the love of Jesus. Our aim is to work with and promote the Thursday and Sunday services and Wednesday lunchtime meeting at which prayers are said for the city.

Urban Soul is alive and well. With our new look display units and selection of buns and sandwiches the cafe is open Monday to Friday from 9.30am until 3.30pm - and on Saturdays as well up until Christmas. So now you have a chance to bring in friends who are not able to call in during the week.



New image: *New chilled display units are now in use at Urban Soul cafe, which is enjoying brisk business in the run-up to Christmas*

Cafe manageress Avril Gracey and her team of Marion, Matt and David have established a great environment and more regular customers, the result being that income has increased each month. The cafe staff use their gifts of hospitality to make customers feel they are with friends and their pastoral talents enable them to get alongside a person who may be concerned with an issue and offer to pray with them at a quiet moment. Jean McCrum and the May Street catering corps form a support team on Thursday lunches and maintain friendships developed over many years of wheaten bread and soup lunches in the lecture hall.

All this is supported by the Urban Soul management team, who take an active role in directing the Urban Soul mission from the cafe base. That means we make sure we have the right people involved and the cafe staff and

church work well together. We help with the needed promotional material and facilities and spreading the word to other partner groups who can work alongside in mission. Getting the message out that God hasn't finished with May Street church yet.

The cafe staff have been organising a number of fundraising events to raise the profile of Urban Soul and bring more people into the church to become friends of Urban Soul. Marion Beattie ran a fun karaoke evening in November while Avril Gracey has used her connections with the talented New Lyric Operatic Company to get them to put on a concert in May Street at 7.45pm on Friday December 11. Sponsorship has been secured to pay for the costs of the choir and the supper, so all money from ticket sales go to the Urban Soul fund – helping to keep the doors of the church open every day. Please buy a ticket and bring friends for a delightful evening of songs from the shows and Christmas and share a light supper afterwards.

On the funding front, thanks go to Avril Gracey who has been successful in securing two generous gifts which will help cover staff costs at Urban Soul in the New Year, and move us to the point at which the cafe will be self-sustaining.

We now have a great marketing leaflet marking 180 years of May Street Church and promoting the cafe in the basement. This has been artistically created by Urban Soul committee member Colin McKeown from whitespace2, the graphic design company which operates from the parlour. The objective is to promote the facilities and seek partners who believe in the vision of being open everyday to be available to bring encouragement and hope into the people of the city. Of particular interest in a historic photograph of worshippers streaming out of May Street Church in the early part of the 20th century. When you next visit Urban Soul, please take some of the pamphlets and use them to show people what is on offer. Encourage friends and family to call in when they are in town, or bring a church group for a coffee morning or, by arrangement with Avril, organise an evening function.

We seek to encourage partner groups who share the mission to the city. Evan Brown's House of Prayer group has been meeting on Thursdays and Saturdays for the past year in the cafe environment, praying for our city and specific needs of individuals. UCB supplies the Word for Today daily reading as a resource we give away and we are talking about further resources we can use with them. Now on DAB radio, presenter Juls Martin can be heard in the evenings. UCB has just received a national DAB licence so he will have an even bigger audience. Juls is hoping to do more Halo events at Urban Soul in the future.

In November, the cafe teamed up with the Mandate conference when May Street provided a venue for two of the seminars. Hundreds of delegates attended the events in the sanctuary, and the cafe offered lunch and coffee, with a roast beef dinner being served to a pre-booked group of over 40 in the lecture hall. They were impressed by the cafe facilities so we hope they come back with friends from their church groups.

Church members past and present and regulars from the Thursday lunches have made the cafe their place to meet up. Do join in. You are missed when you don't come.

RUBY HUTCHINSON & DAVID MCAULEY
Urban Soul management committee

UNWELCOME VISITOR

As those present at morning service on Sunday November 29 were told, May Street Church premises suffered a break-in on the previous night. An intruder broke into the Parlour and Urban Soul cafe, causing a considerable amount of damage in the process. The PSNI were summoned, and finger-prints and other evidence gathered. Repairs were made and the building again made secure. Our sympathies go to Avril Gracey and her staff in Urban Soul, and to Colin McKeown, who runs a graphic design studio in the parlour, for the trauma they have suffered. The incident came as a blow following a successful karaoke evening at Urban Soul on the Saturday evening. But despite the adversity,

Urban Soul was open again for business on Monday November 30. Many thanks to all those involved in raising the alarm, making good the damage and securing the building.

MANDATE AT MAY STREET

"The men are back in town"! The annual Mandate conference took place again this year on Saturday November 14 at the Waterfront Hall with 2,000 men attending from all over the British Isles. In fact 1,000 of the delegates had come from places other than Northern Ireland.



Catering corps: Busy in the May Street kitchen on the occasion of the Mandate conference in May Street on November 14 are (from left) Avril Gracey, Urban Soul manageress, along with May Street members Jean McCrum, Ruby Fannin and Arthur Fannin

The conference was run jointly by Evangelical Ministries (EM) and Care NI and the theme was Saving Endangered Species - Men - Lights in a Troubled World. The Biblical inspiration for this hope-filled theme was based on Romans 15 vs 12, 13...

"And again Isaiah says: 'The root of Jesus will spring up, one who will rise to rule over the nations; the countless will hope in Him! May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.'"

The conference heard a message given by the guest speaker Jeff Lucas on this main text in the morning and then in the afternoon split up to attend a choice of two seminars held in

various venue near to Waterfront Hall. The seminars on Marriage were held in May Street from 2.30-3.30pm and from 4.00-5.00pm. Each seminar was attended by some 500 men filling the ground floor of the Sanctuary!



Full house: *The pews of May Street were packed for a presentation by Care for the Family, one of two seminars held at May Street as part of the Mandate conference on November 14*

The other seminars available included - Father and Sons, Hope in a Meaningless Culture, Prayer Ministry, Dealing with Differences, The Battle of the Sexes, Sexual Temptation and Hope in Financial Uncertainty. The marriage seminars in May Street were led by Richard Harris from Wales, a Baptist Minister from Wales, also representing Care for the Family and the letter also sent their Northern Ireland rep to exhibit relevant literature and sell books in the Foyer. It was interesting and touching to see so many men attending these seminars and to know that in an age of change over 80% of the whole conference were (still) married.

There was also food for the body! Some 20 men were served lunch in Urban Soul beforehand and after the seminars 60 men were served a full roast dinner in the lecture hall. Avril Gracey and her staff were involved in the lunch while Avril and the May Street ladies (plus two men)! helped to cook/serve/clear up the dinner.

All in all everything went very well upstairs and downstairs and there was a lovely buzz and sense of fun and fellowship. So much so that a group of 60 mandate men returned to Church

on the Sunday morning to worship with us, the service and lingered to chat before they walked up to catch the airport bus, with promises to return next year!

EM expressed their warm thanks for such an outstandingly suitable verve and service given and donated £50 towards the heating and lighting. All profits went to our church funds. We look forward to the men from Mandate being back in town next year on November 13 and to a continuing partnership with EM.

CHRIS HEWITT

THE CHOIR

October was a busy month for the choir. On Sunday October 11 we had our Harvest Thanksgiving service. It was a delight to have our senior minister the Rev Jim Barnes, back in the pulpit. Unfortunately his wife Myrtle, because of a chest infection, was unable to accompany him but we look forward to seeing them back in May Street in the not too distant future. The harvest service was extra special this year as it was the occasion for the christening of Matthew Wilson, baby son of Stephen and Kathie.

On the following Sunday, October 18, we celebrated the 180th anniversary of the opening of our church. Colin Johnston, our organist, chose special anthems for the occasion. Because of his connections with Killinchy Presbyterian Church, three of their choir members Joan Moreland, Lyn and John Weir (son and daughter-in-law of the Rev Kenneth Weir, a former minister of May Street) helped to augment our choir. Avril Gracey, manageress of Urban Soul Cafe, also helped to swell our ranks. At several points during the service, Robin Hewitt played the piano and this gave Colin Johnston the opportunity to join the choir rather than presiding at the organ. We thank them all for their support.

No doubt many of you have been watching the X Factor on television over these past few weeks. I am not sure what your views are of "Jedward" but in a recent interview Edward made the comment: "If you want to find good singers just

go to any gospel church or choir. There are so many people who can sing" - so the May Street quintet may be on the X Factor next year!!

Our annual carol service will be taking place on Sunday December 20 at 11am. We look forward to seeing you all there.

Happy Christmas.

VALERIE MORTON
Secretary

TUESDAY CIRCLE

For our opening meeting in September, we had a very humorous and interesting evening in the company of our very good friend the Rev George Grindle, formerly superintendent of the Kinghan Mission for the Deaf.

We met for our October meeting at Dundonald International Ice Bowl - not for a spin on the ice but to participate in the 10 Pin bowling facility. Competition was fierce, but Betty McKeown played an amazing game and I am pleased to report that she is now May Street's 10 Pin bowling champion! Very pleasant refreshments brought a most enjoyable evening to a close. Here's to a return match!

In November we had a most successful meeting, when Pauline Somerville shared with us her experiences in Kenya with street children, through the Sunshine Club.

We plan to have our usual Christmas Party in May Street on Tuesday December 8 and look forward to a relaxing evening and some good food.

Our special thoughts are with Judy Morton, Vera Lemon and Dorrie Morton, and we extend our best wishes to them and to all, for a very Happy Christmas.

PATRICIA McCROSSAN

CHRISTMAS GIFT DAY

Gift Day was held on Sunday December 6 when Stuart Leathem from The Salvation Army was present at morning service. Thanks to

all those who donated presents to Stuart for distribution among children and young people who are from less well off families. At this time of the credit crunch, such outreach by the Salvation Army is particularly valuable. Thanks to Julie Wilson, youth church superintendent, for making the arrangements and to Stuart for joining us.

DEADLINE

The deadline for all contributions to the next issue of The Greeting is Sunday January 31

CHRISTMAS POST

Once again Elizabeth Doran has kindly offered to run the May Street post office in the run-up to Christmas, and cards should be left in the vestibule on Sundays December 6 or 13. Deliveries will take place on December 13 and 20, but please note that no cards can be accepted on December 20.

Please ensure that the recipient is likely to be in a position to collect your card, and please address all items clearly. We are very grateful to Elizabeth for undertaking this duty and providing a much appreciated service. There is no charge, but those who leaving cards are encouraged to consider making a donation to the Flower Fund to reflect the saving they have made on stamps.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Wreaths were laid at May Street on Remembrance Day, Sunday November 8, by Barry Bell and Alan McCrum. Thanks to the Boys' Brigade buglers who joined us for the ceremony after participating in the act of remembrance at the City Hall.

The service was conducted by the Rev David Bruce, executive secretary of the Presbyterian Church's Board of Mission in Ireland. BMI has been helping to fund May Street's outreach operations, including Urban Soul cafe, over the past five years, and we much appreciate this support.



coupled as it was with the baptism of Matthew Wilson. Afterwards, all present were invited for tea, coffee and a slice of christening cake at a celebration in the lecture hall.

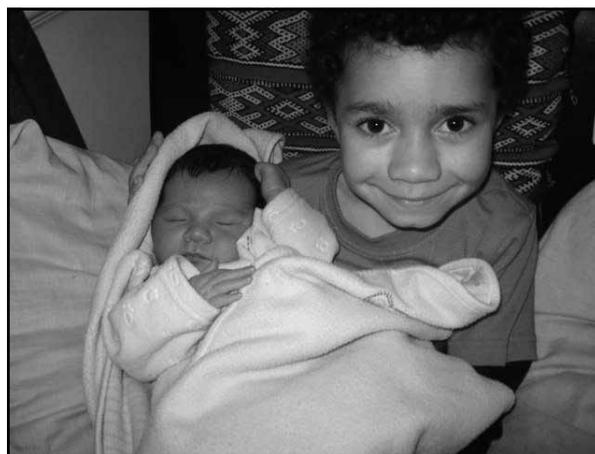
CONGREGATIONAL REGISTER

Births

September 22: Oscar Dorimo Gourley, son of Stephen and Sina Gourley, 172 Lower Braniel Road, Belfast 5.

WELCOME TO OSCAR

Congratulations to May Street members Stephen and Sina Gourley on the arrival of their new baby, Oscar Dorimo Gourley.



He's my brother: Justin Gourley welcomes his new baby brother Oscar back to the family home

Oscar, a baby brother for Justin, was born at the Ulster Hospital on September 22 and weighed in at 10lbs. Plans are in hand for his baptism to take place at May Street on Sunday December 27. Oscar has already paid his first visit to May Street, where he was much admired by members of the congregation. And Oscar's middle name? That is Sina's father's name.

THURSDAY ANNIVERSARY

Amidst all the excitement surrounding May Street's 180th anniversary in October, another landmark occasion deserves to be highlighted. This autumn marks the 20th anniversary of the

Time to reflect: Enjoying a cuppa in Urban Soul after the Remembrance Day service in May Street are (from left) Betty McKeown, Jimmy McCrossan, Patricia McCrossan and Derek Gourley

After the service all present were invited down to Urban Soul for coffee, tea and a chat. It was a useful opportunity to let the Sunday congregation sample the warm atmosphere in the cafe. Thanks to Avril Gracey for organising the refreshments.

HARVEST HOME

Captain Michael Kinnear, commanding officer of The Salvation Army at Belfast Citadel Corps, has written to May Street to express thanks to the congregation for the donation of gifts from the Harvest Service on October 11. In his letter he writes: "I am delighted to tell you that already, people have been benefiting from your kindness as men from our hostel and people from the Belfast community have sought help from us."

Captain Kinnear goes on: "As I am sure you aware, we have a motto in The Salvation Army: 'with heart to God - and hand to man' as we try to live out 'belief in action' within this great city. In the words of St Paul in his epistle to the Philippians 1: 2-3: 'Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you.' Please pass on our sincere thanks to all our brothers and sisters at May Street Presbyterian Church."

Thanks too, to all those who decorated the service. It was a particularly memorable service,

start of Thursday lunchtime services at May Street.

The initiative was launched by the then minister, the Rev Kenneth Weir, with the backing of a small committee. The programme continued with his successor, the Rev Jim Barnes. The Rev Keith Drury further developed the concept of midweek ministry. During his tenure, the soup, bread and cheese lunches which had been served in the lecture hall by a team headed by the late Annette Hill, were relocated to the newly opened Urban Soul cafe.

The convenor of the current vacancy, Dr Rodger Crooks, who at present is conducting a series of Thursday services, has been hugely supportive of the Thursday outreach, and this is much appreciated.

SAM NELSON

COMMITTEE MEETING

A meeting of the congregational committee will be held in the choir room at 7.30pm on Thursday December 10, followed by a meeting of the Kirk Session.

CHRISTMAS CAROLS

May Street will be celebrating Christmas with a double helping of carol services – the first at the Thursday lunchtime service (1.05pm) on December 17 and the second at morning service (11am) on Sunday December 20. Please give these special services your support.

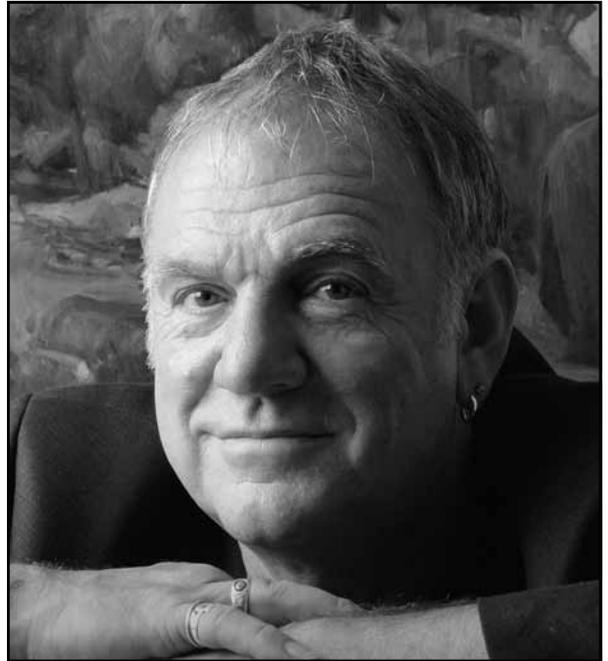
On Christmas Day a short family service will be held at May Street, starting at 11am.

Thanks to those involved in erecting the tree and decorating the sanctuary for Advent – the fruits of their labours were much appreciated by all present at the first Sunday in Advent, November 29.

HOLY COMUNION

A service of communion will be held in May Street at 11am on Sunday January 31.

CITY OF CULTURE



Streets of Belfast: Ralph McTell, who plays May Street on February 26

May Street's fine acoustics were praised by international violinist Tasmin Little during her impressive performance there on October 30 as part of the Belfast Festival at Queen's. The sanctuary was well filled for the hour-long performance, which followed a concert at the Ulster Hall. With an attendance of around 120 people, this was a valuable opportunity to open the doors of our church to a wide audience, and put May Street on more people's radar.

Another red letter day for May Street will be Friday February 26, when we play host to celebrated folk singer Ralph McTell. McTell, best known for his "Streets of London" song, will be appearing at a concert, as part of the 6th Belfast Nashville Songwriters Festival. The concert starts at 7.30pm, and tickets, price £15, are available from Belfast Welcome Centre.

Also being staged at May Street as part of the Songwriters Festival is a performance by the Belfast Community Gospel Choir on Thursday February 25. The event starts at 7.30pm, and tickets, costing £10, are available from the Belfast Welcome Centre. Looks like we are in for two nights to remember!

LOCK AND KEY

A new lock has been installed on the rear door at May Street, its purpose being to allow easy egress during any emergency. The addition of this lock, which opens from the inside on the turn of a handle rather than needing a key, is one of the stipulations laid down by the Fire Service in connection with our ongoing application for an entertainments licence. All May Street keyholders have now been issued with a key to enable the door to be opened from Little May Street.

HAPPY RETIREMENT

Best wishes go to Arthur and Bobby, the two faithful attendants of the Barnabas Ventures car park adjacent to the church. The car park attendants kept keys for the church which often proved useful, and also kept an eye on the premises during the day, sometimes facilitating oil deliveries etc.

After almost 20 years, an automated gate has been installed and both gents decided it was an opportune moment to take their retirement – both of them being already a little over 65. We much appreciate the interest they took in May Street and their neighbourly friendliness. We wish them well as they take life a little more easily.

PEACEMAKING GROUP

Many thanks to Arthur Acheson, our clerk of session, for undertaking the offering of a prayer on behalf of May Street during the annual interdenominational Remembrance Day service at Belmont Presbyterian Church on the evening of November 8.

CHRISTMAS OUTING

May Street youth church is planning a Christmas outing, thanks to the generosity of an anonymous benefactor, who donated £100 in April to May Street. The instruction was that the money was to be used for the benefit of the young people of May Street. Julie Wilson,

our youth church superintendent, is currently drawing up plans so if you are interested in getting more details, please contact Julie.

MODERATOR'S BLOG

May Street was honoured on October 29 when the Presbyterian moderator, Dr Stafford Carson, conducted the Thursday lunchtime service in the sanctuary. Dr Carson, who is minister of First Portadown, was invited to May Street by the vacancy convenor, Dr Rodger Crooks, on the occasion of May Street's 180th anniversary celebrations.

Dr Carson was welcomed to May Street by Arthur Acheson, clerk of session, and David McAuley, chairman of the Urban Soul management committee. After the service Dr Carson was joined by his wife and daughter for lunch at Urban Soul, where he chatted with fellow diners and members of staff.



Signing up: *The Presbyterian moderator, Dr Stafford Carson, signs the visitors' book at May Street Presbyterian Church in Belfast under the watchful eye of David McAuley (left), chairman of the Urban Soul committee, and Arthur Acheson, Clerk of Session. Dr Carson spoke at the May Street Thursday lunchtime service.*

And history was made when Dr Carson wrote up the occasion in his "blog" on the world wide web, the entry including three photographs of his visit. He is the first Presbyterian moderator to use a "blog" - electronic diary - as a channel of communication. This is what the moderator wrote:

“Today I conducted the lunchtime service in May Street, in this month which celebrates the 180th anniversary of the opening of the building. The famous first minister of May Street, Dr Henry Cooke, the champion of Presbyterian orthodoxy, was installed there in November 1829. He was a wonderful orator and debater who upheld orthodox reformed theology against Arianism.

“Having been appointed Professor of Sacred Rhetoric and Catechetics and President of Assembly’s College in 1847, Dr Cooke resigned the pastorate of May Street in 1848, but at the request of the congregation he was appointed constant supplier of the pulpit until his retirement in 1867.



Coffee break: Avril Gracey, manageress at the Urban Soul cafe in May Street Presbyterian Church in Belfast, serves up a cup of freshly brewed coffee for Presbyterian moderator Dr Stafford Carson, who was lunching in the cafe after addressing the May Street Thursday lunchtime service.

“Another famous minister of May Street was Rev Dr Wylie Blue. He was installed in May Street in 1916, and in 1918 he served with the YMCA in France. In 1919-20 he visited the United States and Canada as a member of the Ulster Delegation in opposition to Home Rule. By his eloquent preaching and genial personality he attracted crowds wherever he ministered.

“May Street church is a magnificent building, although sadly the crowds that attended the church in Cooke’s or Blue’s day are no longer there.

“Today the May Street congregation is trying to develop a new style of ministry in Belfast city centre. The facilities of the Urban Soul Cafe are excellent, and the cafe is open from 9am to 3.30pm each day. There is an enthusiastic core of hard-working people who would love to see the ministry continuing in this location.”

Anyone who missed the entry on the blog can still refer back to it by logging onto: <http://www.staffordcarson.com/page/3/>

ROBIN MORTON

MAY STREET’S 180TH



Celebration time: Cutting the cake at a luncheon following a special service to mark the 180th anniversary of May Street Presbyterian Church in Belfast on Sunday October 18 are (from left) Arthur Acheson, clerk of session, visitor Margaret Hutchinson, and preacher Prof Laurence Kirkpatrick, principal of Union Theological College in Belfast. Mrs Hutchinson is the wife of Dr Sam Hutchinson, former clerk to the General Assembly, both of whom were among the visitors at the service.

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Thanks are due to vacancy convenor Dr Rodger Crooks for making arrangements for Sunday and Thursday services at May Street.

This is the schedule for December:

Sunday services (11am)

December 6: Rev Alistair Kennedy

December 13: Mr Stephen McNie
December 20: Rev Lee Eagleson (Carol Service)
December 27: Rev James Barnes (Christening)
Christmas Day (11am)
December 25: Mr David McAuley
Thursday services (1.05pm)
December 10: Dr Rodger Crooks
December 17: Dr Rodger Crooks (Carol Service)
December 24 and 31: No services

BOOK AID

Book Aid is an organisation dedicated to making Christian literature available at reasonable prices. It concentrates mainly on Africa and also on Asia and the Caribbean. It has nationwide collecting points for bibles and religious books where those that are suitable are sorted. They are then shipped to overseas Christian bookshops in needy areas where a structure has been set up for their wide distribution at affordable prices.

Books that are unsuitable for overseas are sold in the second hand bookshop at the Haven Christian Centre, Templepatrick. The proceeds help cover the costs in transporting the books overseas.

We have a collection point in the church in May Street and are greatly indebted to members of the Congregation, to Thursday Service members and friends from outside the church who all contribute bibles and books.

If further information is required please contact me at my home telephone number (028) 9079 1268.

SAM NELSON

ROYAL RECEPTION

Colin McKeown from May Street was one of 500 designers from around the UK to be invited by the Duke of Edinburgh to the Prince Philip Designers Prize 2009 and the 50th anniversary celebration at Buckingham Palace on October 15. The event is a celebration of the design profession and the impact it makes to our lives

within the United Kingdom.

At the event the Prince Philip award for 2009 was given to Andrew Parry for the design and development of the Brompton foldable bicycle. Following the formal speeches and presentations, a reception was held and Colin mixed with leading designers, including Jeff Banks, Rodney Fitch, Michael Peters and Wayne Hemingway.

The invitations came through Colin's work as a member of the Cultural and Creative Skills, Northern Ireland Board and the UK Design Skills Alliance Group that meets at the Design Council in London. Both groups are involved improving professional standards and training, amongst designers in the UK.

Congratulations Colin!

PATRICIA McCROSSAN

Colin McKeown is a member of the Urban Soul sub-committee and is responsible for marketing and design.

COLLECTORS

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

TO THE MAY STREET CONGREGATION

Do not let the unknown fill you with dismay.
It is in the hands of God, so go upon your way.

Trust in Him and have no fear.

You do not walk alone.

He leads the faithful in the dark,
and careth for His own

Poem contributed by Elizabeth Doran