



The Greeting

CONGREGATIONAL MAGAZINE OF MAY STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BELFAST

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LAST WORDS

For Christmas my wife Joan bought me a book entitled *Immortal Last Words: History's most memorable dying remarks, deathbed declarations and final farewells*. The title is a bit over the top, but it is the sort of book I love. One person whose immortal last words are not mentioned in the book is David, Israel's greatest king and prolific psalm writer. So I want to redress this omission by telling you that David's last words as recorded in the book of Psalms are the last verse of Psalm 145: "My mouth will speak in praise of the Lord. Let every creature praise his holy name for ever and ever." In the rest of Psalm 145 he piles reason on top of reason why he praises God and why he wants us to do the same.

God is to be praised because he is great (Psalm 145:3-6). His greatness is seen in his character. "The glorious splendour of [his]

majesty" is the only way to describe a God who is completely self-existent and utterly self-sufficient; whose holiness is awesome, whose purity is infinite, whose power is irresistible, whose sovereignty is incontestable, whose love is limitless and whose grace is completely free; and who has eternally existed as one God, yet three persons. His greatness is seen in his activity, how he created the universe and how he saved his people.

God is to be praised because He is good (Psalm 145:7-10). His goodness is extravagant for he is no heavenly Scrooge, rationing out his goodness in small doses. God's goodness is abundant and over-the-top for it fills His heart with sheer pleasure and delight to lavish upon us one blessing after another. His goodness is undeserved for we deserve nothing from God. He is good because he is gracious. His goodness is universal, lavishing his generosity on all.

God is to be praised because he is King (Psalm 145:11-13). His kingdom is glorious, splendid and permanent. What a privilege to be a citizen of God's kingdom where Jesus our King reigns supreme!

God is to be praised because he is gracious (Psalm 145:14-20). His grace is seen in the way he restores those who stumble and fall; in the way he supports those who are almost crushed by the situation they are facing; in the way he provides his creatures with food; in the way he answers prayer; and in the way he protects his people.

Usually people want to talk about themselves. But when David signs off from the Bible, he wants to talk about God and how great, good and gracious a king he is. All his life he had wanted the words he spoke to focus people's attention on God, and he wants his last words to do the same.

RODGER CROOKS
Vacancy Convenor

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the annual business meeting of May Street Presbyterian Church will take place in the sanctuary at 12pm on Sunday February 13, 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.

As members are aware, we are required to hold an election for committee this year. A voting list has been on display in the vestibule

and voting forms made available. The results will be announced at the ABM.

Following the meeting, all present are invited to partake of a light lunch in the lecture hall.

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 2010 ABM (already circulated by means of publication in The Greeting); (proposer and seconder needed)
- 4 - Matters arising
- 5 - Report of Kirk Session (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 - Announcement of new congregational committee
- 13 - Any other business
- 14 - Closing prayers

ROBIN MORTON
Congregational Secretary

Grace & TRUTH

- a bible story in flowers



May St Church Belfast

19 - 22 May 2011

- organ music - bible reading
- craft fair
- Urban Soul café open

KIRK SESSION

Unmeasurable May Street

We are already some 18 months into our 2009 – 2019 Mission Plan, which sets challenging targets for May Street, including the further development of our café, our move towards being recognised as part of a network of safe places in the city centre and the ambition, within the 10-year plan period, of being a church that never closes.

24-hour opening within 10 years seems to be an impossible dream. But how many of us would have imagined, when we were only open for a few hours on Sunday and Thursday, the seven days a week church that we have become? May Street's doors are now open for more hours per week than many established city businesses.

Six years of work did not in the end lead to a new development opportunity with our neighbours but May Street has emerged stronger, more passionate and more resolute than ever from its experience with South Belfast Presbytery's inability to follow its own advice to congregations to "take risks". Presbytery's risk-averse approach and ponderous indecision (taking 12 months to set up a committee) does not suit city centre mission outreach where we and others take measured risks each day to deal with rapidly changing situations and to grasp opportunities which cannot wait for a committee.

Standard statistical returns sent to Church House each year portray May Street, in common with many other Presbyterian churches, as a congregation declining in numbers and income. These statistics do not count our increasing hours of opening or our strengthening ambition to be a more approachable and relevant church in the city centre. They do not measure the times

spent in May Street each week by members of the congregation, staff, friends and interested visitors who come to explore their faiths, their histories, their problems and their dreams in this house of God in Belfast city centre.

Many churches are dwindling in numbers and income – few are extending their opening hours. May Street, founded to be different, remains different – in many ways we are unmeasurable.

We have welcomed the Inter Church Group to Culture Night in the city and to supper afterwards in Urban Soul café. In return we have held meetings with and attended services in St Malachy's, St George's and Belmont congregations to embrace peace and the things that make for peace. We look forward to a visit in spring 2011 to a new play to be performed in Fitzroy Presbyterian Church – another member of our Inter Church Group.

We have been visited by Presbytery Mission Plan "assessors" (whom we would prefer to think of as "encouragers").

We are in correspondence and look forward to discussions with the Presbytery City Centre Committee which has offered to guide us in collaboration in the city centre as they come to visit us from the suburban churches of South Belfast. We have made the point to the Presbytery assessors and to the chair of the City Centre Committee that we would welcome all possible assistance as we implement our Mission Plan, clearly involving many who are not Presbyterians, or who are not church members at all, as well as volunteers and helpers who are members of other congregations and other denominations. Presbytery's offers of encouragement are welcome and we look forward to some more sleeves being rolled up and more bank accounts being drawn down to help us to embrace the many additional visitors

whom we now greet and welcome each year.

In all this work, The Greeting magazine is a significant opportunity to reach out to people, both in the paper copies available in and distributed from the church building and in the electronic copies which many people now receive in e-mail format. We are most grateful to our editor, Robin Morton, who sets a high standard, faithfully meets deadlines and encourages the rest of us to get our copy to him in time. The May Street website is another valuable communications channel which we hope to further develop this year.

Kirk Session has met in combination with Congregational Committee throughout the year, finding that this method of operation is efficient and productive. There have been no occasions when separate Kirk Session meetings have been required. The work of both Session and Committee has been ably recorded by our congregational secretary, Robin Morton. Our honorary treasurer, Andrew Acheson, has faithfully presented financial information at each meeting and the Weekly Freewill Offering co-ordinator, Barry Bell, has kept us updated with comparative figures. Our honorary auditor, Gordon Kirkpatrick, ensured that the accounts were produced and presented appropriately and I thank all these dedicated people for their special contributions.

Much work has been carried out on the new weekday initiatives and we have retained a traditional Sunday Service. Smaller congregations on Sunday may pave the way to occasional changes. The format of our Annual Business Meeting in 2010, for example, proved successful when it was held after a Sunday Service to receive and affirm, with necessary questions and answers, the reports which had been published in The Greeting. Dealing with the business in this way gave us time for greater

sociability, with lunch in the lecture hall following the meeting.

Sitting down together to have lunch is different from sitting down together to worship, but the two are not incompatible. With a more diverse range and greater number of people in town on Sundays, now may be a good time to introduce ourselves to people attending the Sunday Market and to Sunday shoppers with some innovative thinking about worshipping and eating together in May Street.

We especially thank our Vacancy Convenor, Rev Dr Rodger Crooks, a distinguished preacher, pastor and author who has managed to remain sane in spite of our very unusual approach which we believe to be reflective of our context. Rodger has steered us wisely and has responded creatively in a timely and dignified manner to all our eccentricities and foibles. Thank you, Rodger.

May Street Church is exciting, filled with enthusiasm and with the adaptability needed to be relevant in the centre of an increasingly busy city. But.....

Which box on our Statistical Return do we tick for "peace making"?

How do we quantify "exciting"?

What is the unit of measurement of "enthusiasm"?

Where do we record "adaptability"?

How do we calculate God's love?

We delight in our unmeasurability as we sense the real presence of God among us, directing our work in this place, hour by hour and year by year.

ARTHUR ACHESON
Clerk of Session

CONGREGATIONAL COMMITTEE

The best way to describe the past 12 months in May Street would be to use a fairground analogy and call it a roller-coaster year. At the last Annual Business Meeting we were still holding out hope that a proposed agreement with Barnabas Ventures would soon be signed. The idea, as you will recall, was for the developers to construct a new building embracing the adjoining car park and part of our building. This would have left us with a building which would have been fit for purpose, while preserving the original 1829 sanctuary for worship and use by the congregation. And best of all, this arrangement would have shifted the burden of maintaining the building from the congregation to the developers.

But as readers of The Greeting will know, all this has not come to pass. Heads of agreement had been drawn up between Barnabas Venture and May Street and passed to South Belfast Presbytery and Church House for approval. South Belfast Presbytery constantly assured us of their support for the arrangement but sadly, the negotiations took much longer than we had imagined.

One sticking point which it was established after many months could not be resolved was the point at which the building's ownership would transfer to Barnabas Ventures – before work started, as Barnabas and May Street wished, or once it had been completed, as Church House insisted. Unfortunately this obstacle proved insurmountable and the deal withered on the vine.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to Barnabas Ventures for sticking with us for so long and for giving May Street financial support of £1,000 per month right up to the summer of 2010, when the draft agreement finally foundered. We continue to benefit from the company's generosity in that

we have been granted the ongoing use of its car park – right beside our building - at weekends and in the evening. This is a great asset.

The congregational committee was disappointed by the collapse of the proposal. Committee held South Belfast Presbytery and Church House to be principally responsible, as we believed that a more agile and speedy response on their part might have helped keep the proposal on track. Accordingly, it was decided in August that May Street should suspend quarterly payments to Church House. Committee agreed that the withheld funds would be transferred to Church House once Presbytery came up with a satisfactory alternative proposal. So far, there has been no response from Church House.

Despite this setback, we were determined to face the future with imagination and confidence. With Barnabas Ventures no longer part of the equation, we were again back to making the best use we could of our assets – not just the sanctuary and the basement, but also the Parlour room, overlooking May Street, and the lecture hall, with its glass panelled roof.

Colin McKeown, who had been using the Parlour, indicated that he wished to vacate and at this time we received an approach from a charity, Music Theatre For Youth, or MT4Uth for short. They wished to relocate their offices from Donegall Street to the Parlour and to make regular use of the lecture hall for rehearsals. As its name suggests, MT4Uth is focused on developing the musical talents of young people by running workshops and staging shows. Many young people have found that going on stage has given them a new confidence which benefits them in so many ways – and some have graduated from MT4Uth's tutelage to a new career in the arts.

MT4Uth moved in at the start of February and already there is a new buzz around May Street during the working day and at weekends. We bid them welcome, and hope that the new arrangement will be mutually beneficial. A welcome spin-off is the willingness of MT4Uth to advertise the availability of rehearsal space to other groups working in the arts sector.

Not of course, that May Street is short of requests from outside bodies to use its premises. In October we played host to the Dublin Gospel Choir which staged a concert as part of the Belfast Festival. And in December it was the turn of New Lyric Operatic, which staged a concert in aid of May Street's principal outreach project, the Urban Soul Cafe.

Later this month the Belfast/Nashville Songwriters' Festival will be using our sanctuary for three concerts – by Belfast's own Brian Kennedy, Cerys Matthews from Wales and the evergreen Nanci Griffith from the US.

Then in March the sanctuary is to be used for a performance by internationally acclaimed countertenor Lawrence Zazzo who will be making maximum use of our excellent acoustics. These days, you dare not come to May Street without having your autograph book in your pocket.

Such events are good for putting our church on the map with a wider audience and for creating links with the wider community. In addition, the income we receive from donations for use of our premises helps us to balance our books at a time when our core congregation is dwindling.

Our unique selling point, as the marketing people would say, is our city centre location. As memories of the troubles fade, and a new generation grows up, the city centre is again becoming the magnet it once was. Young people and tourists are giving Belfast back its buzz and

our position, close to the City Hall and Victoria Square, creates a major opportunity for us.

Indeed, the popularity of Sunday shopping is for May Street not a threat but an opportunity. Some of those who are down in town for some retail therapy may also be in the market for a little Christian therapy, and may decide to include a visit to church as part of their day out. The challenge for May Street is to be inventive and to come up with ways which will make us relevant to the wider public.

Our Thursday lunchtime service – which began as a far-sighted venture almost 30 years ago – is very much a pathfinder. The weekly services have shown that the church can appeal to those beyond its own congregation and over the years they have created a bridge between church and commerce.

All this activity is now underpinned by the expansion of our basement cafe, Urban Soul. Staff serve delicious coffee, tea, scones, sandwiches and lunches, but Urban Soul is also widely appreciated as a safe haven and a peaceful oasis in the midst of the city centre. A little over a year ago the cafe was facing a financial crisis and indeed, the only option seemed to be to hand it over to a commercial operator.

But the congregational committee saw the cafe's primary role as being one of outreach and we were determined to keep the doors open on this basis. Under the inspired management of Avril Gracey, with support from her staff and the input of members of the congregation, the cafe has undergone a dramatic revival over the past 12 months.

As well as our own church members, the Urban Soul Committee membership includes David McAuley from Helen's Bay Presbyterian Church and Ruby Hutchinson from Lowe

Memorial Presbyterian Church. We thank these members of the wider church for their gracious, enthusiastic and energetic support. Key to the success of Urban Soul, however, has been the financial support which Avril has managed to draw down from the Presbyterian Church's Board of Mission in Ireland, from the TBF Thompson Trust, and from other benefactors. We are truly grateful to them all, because this funding has been the difference between closure and a bright future.

Although it has significantly narrowed the gap between income and expenditure, Urban Soul is still not self-sustaining in financial terms. But while sales and costs can be written down in the ledger what will never be fully known to us is the difference the cafe has made to people's lives. Staff are willing and able to provide a listening ear and to offer support and empathy when they are needed. Most customers leave feeling the better for the time they have spent in Urban Soul - if you're not careful you might get a hug too, from the friendly staff.....

May Street's future is not clear, but the events of the past year have helped to convince committee that we do have a future. The congregational committee is grateful to Dr Rodger Crooks, now well established as vacancy convenor, for the role he is playing at our meetings and beyond.

I would also like to commend, on behalf of committee, the role played by Arthur Acheson, our clerk of session, in giving leadership and direction to us at a time of constant change and challenge. His vision has been an inspiration to us all.

In closing, may I thank all those members of committee and congregation who have helped in so many ways over the past year. This is a team effort, and although our squad is fewer in number than in most congregations, I know that

we have a team second to none. We continue to prayerfully try to discern God's purpose for May Street but at present one thing is certain. At present, there are more doors opening before us than closing in our face.

ROBIN MORTON
Congregational Secretary

DEADLINE

The deadline for all contributions to the next issue of The Greeting is Sunday March 27

WEEKLY FREEWILL OFFERING

As expected our WFO is down this year for reasons of which we are all aware. We can, however, only be amazed at the high level of giving by our small congregation, thus proving that the heartbeat of May Street is regular and strong. Many thanks to all who have contributed so generously, and I am pleased that there have been some recent additions to our subscribers. We value their support very much.

The envelopes returned for our other Appeals such as Urban Soul, The Flower Fund, Harvest and United Appeal, have been thin on the ground, but as these are ongoing activities, many members donate to them in various unseen and unheralded ways. Finally my thanks go to our honorary treasurer, Andrew Acheson, for overseeing all the finances of our church. He runs a tight ship!

BARRY BELL
WFO Convenor

HON TREASURER'S REPORT

Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2010

While 2010 has seen much activity and many changes at May Street, it was a remarkably uneventful year financially.

For the main church account, income exceeded expenditure by £5,265 - but it should be noted that we have withheld our assessment for November (£2,678) due to South Belfast Presbytery's handling of our potential partnership with Barnabus Ventures. Our opening balance was £9,401, receipts £56,272, payments £51,007 leaving a closing balance of £14,667.

Overall it has been a year of great activity and energy in many areas of life at May Street, yet we have been able to conserve cash and "live within our means" by ensuring that our expenditure does not exceed our income.

It is intended to publish our audited account in time for circulation at the Annual Business Meeting.

May I take this opportunity to thank our honorary auditor, Gordon Kirkpatrick, for his useful insight and in ensuring that the numbers present a coherent picture. 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

I am delighted to report that for once my annual plea for new members had not fallen on deaf ears! Chrissie Hewitt has joined the alto section and we are pleased to have her on board to help us lead the worship in May Street Church Sunday by Sunday. We continue to provide special praise items at services to mark Palm Sunday, Easter Day and Harvest

Thanksgiving. Unfortunately the snowy weather prevented some of our members travelling to church on Sunday December 19 for the carol service and the programme had to be modified at the last moment. This meant that there were fewer choir items and more input from the congregation.

Our annual outing this year was deferred from June until July. We went ten pin bowling at Dundonald, had refreshments at Hillside Nursery, travelled to Portballintrae for the afternoon and finished off with an evening meal at Cromore Halt. We had glorious weather throughout the entire day and we thoroughly enjoyed our time of fun and friendship together.

Congratulations to Evelyn Gourley, from the alto section, and her husband Derek who celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in July. They marked the occasion with a party at Rockmount Golf Club, Carryduff where they were joined by all the family including relatives from Scotland and Canada. Our good wishes also go to Derek as he has had a spell in hospital recently.

Choir members would like to express their sympathy to the daughters and family of George Lindsay who died in October. Although he had not been able to attend church for some time he had contributed to the life of May Street over many years and was an active member of the choir and bowling club.

In closing I would like to thank Avril Gracey, for being an 'honorary member' of the choir and augmenting our numbers on special occasions, Robin Hewitt, our occasional piano accompanist, and finally our organist Colin Johnston. We are indebted to Colin for keeping us in time week by week and for his selection of music. Throughout the year many visiting ministers have commented on his spontaneous choice of music during the collection or at the

end of the service chosen to reflect the theme of the readings and address. Thanks you Colin.

VALERIE MORTON
Choir Secretary

TUESDAY CIRCLE

This is the 42nd annual report of the May Street Tuesday Circle and I am pleased to report that we are still going strong with quite a few founder members still playing important roles in our group. We welcome Elizabeth Acheson and Valerie Hoyle as new members, and hope that they enjoy their time spent with us.



Kitchen cabinet: *The May Street catering team which regularly provides lunch for the BB Officers in the lecture hall rest from their labours. From left are Bobby Rowe, Winifred Connor, Kathleen Rea, Bertha Rowe, May Mercer, Betty McVicker and Mona Templeton.*
RICHARD CONNOR

Our meetings have been well attended during the year with an average of 20 ladies attending each month. We put this down to the well planned programme with the emphasis on fun and entertainment! The programme for the 2010-11 season was as follows:-

September: A visit to Dundonald Ice Bowl, which has become a firm favourite and a good way to ease ourselves into the winter season.

October: Mrs Sheila Hughes was the speaker, her subject was the old Empire Theatre

November: We had a floral art demonstration and were all encouraged to have a go ourselves.

December: A Christmas meal and party was planned but had to be postponed due to the extreme weather that we all experienced in December

January : We enjoyed our Christmas meal this month in Urban Soul and it was a lovely evening . Good company and good food.

February: Our meeting in February is planned to be the one that had to be cancelled in March 2010 because of wintry weather. It is a visit to Valerie Morton's house for a cookery demonstration, so let's hope the weather does not turn nasty again!

March: Joan McQuoid will show us pictures and tell us about a recent holiday that she had in China.

We are often asked to do some catering for groups that have visited May Street in the past. Over the past year, our visitors included:

April 20: Newmills seniors, who were served soup and sandwiches

May 14: Our friends from St Columns, who have been with us now for their sixth year, for their annual reunion. They had coffee and lunch

June 23: Dromore seniors, who were served a ham salad.

We are a very enthusiastic group and are currently planning our programme for the season 2011-2012 which will, as usual, be varied and entertaining. As we come to the end of another season we again issue a cordial invitation to any lady (of any age!) to come and join us on the fourth Tuesday of each month and they will be assured of a good evening of friendship.

Our members Dorrie Morton and Vera Lemon, who are not able to attend our meetings any

longer, are always remembered in our thoughts and prayers.

ENA KIRKPATRICK
Tuesday Circle Secretary

PEACE AGENT

Shall we dance?

May Street has embraced the concept of Peace Agent since it was first mooted in the Presbyterian Church in the early 1990s and indeed, had by that time already been involved in discussions with our neighbouring St Malachy's Catholic Church.

While some may argue that peace in Northern Ireland has now been established, one only has to read or listen to media reports to see that relationships between people and groups are still fragile at best and hostile at worst, that some activities are still directed towards influence by fear and bullying rather than by love and discussion. In pursuit of politics or power, there is still the capacity and the will to bring disruption, injury and death to individuals and families.

Fundamental issues remain.

<p>"You like potato and I like potahto You like tomato and I like tomahto Potato, potahto, Tomato, tomahto. Let's call the whole thing off"</p>	<p>"You like haitch and I like aitch You like The North and I like Northern Ireland Aitch, Haitch, The North, Northern Ireland. Let's call the whole thing off"</p>
<p>"Let's Call the Whole Thing Off" is a song written by George Gershwin and Ira Gershwin for the 1937 film <i>Shall We Dance</i></p>	<p>"Let's Call the Whole Thing Off" is not an option..... for May Street, St Malachy's, St George's, Fitzroy, Belmont, Northern Ireland or the North</p>

There is now a greater than ever need to lead by example – we insist – and May Street is very fortunate to have had the opportunity to maintain and develop links with fellow Christians and non-Christians in the pursuit of peace and the things that make for peace.

We welcomed the Inter Church Group to Culture Night in the city's Cathedral Quarter in September and to supper afterwards in Urban Soul café. In return we have held meetings and attended services with St Malachy's, St George's, Belmont and Fitzroy congregations to embrace peace. We look forward to a visit in Spring 2011 to a new play and to other events in the peace-making calendar.

May Street will not depart or deviate from the principle that all people must be given the opportunity to present their views, be listened to and treated with respect no matter how far their attitudes or beliefs may differ from our own. We celebrate the diversity of people who visit, work and live in the city centre and look forward to continuing creative discussions about sharing futures and growing peace – the livelier and sooner the better!

We have written to South Belfast Presbytery to reinforce the position that City Centre Mission is not just by Presbyterians or for Presbyterians.

ARTHUR ACHESON
Peace Agent

URBAN SOUL

Urban Soul, the May Street outreach project which operates a cafe in the basement of the church premises, ended 2010 on a high note. Our friends from New Lyric Operatic Company held a fund-raising concert for Urban Soul in the May Street sanctuary. Under the baton of musical director Loreto McAuley, the troupe entertained us with Christmas classics and well

known songs from the shows, and it was a great night's entertainment. It was in the middle of a snowy December and fortunately fell on the one snow-free Saturday, December 11. We are grateful to New Lyric for their valued support and would love to make the concert an annual event.



Star line-up: *The chorus of New Lyric Operatic Company in full cry at May Street on December 11.*
ROBIN MORTON

Alas the sudden return of snow the following week meant one of our groups from Ballymena had to cancel at the last minute when all the preparations were made. However, a Fit for Life group from Kells were able to have their night at the Christmas Markets and to enjoy supper afterwards at Urban Soul. The following night a youth group from Carrickfergus had a social evening in the cafe. These evenings not only open the doors of May Street to more people but also raise valuable funds for Urban Soul. We much appreciate the valuable assistance and support of the team of ladies from May Street Church, without whose assistance we would be unable to handle such a wide range of bookings.

A New Year and time to expand the catering on offer to groups. Avril Gracey, our cafe co-ordinator, has prepared a pamphlet with menu suggestions and has been circulating these to Presbyterian Women group secretaries and mission groups as well as business connections. A visit to Church House produced

useful contacts and a booking for space to hold some summer team interviews.

Already in 2011 we have welcomed several groups to the cafe for coffee and lunch. A men's group had an enjoyable morning in the cafe and assured us they will be back and will spread the word. We look forward to a daytime senior group from Gransha.

We look forward to working with Windsor Baptist Church which is running a Christianity Explored course starting at the beginning of February and running until Easter. That will mean regular catering for the group at tea-time.

We have many lunchtime regulars from the businesses in the vicinity and look forward to welcoming them this year. We play host to the Woman's Day of Prayer team and are also the venue for monthly meeting of retired journalists from the Belfast Telegraph, who enjoy the chat, coffee and scones. Other times it can be someone just dropping in for a bit of time out, or taking a break from a busy office or an afternoon's shopping. Our door is always open.

Music Theatre For Youth, the charity which is setting up its offices at May Street, has already brought us new customers when they had rehearsals before their Beautiful Evening concert in December and again during their auditions at the beginning of the year. We look forward to having them around and doing more together.

The concerts during the Belfast Songwriters Festival at the end of February will create another fundraising opportunity by selling coffee and drinks during the interval. We have worked out what sells best and each concert gets better.

Looking further ahead, plans are taking shape for the Grace and Truth Flower Festival which runs from Thursday May 19 until Sunday May

21. We are hoping to play host to many visitors and are gearing up for a busy weekend.

The Grace and Truth Flower Festival is being held to promote May Street and also to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the publication of the King James version of The Bible.

It is amazing how many everyday expressions can be traced back to the King James version of The Bible. These include: A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, a house divided against itself cannot stand, a leopard cannot change its spots, a drop in the bucket, a fly in the ointment, a labour of love, and a thorn in the flesh.

Hence the King James version was enormously influential in the development of the English language and already the 400th anniversary year has sparked numerous newspaper articles, as well as television and radio programmes. In May, we hope that our flower festival will be up there with a host of local events. So please note the date in your diary, and spread the word.

RUBY HUTCHINSON

Urban Soul management committee

HAPPY ANNIVERSARIES

Greetings to May Street convenor Dr Rodger Crooks who marked the 30th anniversary of his ordination as a Presbyterian minister by preaching at May Street on January 9. Dr Crooks, the minister of Belvoir Presbyterian Church, was ordained at High Kirk Church in Ballymena in 1981.

But that record was bettered by the Rev Alistair Kennedy from Broughshane, one of our rota of preachers at Sunday morning services. On December 19 he informed the congregation that it was 40 years to the day since he had been

ordained – at Wellington Street in Ballymena. Mr Kennedy served in the congregations of Rasharkin, St Andrew's Belfast and Trinity Bangor, from where he retired in 2006. Mr Kennedy, who is usually accompanied by his wife Anna May on his visits to May Street, was conducting the carol service.

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 unlike Royal Mail, they all reached their recipients in time for Christmas, despite the snowy weather. Well done, Elizabeth.

Thanks too, to our new cleaner Elizabeth McKinney for having the sanctuary and the rest of the building looking spic and span not just at Christmas but into the New Year too.

CHRISTMAS GIFT SERVICE

Many thanks to the congregation for their generosity in connection with May Street's annual Christmas Gift Service, which took place on Sunday December 5. As usual, there a huge amount of toys had been left beneath the Christmas tree in the sanctuary. Stuart Leathem from the Salvation Army, who was present to accept the gifts, told us that the presents go directly to people in dire need. This is so important at this time of year as he sees increasing levels of poverty in Northern Ireland at present.

JULIE WILSON

HOW MANY LOAVES HAVE YOU?

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 4. This year the theme is "How Many Loaves Have You" and the services have been planned and written by women from Chile in South America.

It is an appropriate theme, because bread is eaten at every meal in Chile and is very much part of every day life. The women of Chile will offer what it means to them as they share this service with us.

Stretching from Peru to Antarctica, the Republic of Chile occupies a long, narrow strip of land 2,640 miles long and 110 miles wide. It is a land of incredible contrasts. It also has the highest incidence of domestic violence in Latin America and most women suffer from discrimination in some form or other. Equal opportunities are being pursued.

COUNTING ON MAY STREET

May Street is ready and waiting to play its part in the forthcoming Assembly election. Approval has been given to an application by the Electoral Office to use the May Street lecture hall for storage and checking of ballot boxes in the days leading up to the election on Thursday May 5.

MAY STREET ON YOUTUBE

Richard Connor, who was visiting Belfast from England in December to see his aunt, May Street member Winifred Connor, kindly put together a video of Belfast in the run-up to Christmas. The clip, which he posted on youtube, includes scenes from the May Street Thursday and Sunday carol services. If you watch closely, you can see a shot of the Vacancy Convenor,

Dr Rodger Crooks, strumming his guitar as he accompanies his daughter Elizabeth as she sings a solo at the Thursday service.

This is the link:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sb_4kSVTC0o

MUSIC THEATRE FOR YOUTH

Music Theatre for Youth, the charity which is setting up shop in May Street Church, went live on February 1 and is now using the Parlour as its office. In addition the organisation will be using the lecture hall for rehearsals.



Talent show: Matthew Graham (21) from Bangor takes part in an 'Acting Through Song' workshop held for Music Theatre 4 Youth participants in the May Street lecture hall over the weekend of on January 15 and 16. MT4Uth is linking up with the Guildford School of Acting to offer the GSA Musical Theatre Singing Exams. The programme was launched by the GSA's chief examiner, Professor Ross Campbell, who flew from London to hold the event at May Street. Accompanying Matthew on the piano is Andrew Robinson. ROBIN MORTON

In advance of the big move, MT4Uth held its first music theatre workshop in the lecture hall over the weekend of January 15. The charity says it is very much looking forward to moving from Donegall Street into its new 'home' at May

Street and using the facilities at Urban Soul Cafe and the lecture hall on a regular basis, once it launches its new Weekend Academy in May.



Top two: *The Guildford School of Acting's chief examiner, Professor Ross Campbell (right), chats with Belfast-based GSA examiner Barry McGonagle during a break from auditions in the May Street lecture hall on January 15.*

The January workshop marked the launch of exciting new MT4Uth partnerships, not only with May Street, but with The Guildford School of Acting (GSA). GSA chief examiner, Professor Ross Campbell, came to Belfast to introduce MT4Uth's young people and singing teachers from across Northern Ireland to his new Musical Theatre Singing Examination Syllabus which MT4Uth will be facilitating the examinations of from June 2011.

May Street is delighted to welcome MT4Uth to May Street and already their presence has added a buzz to the whole complex. We look forward to working with the charity as the weeks and months unfold.

BELFAST NASHVILLE

May Street is to be one of the venues for the 7th Belfast Nashville Songwriters Festival and Song Writing Convention which takes place at the end of February. May Street will host three concerts – Belfast's own Brian Kennedy on

Thursday February 24, Cerys Matthews from Wales on Friday February 25 and Nanci Griffith from the US on Saturday February 26.

As part of the arrangement with the promoters, a limited number of tickets for all three concerts are available from Urban Soul Cafe at May Street. They are priced at £25 each and are available from staff at Urban Soul. The proceeds from tickets which are sold at Urban Soul goes to the May Street outreach operation, so if you are interested in going to any of the concerts, please buy your tickets in advance from Urban Soul. First come, first served.



Brian Kennedy: *First ever concert at May Street takes place on February 24.*

For each of the concerts, doors open at 7.30pm and the music starts at 8.30pm. 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 from both the downstairs and the balcony. All three concerts look like being sell-outs, so don't delay.

Now for more details of the concert programme:

Brian Kennedy who recorded his first album 'The Great War of Words' in 1990, will be performing a solo concert, his first visit to May Street. In 2010, he collected the Lifetime



Welsh star: Cerys Matthews who will be singing at May Street on February 25 as part of the programme of the 7th Belfast Nashville Songwriters Festival.



Welcome back: Nanci Griffith will be back in May Street on February 26 for her third concert at the venue.

Achievement prize at Ireland's prestigious Meteor Music Awards – achievements that include two successful novels and the acclaimed TV series On Song, as well as those

highlighted by his anniversary compilation, The Very Best of Brian Kennedy.

On Friday February 25 it will be the turn of Cerys Matthews. Former lead singer and songwriter with Welsh Band Catatonia, whose hits include, 'Mulder and Scully', 'Dead From the Waist Down', and 'Road Rage', she will present a special concert featuring music from her extensive catalogue of songs both old and new. She intersperses songs with stories she has collected from her childhood in Wales and her travels around the world. According to the promoters, this concert promises to be a magical journey reaching as far as Nashville, where Cerys lived and recorded.

The following night, Saturday February 26, it is the turn of the evergreen Nanci Griffith, who will be back in May Street for the third time. Radio Ulster presenter Ralph McLean will act as master of ceremonies at the gig.

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, a well deserved tribute to an impressive artiste.

Also featuring in the concert will be Laura McGhee, a gifted young Scottish songwriter who is based in Nashville.

ROBIN MORTON

AND THERE'S MORE

May Street Church will be hosting a recital by the American countertenor Lawrence Zazzo on Sunday March 20 at 3pm. Lawrence, who hails from Philadelphia but lives in Carrickfergus at present, has been described as one of the most

outstanding singers of his generation and has performed in many of the world's finest opera houses and concert halls.



On song: International countertenor Lawrence Zazzo who will be performing a recital at May Street on the afternoon of Sunday March 20.

His opera roles have included the title role in Giulio Cesare (Metropolitan Opera New York, Brussels, Amsterdam, Bilbao, the title role in Gluck's Orfeo (Netherlands) and Oberon in A Midsummer Night's Dream.

For his recital at May Street, entitled 'Songs My Mother Taught Me: A Programme of 20th Century American Song', Lawrence will be joined by pianist Simon Lepper and will perform a variety of classic songs from composers such as Charles Ives, Samuel Barber, Ned Rorem and Andrew Gerle.

Tickets for the recital will be priced at £10 and £5 for concessions. The proceeds will be going to support two organisations which are close to

Lawrence's heart – NI Opera and Carrickfergus Women's Forum.

NI Opera is a new organisation which is dedicated to bringing high quality opera to the whole of Northern Ireland. Their mission is to widen the audience for opera and ensure that everyone feels welcome at their productions, from young to old, from rich to poor and from the traditional opera-goer to someone who has never seen an opera in their life before.

Carrickfergus Women's Forum is a support service for women who have experienced mental health issues. The women meet on a weekly basis to talk, share experiences, learn from guest speakers and short courses. The Women's Forum provides a safe, supportive, inspiring and confidential haven run by women for women.

Tickets will be available for purchase at the door on the day of the event. Please give this new venture your support.

CONGREGATIONAL COMMITTEE

A meeting of the congregational committee will take place at 7.30pm on Thursday March 10, followed by a meeting of Kirk Session.

COLLECTORS

Feb: Kathleen Rea, Gordon Kirkpatrick, Frank Boyd, Valerie Condy, Brian Gourley, Andrew Acheson.

Mar: Kathleen Rea, Robin Morton, Jenny Wilson, Arthur Acheson, Arthur Fannin.

Apr: Kathleen Rea, Christine Hewitt, Alan McCrum, Barry Bell, Robin Hewitt, Clive Gilmour.

CONGREGATIONAL REGISTER

Deaths

October 20: George Lindsay, formerly of Abbeyfield House.

January 21: Meta Mahon, of the Somme Nursing Home.

Blessed are those that die in the Lord.

GEORGE LINDSAY

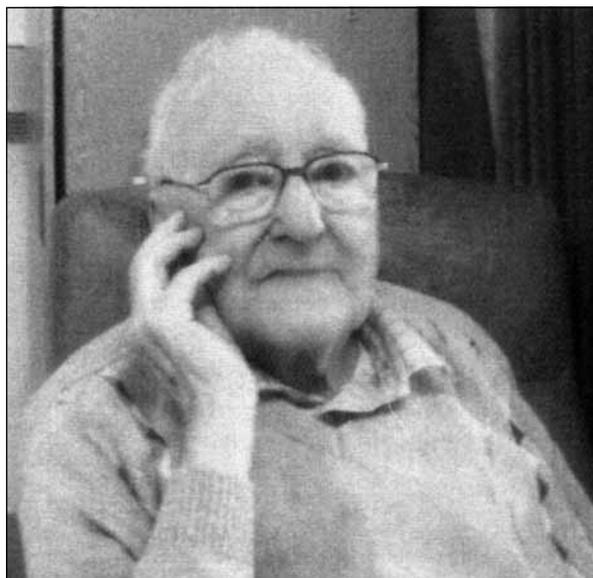
It is with regret that we record the death on October 20 of May street member George Lindsay. An active member for many years of the choir and indoor bowling club, he had been living at an Abbeyfield Home at Ballynafeigh.

Mr Lindsay was a regular contributor to The Greeting for a number of years, compiling reports on behalf of the indoor bowling club.

Born on August 9, 1918, Mr Lindsay was 92 when he died. A service of thanksgiving for his life took place at Ravenhill Funeral Church on October 23 and was conducted by the Rev Niall Bayly who is Minister for Pastoral Care at May Street. Below we print Mr Bayly's tribute to Mr Lindsay.

In the course of my visiting (as Minister for Pastoral Care at May Street Church) I have known George Lindsay for about seven years. For most of that time he has resided at the Abbeyfield Home in Ballynafeigh. That home closed recently and George moved to Haybank Residential Home. Unfortunately, he broke his hip, and was moved to Musgrave Park Hospital, thereafter to Meadowlands, the elderly care section of that hospital. He moved for a brief period then to Mount Lens residential Home in Dundonald; finally, as his health deteriorated, to the Ulster Hospital where he died peacefully on the morning of Wednesday October 20, at the age of 92, an age of which, as he approached his tenth decade, he seemed to have been quietly and rightly pleased to have achieved.

At Abbeyfield, he passed his time with a healthy interest in doing books of crosswords, one of many ways which help to keep us mentally alert. He struck me as a modest man, and someone who had had a number of interests in the course of a long life. He also came across as a man of humble and personal faith, which was confirmed by the sense of devotion he indicated during prayers which we always shared together at the conclusion of visits. I understand from family that he could be heard singing, in his own home, some of his favourite hymns, three of which have been chose especially for this service. He was also a member of May Street Church Choir, where also he was a member of the Bowling Club.



Sadly missed: George Lindsay, who died in October.

His working life involved managerial positions within the textile business, including York Street Threads and a position in Lurgan.

He loved walking, which rings a bell with those of us who appreciate the therapeutic benefits of such relaxing activity! He preferred, if possible, to walk, rather than take public transport. George was only 28 when, sadly, his wife, Sadie, died shortly after the birth of his second daughter, Rosemary, and she and her elder sister, Florence, owe much to George and their grandparents, with appreciation, for their upbringing.

George relied greatly on his daughters, and their families: Florence and her husband Hedley, and their sons, Alistair and Christopher; and Rosemary, and her husband Maurice, and their children, David, Julie, Lynne, and Kim. George was also blessed with, and cherished his great grandchildren.

We remember all in our thoughts and prayers.

NIALL BAYLY

META MAHON

It is with regret that we record the death of May Street member Martha (Meta) Mahon who passed away on January 21 at the Somme Nursing Home where she had been a resident for several years. Our sympathy is expressed to her nephew Wilson Hamilton, his wife Isobel and their family.

A service of thanksgiving for Mrs Mahon's life was held at May Street Presbyterian Church on January 25 and was conducted by the Rev Niall Bayly, minister responsible for pastoral care with the congregation.

Meta Mahon was born on December 3, 1914, the first day of World War One. She was brought up in First Ballymacarrett Presbyterian Church and she attended Mountpottinger Primary School before transferring to Victoria Academy. She was awarded a place at Queen's University, but chose not to take it up, embarking instead on a career as an assistant librarian.

Meta first met Jim Mahon when they both attended First Ballymacarrett Sunday School as children. Jim was a member of May Street but during the troubled times of the early 1920s he attended First Ballymacarrett.

They married on May 19, 1944 when Jim was home for a short period of leave from the Navy. Living with Jim's father and aunt in Madrid Street during Jim's absence, she became involved in May Street and the church's activities. She also

became a member of St John's Ambulance Brigade.

In 1963 they bought a house in Orby Drive, but then Meta joined Jim in Hong Kong, where he was based with the Merchant Navy. There they made many Chinese friends of lifelong standing. Meta also accompanied Jim on many of his voyages overseas and they travelled around the world three times.



Fond memories: Meta Mahon, pictured in 2008.

Mrs Mahon was active in the Presbyterian Women's Association in May Street and the Eastern Star organisation. They also sponsored several Chinese boys enabling them to be educated in Northern Ireland.

After Jim's death in 2002, Meta continued to live alone in Orby Drive and with the assistance of friends and family she kept a well-run home. She obtained a personal computer and started a course on computer skills at the age of 90.

Mrs Mahon was taken ill in March 2008 and after surgery she went to the Somme Nursing Home for recuperation. She enjoyed staying there and had been in good form until several weeks before she passed away peacefully on January 21.

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 at all May Street services.

Sunday services (11am)

February 13 – Dr Rodger Crooks

February 20 – The Rev Alistair Kennedy

February 27 – Dr Godfrey Brown.

March 6 – The Rev Lee Eagleson

March 13 – Dr Rodger Crooks

March 20 – The Rev Alistair Kennedy

March 27 – Dr Godfrey Brown

April 3 – The Rev Lee Eagleson

April 10 – Dr Rodger Crooks

April 17 – The Rev Alistair Kennedy

PRAY ABOUT EVERYTHING

The four-year-old son of a missionary family in Africa spotted a picture of a little pink dinosaur in a magazine and set his heart on having one. His mum knew it was impossible (the magazine was three years old), but her son never doubted God would come through for him. Ten months later, on Christmas Eve, a box from home arrived. At first glance it seemed to contain something special for everyone - except a four-year-old boy. Then they reached the bottom - and they were stunned. The lady who sent the box had no way of knowing God would use her to answer a little boy's prayer. Before taping up the box, at the last minute, she tossed in the one item impossible for his parents to provide - something so insignificant no rational adult would ever have been foolish enough to ask God for...a pink plastic brontosaurus from a fast-food restaurant promotion! Sometimes we feel foolish bothering God with little things, but we shouldn't. The Bible says: '...pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank

him for all he has done.' (Philippians 4:6 NLT). God is interested in every detail of your life; if something is important to you, it's important to Him. In Bible times two sparrows were sold for a penny (on sale you could buy five for two pennies!) yet Jesus said, '...not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it...the very hairs on your head are all numbered' (Matthew 10:29-30 NLT). When you learn to trust God in little things, you'll be able to trust Him in big ones.

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Word for Today

NEW MODERATOR

The next Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland will be the Rev Ivan Patterson, minister of Newcastle Presbyterian Church. Mr Patterson (62), a former television repair man, was nominated on February 1 by 12 of the 19 Irish presbyteries - including South Belfast.

He will take up office at the General Assembly in June in succession to the Rev Dr Norman Hamilton, who continues as Moderator until that time. Mr Patterson, minister of Newcastle for the last 20 years, said: "I am absolutely overwhelmed to be elected as Moderator. I am very happy to serve the Church and to represent its members but am somewhat daunted by the thought of the year ahead."

Mr Patterson said that he had "no problem" in worshipping with other denominations, including Catholics. He said: "We have regular services together in Newcastle, and there are very good relations between members of the main churches."

One of Mr Patterson's themes for the coming year will mark the 400th anniversary of the King James-authorized version of the Bible. He said: "I will be reflecting on how it has affected society and how we must listen afresh to what God is saying."