



The Greeting

CONGREGATIONAL MAGAZINE OF MAY STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BELFAST

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THE GOD WHO TRANSFORMS

There are people who are in the transformation business. They renovate rundown old barns and turn them into exclusive country retreats, or they buy up a tired business and turn it into a market leader. However, what they do is nothing compared with "the God who gives life to the dead" (Romans 4:17).

While Bible history is littered with examples of this, the greatest example is Jesus' resurrection. Jesus died. His burial flags this up. But God raised him from the dead. He did not simply resuscitate him. He transformed completely the physical state of Jesus' dead body, giving him a new resurrection body. This is why the New Testament writers ask us: "Why has Jesus' resurrection taken you by surprise? It is the sort of activity God has been doing since the start of history. Giving life is his thing, and what he is doing in Jesus' resurrection is showing on the biggest stage possible that he is 'the God who gives life to the dead.'"

But God's life-giving activity does not stop, even with Jesus' resurrection. He is still up to the same thing today in the way that he gives spiritual

life to us. We were spiritually dead as a result of our failure and rebellion against God (Ephesians 2:1). But God stepped into our lives to raise us from our spiritual death to a completely new life in Jesus (Ephesians 2:4-7). Each day God's life-giving resurrection power is available to us so that we might live for him (Ephesians 1:19-20).

This is God's speciality – transforming and giving new spiritual life. Have you experienced God's work in your life?

RODGER CROOKS
Vacancy Convenor

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

Minutes of the Annual Business Meeting of May Street Congregation, held in the lecture hall on Tuesday February 12, 2013.

Dr Rodger Crooks, vacancy convenor, presided, and 21 members were present. Attendance and apologies were noted in the attendance register. Dr Crooks opened the meeting with praise, Scripture reading and prayers.

Minutes: The minutes of the 2012 ABM, which had already been circulated by means of publication in The Greeting, were agreed on the proposal of Clive Gilmour, seconded by Derek Gourley. The minutes of a congregational meeting held on December 9, which had already been circulated by means of publication in The Greeting, were agreed on the proposal of Arthur Acheson, seconded by Barry Bell.

Matters arising: None.

Reports: The reports of the Kirk Session, congregational committee, Weekly Freewill Offering and the treasurer had been published in the February 2013 issue of The Greeting magazine. Andrew Acheson said there was one typographical error in the treasurer's report – the closing balance of £21,134 related to 2011, not 2010 as had been published in The Greeting. The reports were adopted on the proposal of Arthur Fannin, seconded by Gordon Kirkpatrick.

Accounts: Andrew Acheson presented the accounts for 2012, which had been audited by Gordon Kirkpatrick. Receipts amounted to £60,675 (£53,738 in 2011), while payments totalled £56,389 (£39,830), resulting in a surplus of £4,285. The Urban Soul account showed income of £49,275 (£59,922 in 2011) against expenditure of £53,666, resulting in a deficit of £4,390. The Fabric Fund account had benefited from an anonymous donation of £20,000, which meant receipts amounted to £21,645 (£3,407 in 2011) but expenditure came to £7,394 (£10,846 in 2011), producing a surplus of £14,250 (deficit in 2011 of £7,439).

In overall terms, the surplus for 2012 was £14,145, as against £2,288 in 2011. The opening balance had been £29,070, while the closing balance was £43,216.

Answering questions, Andrew Acheson said the cafe deficit of £4,000 was in line with 2011. He said that once the plan to set up a Community Interest Company (CIC) to run the cafe took effect, the way would be open for the CIC to apply to other bodies for funding.

He told the meeting that the Manse had been re-let for another year. The backlog of assessments to Church House would be cleared by the second quarter of 2013.

The accounts, which had been adopted by the congregational committee, were noted by the meeting.

Auditor: G Kirkpatrick agreed to act as auditor for another year and was duly appointed on the proposal of Arthur Acheson, seconded by Kathleen Rea. G Kirkpatrick said he wished to commend the treasurer for all his hard work.

Church organisations: The reports of the congregational organisations – Tuesday Circle, the Choir and the Peacemaking group – were taken as read, having also been published in The Greeting.

Proposal to upgrade the May Street basement: Arthur Acheson told the meeting that an opportunity had arisen for a major upgrade of the schoolroom. Outline drawings had been prepared and these were now on display in the vestibule. Arthur A said the breakthrough had come in December when Belfast City Council had offered May Street funding of £200,000 towards the project, on the condition that match funding of £50,000 was raised. Negotiations were now under way with various other funders, including the Social Investment Fund which had been set up by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister. It was anticipated that an indication would emerge by the end of March as to the likelihood of funding. If significant support were to be forthcoming, it was possible that a more ambitious development would be possible. He said the outline plans included a new gas-fired heating system, which would free up space by eliminating the need for a boiler and oil tank. There were also proposals for improved flood protection and drainage, new flooring, electrics and disabled toilets, which along with the ramp would make the premises DDA compliant. The aim, Arthur A said, was to secure an entertainments licence which would enable the premises to be used as a Christian resource centre, and for hosting public performances. In answer to questions, Arthur A said the general feeling was that the schoolroom should not be sub-divided, but he said there was no reason why a kitchen cum serving bar should not be included. He said members of the congregation should examine the draft plans and feed back their ideas. One option in the longer term, he said, was to open up a new access to the cafe from Alfred Street. Another idea was to create a paved area at the frontage of the lecture hall and position a table and chairs on it, in order to market the cafe.

Jimmy McCrossan asked what would happen if Church House decided to close May Street Church. Dr Crooks said any decision to amalgamate would be up to the congregation, although he said this possibility had so far not been raised. He said South Belfast Presbytery had been kept informed about the development, and had appointed Hubert Martin to liaise with May Street.

Arthur A told Clive Gilmour that there were no plans at present to reinstate Mr Christie's flat, although this could be considered in the longer term. He told Ruby Fannin that the investment would cover an overhaul of the electrics and the heating.

Arthur A said Presbytery had requested that the congregation be consulted about the proposals, and invited to endorse the project. He proposed that May Street congregation should approve in principle of the project, subject to further consideration of the details. J McCrossan seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.

A vote of thanks was passed to Arthur A for all his work on the project to date. He said it had been a team effort.

What's Next?: Arthur Acheson reported that since the congregational meeting on December 9, he had received two written responses. One was very enthusiastic about all three principles while the other raised some pertinent questions. One issue was whether principle one should be more specific about the venue for continuing worship in the city centre. He said that in the past, the congregation had needed to help various outreach projects. However, it was possible that in future, the reverse might be the case, with outreach programmes helping to sustain the congregation.

Arthur A referred to two instances in Belfast in which congregations had folded, churches had been sold off, and new outreach missions had been initiated. These were the 174 Trust at Duncairn on Antrim Road, and the migrant project at Ulsterville Church on Lisburn Road. Arthur A said the proposed development of the basement, under the auspices of the congregation, raised the prospect that the congregation could remain in existence while developing and overseeing new outreach activities. This, he said, was his preferred route.

A general discussion ensued. Dr Crooks said he felt there was a place for the "classic" Sunday service on offer at May Street. Ruby Fannin said that if May Street congregation was to survive it would have to adapt. Chris Hewitt observed that the congregation was dwindling. She suggested other faith communities could use the sanctuary during Sunday afternoons. Dr Crooks said his experience was that outreach activities did not add numbers to a Sunday service. Outreach was important, however, because it was the right thing to do and it would promote the Kingdom of God. The problem was that the Presbyterian Church's key measure was the numbers in attendance at Sunday service, rather than the extent of outreach. Jenny Wilson said that outreach helped to sow seeds and enabled people to experience Christian love. Arthur Acheson observed that the Presbyterian Church had been encouraging congregations to be "more than a Sunday service".

Arthur A said the Community Interest Company, which was being established to take over the Urban Soul operation, would be able to apply for funding which was beyond the congregation's reach. This meant it could operate in tandem with the congregation. Valerie Morton said the challenge for May Street was to sustain the congregation and its finances while also facilitating outreach. Arthur A said May Street records showed that 35 years ago, the congregation had been exercised about May Street's future at a time when the BB Company was being closed down. But now, in 2013, the church was still in operation and was playing host to organisations such as Street Pastors and the Underground as well as running a cafe.

Alan Gourley said the third principle was the most important, and he suggested the Sunday service should be revisited because the current format did not seem to be attracting new members.

Patricia McCrossan said the congregation needed to be kept better informed and asked how many people the Sunday night Underground gatherings were attracting. Arthur A said he understood the attendances ranged from 10 to 30, and recalled that the Rev Lee Eagleson had told the congregation at one of the Sunday services that if the numbers went beyond 50, he would split the operation into two gatherings. He maintained that the May Street congregation was kept

well informed, in particular through the regular publication of The Greeting. Dr Crooks said the Presbyterian practice was for the committee to be elected by the congregation and then to take decisions on its behalf, and said this was being adhered to at May Street.

Arthur A suggested one amendment to the first principle, namely to insert “provide” into the wording. With that proviso, he proposed that the three principles should be adopted by the congregation. This motion was seconded by Robin Hewitt and agreed unanimously.

In final form, the three principles are:

May Street should provide and promote Presbyterian Sunday Worship in the city centre;

Urban Soul is a good outreach facility and should be supported;

May Street should be innovative and open to new ideas.

Closing remarks: In winding up proceedings, Dr Crooks thanked the office-bearers and members of committee of May Street for their work, and thanked all present for their attendance. There being no further business, the meeting was closed with prayer.

ROBIN MORTON
Congregational Secretary

THE CHOIR

The choir continues to lead the praise in May Street Sunday by Sunday with hymns being selected by our organist, Colin Johnston. In April one of our visiting ministers, the Rev Alastair Kennedy, asked Colin to play “All in the April Evening” as this is one of his favourite pieces. Colin obliged with a perfect rendition.

It is with great sadness, yet with thankfulness for their lives, that I record the passing of Wilfie Lewis in February and of Corry Lyttle in May.

Wilfie was May Street’s organist for many years. He and his wife Sybil made a tremendous contribution to the life of the congregation. Even after he retired and they joined Whiteabbey congregation, he and Sybil would return to May Street for special events. They were both strong

supporters of the outreach being developed by Urban Soul.

Corry, a member of Dundela Parish Church, was choir member Kathleen Rea’s partner for 18 years. A widower, he encouraged and supported Kathleen in all her work for May Street but Corry and Kathleen also managed to make time for travelling and enjoyed wonderful holidays worldwide.

Our love and prayers are with Sybil and Kathleen at this difficult time.

In April choir members attended a production of “The Sound of Music” by St Agnes’ Choral Society in the Grand Opera House. Singing, music, acting, costumes and scenery were terrific and we rounded off the evening with supper in the Europa Hotel. We had such a lovely evening that we are planning another outing in June, venue still to be decided!

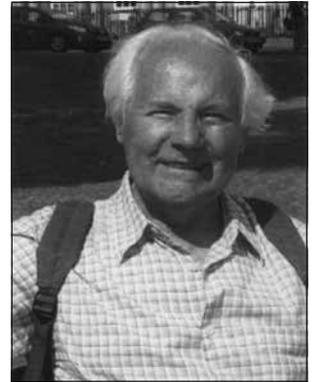
We hope that all members of the congregation will have a good summer.

VALERIE MORTON
Secretary

URBAN SOUL

It has been a busy term for Urban Soul Cafe, the May Street Church outreach arm, which operates in the basement of the church. The cafe continues to be in demand as more and more people discover it is the quiet place that they have been seeking for some “time out” and good food. It is always a pleasure to share time with groups and there have been many special moments.

One such occasion was the visit of Simon, who is from Burkina Faso and is involved in building community there. His wife Rachel is from Belfast and during their time here in April they hosted



Sadly missed: Wilfie Lewis, former organist of May Street Church who died in February. Mr Lewis was organist of May Street for nine years until he retired in 2007.

an information morning in Urban Soul for invited friends. Stories flowed in French and English. It was also the first outing of their new baby Tania, so lots of ooohs and aaahs too.



Birthday girl: Kat Kirk, one of the volunteers at Urban Soul, marked her 21st birthday on February 21 with a party in the cafe. She is surrounded by well-wishers including colleagues from May Street and Urban Soul. Pic: JENNY WILSON

We kept the exhibition of wonderful photos and wood carved children with books in the cafe during the month of April. Rachel and Simon met in Burkina Faso where Rachel's parents are Wycliffe missionaries. Wycliffe, of course, was involved in the Bible exhibit in the Grace and Truth Flower Festival in May Street in 2011.

Another special moment was the reunion of Telephone House girls, the operators who used to handle all the 999 calls at Telephone House just down the road from May Street Church, during the pressurised days of the troubles. All told, some 80 former colleagues were involved in a get-together over supper at Urban Soul. Some had not seen each other for 40 years, so they had a lot of catching up to do. You can imagine the noise as they got chatting.

A team visiting from the United States joined with the Vineyard Church prayer teams one Saturday morning in Urban Soul Cafe before going out to meet and pray for people they encountered on the streets of the city centre.

A group from the haematology unit of Belfast City Hospital returned for a second time for a

music and fund raising evening, while PW groups come from Belfast, Ballymena and beyond. More recently a group of 28 came from Lowe Memorial congregation in Finaghy for their end of year dinner, while more Lowe people came for afternoon tea at Urban Soul following a tour of the City Hall.

Valerie Tweedie, the immediate past president of PW, helped to promote Urban Soul during her year in office, and we also have great support from Lisa Skinner and Caroline Hawthorne, the PW general secretary. The PW can see the value of the cafe as a safe place in the city and as a neutral place to meet.

The value of the central, neutral location has been noted by other groups and relationships are growing for future activities. For example, we play host once a month to a gathering of retired Belfast Telegraph staff.

The cafe continues to open Monday to Friday from 9.30 to 3pm and cafe manageress Avril Gracey has been assisted by Kat, Cathy, Amy, Henry (now returned to Valencia, Spain) Martin and Harry. Our friend Angela Martin has brought her skills to organise a computerised publicity display using a laptop in the cafe, and has also been invaluable in helping to put together a Powerpoint presentation about Urban Soul.



Dancing duo: Irish dancers Noleen Lennon and Bridgin Merron entertain the audience at the Arts Care Belfast City Hospital Concert which was held in Urban Soul Cafe on May 16. The programme at the concert featured everything from bluegrass to contemporary dance to a guitar duo and a string trio. Pic: VALERIE MORTON

We appreciate the continuing support of many regulars and friends who meet up in the cafe and

we take time to encourage and value people and hope we help create a happy atmosphere. We are grateful to the ladies of May Street congregation including Kathleen, May, Chrissy, Jean, Elizabeth, Valerie and Jenny. They bring their experience when needed and were essential in the outside catering operation which Urban Soul mounted at Belfast City Hall on May 28 on the occasion of the launch the City Centre Chaplaincy initiative. Urban Soul was responsible for providing a buffet lunch for 50. Urban Soul is one of the partners in this project led by Andrew Irvine, chief executive of Belfast City Centre Management.

Urban Soul Live, our monthly gig aimed at young people, continues on the first Saturday evening of each month. Live bands perform and hot chocolate is in great demand. If you know of a group of young people who would like to join us, please get in touch. It's all very informal and it's a great way for young people to meet up.



Big night out: Some of the ladies from Lowe Memorial who enjoyed an end of term dinner at Urban Soul on May 21.

We are pleased to be able to play host to The Rev Lee Eagleson's Underground, which continues to meet on Sunday evenings in the cafe from 8pm. Members of Street Pastors use the cafe as their base at weekends when they send teams out to various nightspots to help keep vulnerable young people out of harm's way.

With advice from our consultant Kieran Harris and funding assistance from the UnLtd social enterprise charity, Urban Soul Community Interest Company was registered at Companies House in January. This means the name of Urban Soul is now registered and the CIC will be able to apply for funding that is not available to churches. We

are still awaiting the outcome of applications to various funders for match funding for £50,000 to augment the £200,000 on offer from Belfast City Council through the Local Investment Fund. The objective is to secure sufficient funding to facilitate a major upgrade of the basement area adjoining the cafe. A group from Urban Soul and May Street attended a seminar on church funding run by Dr Audrey McKeown from the office of Diane Dodds MEP. This was most beneficial.

We are grateful to David Hull from Addiction Solutions who generously designed and printed 1,000 fliers for Urban Soul. These leaflets have proved a very effective means of helping to publicise our cafe operation.

It is always important to keep Urban Soul's profile up and to this end we were delighted to be able to entertain Anna Lo MLA and Councillor Catherine Curran from the Alliance Party to coffee. This enabled us to brief the two politicians about what is happening in May Street Church and at Urban Soul. Anna Lo was most encouraging and told us we ticked all the boxes. She and Councillor Curran offered their support for our various proposals. Councillor Curran is a member of the South Belfast Council group that awarded May Street the Local Investment Fund support, so it was good to show her round and share our dream of what that funding will provide.

We have been following up community connections with South Belfast Partnership and the UnLtd links to Social Enterprise. Volunteer Now kindly awarded a grant for the cafe volunteers to help fund uniforms and a hygiene course. I am pleased to report that everyone passed.

God's hand has been guiding us thus far and I hope this little review of the past few months helps to convey an impression of how much is going on.

RUBY HUTCHINSON
Urban Soul Community Interest Company

BELFAST CITY CENTRE CHAPLAINCY

May Street and Urban Soul were well represented at the launch in Belfast City Hall on May 28 of a new initiative designed to establish a city centre chaplaincy in Belfast. The chaplaincy is the brainchild of Belfast Central Mission and Belfast City Centre Management but it is

supported by groups including Urban Soul and Street Pastors.

The Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Gavin Robinson, was present at the launch, along with Presbyterian Moderator Dr Roy Patton, the Rev John Mann from St Anne's Cathedral and Fr Gerard Fox, a chaplain from Belfast City Hospital.

The Rev Richard Johnston, superintendent of Belfast Central Mission, said he believed a chaplain could provide a key role in providing pastoral care to the city centre's 100,000 employers, staff, shoppers and residents as well as its tourists. The chaplain would be non-denominational but would link in with existing churches and ministries.

Andrew Irvine, chief executive of BCCM, who is a regular volunteer with Street Pastors, said the chaplaincy idea was a fresh expression of the church thinking through how it connects with people and serves people in the city.

The mission statement of the Belfast City Centre Chaplaincy is: "to serve every person who is in the city centre in a manner that demonstrates the love of God. To show compassion, share the Good News of the Christian gospel and to empower other Christians to impact Belfast city centre for good."

Belfast already has chaplains in hospitals, hospices, schools and football clubs, but this is the first time that a proposal has come forward to create a post for a city centre chaplain. Other cities in Britain have already taken up the idea, and it is expected that one of these chaplains will soon be invited to pay a visit to Belfast.

ROBIN MORTON

BRILLIANT BELFAST

May Street Church featured at No. 242 in the Belfast Telegraph's Brilliant Belfast supplement on April 23. We were squeezed in between Royal Avenue (No. 241) and the shipyard playwright Thomas Carnduff, (No. 243) a socialist and writer who was born in Little May Street in 1886. Carnduff is best remembered for his first poetry book, *Songs from the Shipyard* (1924).

May Street Church's claim to fame came through Dr Henry Cooke, the church's founding

minister. The blurb reads: "May Street Presbyterian Church was built for the Presbyterian reforming minister Dr Henry Cooke – the gentleman depicted in the Black Man statue in front of Inst – and is located behind the City Hall travelling along May Street towards the markets.

"Opened in 1829 in Georgian Belfast, the church was originally on the edge of the city, surrounded by green fields. It was built in the Greek Revival style on land originally occupied by Cromac Paper Mill at Joy's Dam. Today, this busy church has an Urban Soul Cafe, and is often used for musical and theatrical events including soul and gospel concerts during the Belfast Festival at Queen's where the likes of performer Duke Special raise the attractive roof."

Incidentally, a recent search of the May Street deeds, made in connection with our funding application to Belfast City Council, uncovered a dusty document from 1830 signed by Henry Joy in which the land at Joy's Dam was made over to the trustees of May Street Church. The deeds are lodged safely in a solicitor's office and will shortly be returned to Church House for safe keeping.



Tuneful team: The Ward 10 North Nurses Choir held its first public performance at the Arts Care BCH concert in Urban Soul Cafe on May 16. The numbers included "I Dreamed A Dream" and "The Lord's My Shepherd". The event was organised by Dr Robert Cuthbert, consultant haematologist at Belfast City Hospital in aid of Arts Care BCH and was attended by staff, patients and their families. Pic: VALERIE MORTON

WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

May Street Church was the venue for the Women's World Day of Prayer service in Belfast on March 1, the programme for which was prepared by the Christian women of France. Margie Savage

of WWDP reports that the organisation held its first ever service in Belfast in May Street over 70 years ago and they are looking forward to marking their 75th anniversary with us, which would be a great record. Links with WWDP will be further strengthened when the organisation holds its annual conference in May Street on the morning of September 21.

EASTER EVANGELISM

A report by May Street committee member Brian Gourley about his experience taking part in an Easter evangelism mission in Dublin at Easter.

I was a member of a Young Life team of around 40 people and we worked alongside Grace Bible Fellowship in Pearse Street in Dublin. During the daytime we did "open airs" which meant one team would go to one area of the city and the other team in a different area usually near the James Joyce statue.

It was estimated that over the weekend we had 75 significant conversations discussing and sharing the good news of Easter that is Jesus death and resurrection. We had Bibles and gospel tracts (universal language) to give out to those interested and searching for purpose in life.

It was cold in Dublin but well worth it. Keep in mind, folks, that if Christ be not risen then our preaching is in vain. We are also to remain steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord for our labour is not in vain - quotes taken from 1 Corinthians 15.

We understand that a couple of the passers-by who heard us witnessing in the open air in the past have now become Christians. This is a huge encouragement to us all, to know that our labour and perseverance is not in vain.

The three evenings were held in Grace Bible Fellowship where we had an Intentional night, a Murder Mystery event and The Passover plus an insight into the Resurrection.

Young Life have been going to Dublin now every Easter for just over 30 years. Please remember this outreach in your prayers and hope that it bears much fruit as only time will tell. I believe it is important that May Street reaches out to others, be it through Urban Soul or Street Pastors. We are

all trying to make a difference and to be a light in the darkness.

BRIAN GOURLEY

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

During the ongoing 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 12 midday.

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. The Thursday services will take a break in July and August, the final service for this term being on June 27.

Sunday services (11am)

JUNE 2013

16 - Rev Alistair Kennedy
23 - David McAuley
30 - Dr Godfrey Brown

JULY 2013

7 - Rev Lee Eagleson
14 - Rev Alistair Kennedy
21 - Dr Rodger Crooks
28 - Dr Harry Uprichard

AUGUST 2013

4 - Rev Drew Aberneathy
11 - Mr David McAuley
18 - Rev Alistair Kennedy
25 - Dr Rodger Crooks

SEPTEMBER 2013

1 - Rev Alistair Kennedy
8 - Rev Drew Abernethy
15 - Dr Rodger Crooks
22 - Dr Harry Uprichard
29 - Dr Godfrey Brown (Communion)

LOUD AND CLEAR

Thanks to Paul Boyd from UTV, who is expert in many things including sound systems, for his help with improving the PA system in May Street Church. His knowhow produced a cost-

effective solution which has resulted in a major improvement, and people in the very back pews can now follow the service much better. Paul has also put his talents to work in Urban Soul, where he has set up an excellent sound and light system for the Urban Soul Live gigs. Sound man!

BB SERVICE

May Street was once again the venue for the annual service held by the Boys' Brigade officers. The service took place this year on April 14 and everything went well. The BB officers were accompanied by the smartly attired Symington Memorial Band on their parade around the City Hall. Praise in May Street was provided by members of the band. Although May Street no longer has a BB Company, we continue to keep up our links with the organisation, primarily by means of the monthly lunch for BB officers which is laid on by the ladies of the congregation.

WEDDING DAY



Taking their vows: A view down the flower-bedecked aisle of Gillian and John taking part in the marriage ceremony at May Street on May 25. CHRIS HEWITT

May Street hosted its first wedding for around four years when Gillian Collins and John Grattan

were married in the church on Saturday May 25. The service was conducted by Pastor Sheila Smyth and the church was beautifully decorated with flowers for the occasion. Gillian selected May Street as the venue for her wedding when she was taking part in a concert there a couple of years ago. She was a member of a choir which was performing in May Street. We wish Gillian and John God's blessing in the years to come.

SPREADING THE WORD

May Street has granted permission to Belfast City Centre Management to put an eyebolt into the front wall of our parlour building. This will be used to anchor one end of a wire which will stretch at high level across May Street, the other anchor probably being in BB House. It will be used to display banners which will help to publicise various events in the city centre and one of its first uses will be to draw attention to Urban Soul. At Christmas time, the wire will be used to support festive lights. It should all help bring a bit of buzz back to May Street and highlight the church's continuing role.

FEED THE SOUL

Feed the Soul is our outreach to the homeless which was launched at the start of March. Sunday by Sunday our friend Damien Smyth and his team set up the lecture hall and throw open the doors from midday to 3pm to anyone in need of a hot meal. The menu ranges from stew and wheaten bread to soup, all washed down with a good cup of tea. The take-up has varied from week to week but Damien reports that the feedback has been very positive.

"We see this as a chance to extend a welcome to those who are most in need and we believe it is a chance to show God's love at work," he said. "I am very grateful to May Street for facilitating this outreach and to various members of the congregation who have given us encouragement and practical support.

"I am also indebted to my regular squad of workers such as Stephen and Gail from Carnmoney Presbyterian Church and Barry from Larne. This is a real team effort and we feel we are making a difference to people's lives. Those

who avail of the lunches enjoy not just the food but the company, and they are so appreciative that someone has gone out of their way to provide for them.

“We can feel God’s hand is upon this project and are so pleased that it has gathered momentum over the past three months and we have new faces each week as well as the regulars. We intend to review the operation at the end of June but we feel there is an increasing need for this sort of outreach.”

Arthur Acheson, Clerk of Session at May Street, said they were delighted to have been able to offer Damien and his team the use of the lecture hall and kitchen.

“It is good for facilities such as these to be used and we are pleased that May Street can play its part in facilitating this outreach to those who, often through no fault of their own, have ended up on the streets,” he said.

“The initial lunch was held on Christmas Day but since then it has developed into a weekly operation which is clearly providing much needed assistance to the homeless. We are so impressed by the dedication and commitment shown by Damien and his team and we wish them every blessing.”

ROBIN MORTON

EUROPEAN HERITAGE OPEN DAY

May Street Church will again be taking part in the European Heritage Open Day event, which will be held on the weekend of September 14/15. The church will be open for visitors from 10am to 5pm on the Saturday and from 12 noon to 4pm on the Sunday. We will be offering conducted tours by members of the congregation - and an opportunity for visitors to go up the steps to the pulpit. We are grateful to the team at EHOD 2013 for including May Street in the programme, and look forward to welcoming more visitors than ever to our historic church. May Street Church, built in 1829, is one of the few Georgian buildings in Belfast still being used for its original purpose so if you have never taken a good look at the church or heard much about its history, this is your chance.



View from the pulpit: Alliance MLA Anna Lo (left) and her party colleague Councillor Catherine Curran survey May Street Church from the pulpit. Pic: RUBY HUTCHINSON

BELFAST COMMUNITY GOSPEL CHOIR

BCGC, the 90-strong choir conducted by the inimitable Marie Lacey, took the Waterfront Hall by storm on the evening of Saturday June 1. The concert was entitled “Ain’t No Stopping Us Now” and it was a sell-out with more an audience of 1,900, including dignitaries such as the First Minister, Peter Robinson, the Lord Mayor, Gavin Robinson and the leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, Mike Nesbitt. The enthusiasm of the choir, which holds its rehearsals in the lecture hall at May Street, was infectious and soon the audience was on its feet, clapping along in time with the music. Well done to Marie and the rest of the team for putting on a great night’s entertainment.

DEADLINE

The deadline for all contributions to the next issue of The Greeting is Sunday September 22.

COLLECTORS

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

COMMUNION

Communion services will take place in May Street on Sunday June 16 and Sunday September 29.

COMMITTEE MEETING

A meeting of Kirk Session and Congregational Committee will be held at 7.30pm on Thursday June 20.

MAY STREET WEBSITE

Big changes are afoot at the May Street Church website. Thanks to the assistance of Simon Killen from designers Xzopia and our own Colin McKeown, creative director of Whitespace, the website has been undergoing a transformation. The new-look, more attractive, website is due to boot up during June, so give it a go. There is a new website address: www.maystreetchurch.com And please note that the May Street email address has also changed, the new address being info@maystreetchurch.com

SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS



Cleaning up: Some of the students who successfully undertook a food hygiene course at Urban Soul on February 23 with the support of the Volunteer Now organisation. The course was run by Tommy Burns, a Co-op Learning and Development Officer from St Marys Church in Ballybeen. Pic: JENNY WILSON

On February 23 a course was run in Urban Soul to train cafe volunteers in a CIEH (Council

in Environmental Health) Level 2 Award in Food Safety and Catering. The visitor tutor and course leader was Tommy Burns, a Co-Op Learning and Development Officer from St Mary's Church in Ballybeen.



Corridors of power: The Rev Richard Johnston (left), superintendent of Belfast Central Mission with the Urban Soul team which handled the catering at the launch in Belfast City Hall on May 28 of the City Centre Chaplaincy Initiative. The catering corps are (from left) Jenny Wilson, Angela Martin, Henry Lermont, Avril Gracey, May Mercer and Ruby Hutchinson.

Attending were four of our own cafe volunteers, five of our church ladies, three ladies from Townsend Street congregation, and four volunteers from Feed the Soul. After coffee/tea and scones all served by cafe manageress Avril Gracey, we worked through a number of work sheets with the help of a Powerpoint presentation and comprehensive tutoring from Tommy, covering a range of topics.

These issues included basic definitions, contamination, bacterial reactions at different temperatures, high risk foods, checking and recording refrigerator temperatures, personal hygiene, to clean and/or disinfect. At each stage we took notes and engaged in small group discussions over shared written question/answer sheets. The atmosphere was relaxed and everyone participated with enthusiasm.

We broke for lunch shortly after midday and enjoyed Avril's hot soup with fresh rolls and traybakes as we chatted together. Then it was time for our "finals". This comprised of 30 multi-choice questions and answers. And when we got our results two weeks later, everyone had passed, so congratulations all round.

Urban Soul proved to be an ideal venue for this course and our thanks go to Avril Gracey for

keeping us fed and watered, to Tommy Burns for his tuition, and to my Volunteer Now group viz Ian Cardwell who provided a generous grant to underpin all the funding. And warm thanks also to all the willing volunteers who undertook the course. Urban Soul and May Street Church catering will reap the benefits in the months and years to come.

CHRISTINE HEWITT

HE KNOWS

Thou knowest my way
How lone, how dark, how cheerless.
If thy dear hand I fail in all to see.
Bright with thy smile of love, my heart is fearless,
When in my sorrow I can lean on thee
Give me thy presence.
Go then Lord before me.
Make a plain path where all is rough and drear.
So let me trust the love that watches o'er me.
And in these shadows still believe thee near.

TIME

Time proves the worth of friends,
Tests them and tries them.
Life alters many things,
Changing our view.
Tearing the mask from the false and the trivial,
Making us value the real and the true.

STRENGTH

We are given strength to bear the burdens of each day.
Grace sufficient for the hour and light to see the way.
Whether sufficient for the hour and light to see the way.
Whether in the vale of shadows or on heights sublime.
Live your life with hope and courage.
One day at a time.

WORDS

Sticks and stones may break our bones but
words will break our hearts.

CHILD OF MY LOVE

Child or my love, fear not the unknown morrow,

Dread not the new demand life makes of thee;
Thy ignorance doth hold no cause for sorrow
Since what thou knowest not is known to Me.

Thou canst not see today the hidden meaning
Of my command, but thou the light shall gain;
Walk on in faith, upon my promise leaning,
And as thou goest all shall be made plain.

One step thou seest – then go forward boldly,
One step is far enough for faith to see,
Take that, and thy next duty shall be told thee,
For step by step thy Lord is leading thee.

Stand not in fear, thy adversaries counting,
Dare every peril, save to disobey;
Thou shalt march on, all obstacles surmounting,
For I, your Lord, will open up the way.

Therefore go gladly to the task assigned thee,
Having My promise, needing nothing more
Than just to know, where'er the future find thee,
In all thy journeying I go before.

TOMORROW

He was going to be all a mortal could be –
Tomorrow.
No one could be kinder or braver than he –
Tomorrow.
A Friend who was weary and troubled he knew
Who'd be glad of a laugh and who needed it, too,
On him he would call and see what he could do –
Tomorrow.

Each morning he stacked up the letter he'd write –
Tomorrow.
And thought of the folks he would fill with delight –
Tomorrow.
It was too bad, indeed, he was busy today.
And hadn't a minute to stop on his way,
More time I will have to give others, he'd say –
Tomorrow.

The greatest of workers this man would have been
– Tomorrow.
The world would have known him had he ever
seen – Tomorrow.
But the fact is, he died and he faded from view,
And all that he left here when living was through
Was a mountain of things he intended to do –
Tomorrow

Poems Contributed by Elizabeth Doran