



# The Greeting

**CONGREGATIONAL MAGAZINE OF MAY STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BELFAST**

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<i>Minister Emeritus:</i>	The Rev James Barnes, 3 Onslow Drive, Bangor BT19 7HQ Tel 9145-2461
<i>Vacancy Convenor:</i>	Dr Rodger Crooks, 10 The Beeches, Belfast, BT8 6PP Tel 07746-698528
<i>Session Clerk:</i>	Arthur Acheson, 56 Quarry Road, Belfast BT4 2NQ Tel 9076-0691
<i>Secretary and Editor:</i>	Robin Morton, 13 Sharman Gardens, Belfast BT9 5GE Tel 9066-0381
<i>Treasurer:</i>	Andrew Acheson, 22 Kirkliston Drive, Belfast, BT5 5NX Tel 9065-4114
<i>Urban Soul Cafe:</i>	Avril Gracey, Cafe Manager "Urban Soul" < <a href="mailto:urbansoulcafe@live.com">urbansoulcafe@live.com</a> > Tel 9032-5554
<i>May Street email:</i>	<a href="mailto:info@maystreetchurch.com">info@maystreetchurch.com</a>

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## LEARN TO WAIT

The Psalmist writes: "...I trust in You, O Lord; I say: 'You are my God.' My times are in Your hand..." (vv. 14-15 NKJV). As you walk with God you'll find that you spend more time waiting than you do receiving. And when you receive what you're waiting for, then you'll begin waiting for something else! So if you don't learn to wait with joy, you'll live in frustration.

Paul writes, "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9 KJV). "Due season" is when God knows the time is right, not when you think it is. God has a set time for accomplishing things in your life, so you might as well settle down and wait because that's when it will happen, and not before.

God knows what you need, when you need it, and how to get it to you. You ask: "And what am I supposed to do while I'm waiting?" Trust Him!

One Bible teacher writes: "God has taught me to keep living the life I now have while I'm waiting

for the things that are in my heart to come to pass. We become so intent on trying to give birth to the next thing, that we neither enjoy nor take care of the things at hand. I had a vision from God ten years before I began to see it fulfilled. During those years I believe I missed a lot of joy by trying to give birth outside of God's timing. Learn to enjoy where you are, while you are waiting to get to where you want to be."

*Reproduced with kind permission from United Christian Broadcasters (UCB) Thought for The Day*

## ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the Annual Business Meeting of May Street Presbyterian Church will take place after morning worship on Sunday February 16, 2014. The meeting is expected to commence at around midday. Notification of this meeting has already been given by means of the Sunday service intimations.

The reports which will be presented are printed in this copy of The Greeting. They will not be read

out at the ABM but members of the congregation will have an opportunity to ask questions and raise matters of concern.

An election was held in 2011, and the existing committee elected for a three-year term. It is proposed, however, simply to re-elect the existing committee and a motion to this effect will be put forward at the meeting.

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 Prayers
- 2 – Apologies
- 3 – Adoption of minutes of 2013 ABM (already circulated by means of publication in The Greeting); (proposer and seconder required)
- 4 – Matters arising
- 5 – Report of Kirk Session for year ending December 31, 2013 (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
- 11 – Re-election of existing members of Congregational Committee (proposer and seconder required)
- 10 – Adoption of main reports (proposer and seconder required)
- 11 – Reports from congregational organisations:  
The Choir  
Tuesday Circle  
Peace Agent
- 12 – May Street's future: An update on a recent meeting of Kirk Session and Congregational Committee.
- 13 – Any other business
- 14 – Closing Prayers

ROBIN MORTON  
Congregational Secretary

## KIRK SESSION REPORT

The Kirk Session is indebted to the Convenor of Vacancy, Dr Rodger Crooks, for his continuing

guidance during 2013, his active involvement in the mid-week services on Thursdays, his pastoral care and visitation, for ensuring we are well provided with ministers on Sundays and for his work with Session and Congregational Committee. No congregation would choose to have a “vacancy”, particularly a long one, but we continue to be driven forward by good messages and a good heart.



**Welcome Cuppa:** A number of groups which attended the M13 (formerly Mandate) Christian conference at Waterfront Hall in Belfast on the November 9 came to Urban Soul for catering, and one group attended morning service the following day, November 10. Pictured chatting with Robin Morton, May Street Congregational Secretary over a cup of coffee in the lecture hall after the Sunday service, are (from left) Stuart Lidgett, Mark Blower, Neil Joubert and Rob Marais. Along with their minister, the Rev George Rodgers, the group had travelled from Werrington, near Peterborough, to attend the event and all except Neil worship at Werrington Church of England Parish Church.

The many people whose lives May Street touches each year include members, regular visitors, one-off tourists and a great number who come to us formally or informally, regularly or occasionally, for their own reasons. Sometimes these are work reasons – we do business with many people and agencies and we hope to do more. Sometimes people come for personal reasons and we know that the variety of their circumstances is huge. Being open six or seven days a week would be difficult for churches with resources and staff in abundance. May Street's impact and capacity far exceed its statistics.

There are very distinct differences between city centre churches and those which have a suburban location. It is possible to do things in the city centre which are simply impossible in a close-knit suburb. Both privacy and publicity are more

## CONGREGATIONAL COMMITTEE

acute in the city centre. The concept of Shared Space is an important ambition of local and central government. Suburban shared space can be very difficult indeed. People can feel exposed and uncomfortable in places with which they are unfamiliar. City centre May Street is a shared space – it has to be. Sometimes sharing is not easy – proximity in time or space means that small issues can become inflated beyond their importance. Sometimes we have to invent rapid responses to deal with problems as they arise. We have learned techniques in May Street that could be made more widely available – if we had more time to write about them. Our various works are based on Christian principles and involve more than tolerance of difference. We celebrate the variety of people with whom May Street comes into contact and admire the passion of their ideas and works. Sometimes we find sharing and change difficult and that gives us all the more reason to allow God to lead us in His own time.

We have not departed from the principles we deliberately established last year to encourage us to maintain the excellent work in the church and cafe, to accept that things are changing and to seek to embrace innovative ways to do things. Our worship remains traditional in format, while incorporating new ideas which come along from time to time. Traditions represent the best of the many years of experience which exist in May Street. They have been distilled and work well for us. If they change, they change slowly. Traditions evolve. The installation of an organ 100 years ago was not only revolutionary but was much opposed by certain members of the congregation in 1914. Organ music is now celebrated as a completely integral part of our “traditional” worship services.....

That is why our third principle of innovation is so important. We acknowledge that change happens but perhaps it is good that it happens a little more slowly, with a little more grace, in church than in the streets around us. We must never disconnect from those streets, we must always accept and celebrate difference and if we can ‘*calm the change*’ for each person with whom we come into contact, our continuing presence here in May Street remains vital for this city.

ARTHUR ACHESON  
Clerk of Session

A Chinese proverb states: “May you live in interesting times”. And after another year of challenges and opportunities, May Street congregational committee might well adopt the saying as its motto. Indeed, such has been the pace of change that times have been a little too interesting on occasion.

The challenges are many and varied. May Street Church faces the ongoing problems of an ageing and dwindling congregation. As our treasurer will confirm, our finances are under increasing pressure as bills rise, particularly for energy and water, and for the maintenance of our historic but temperamental building. As far as the building is concerned, the years are there and we regularly have to call in electricians to repair lights and builders in to fix locks, roofs or flooring.

But there are, conversely, so many opportunities. What keeps us going is that we feel May Street has been placed in the city centre for a purpose. We are ideally positioned in the heart of the city to proclaim the Christian message to the wider community, and to reach out to those in need. Outreach is now a major part of the May Street mission and this is now central to committee’s thinking and strategy.

Our primary outreach is the Urban Soul Cafe, which operates Monday to Friday 9am to 3pm. Under the caring leadership of cafe manager Avril Gracey, Urban Soul continues to provide a safe haven in the midst of the city’s bustling and bruising streets. It is an oasis in which people can obtain both bodily and spiritual refreshment. If customers require it, there is a listening ear, but quite often it is just somewhere people come to get “their head showered”, to use the vernacular. And for those who just want to check their emails over a cup of coffee, we offer free wi-fi.

Such are the cashflow challenges that we can afford only one salary, and that is for the cafe manager. So in order to keep the doors open Avril has to rely on the services of a team of volunteers, some from within the congregation but chiefly young people who have no previous connection with May Street. Some are from overseas, some come and stay for a while, some like to include one or two days a week in their weekly programme, but they all receive training and quickly become part of the team.

Over the past year we have been working with a couple of charities which see an opportunity to use Urban Soul as a suitable location to help vulnerable young people regain social skills and self-esteem. It is a scheme that is of mutual benefit and the value that such people place on their role in the cafe is humbling. It is most rewarding to see their self-confidence soaring as they start to get involved in the cafe team.

The operation of Urban Soul is overseen by a management committee which is made up of May Street representatives and individuals from beyond the congregation who see the value of what we are trying to achieve and who have committed themselves to cause. As reported last year, we have formed an embryonic Community Interest Company which we hope in time will take full responsibility for the cafe. Until sufficient funds are in place to make the cafe self-sustaining, the CIC will remain dormant.

At present May Street continues to support Urban Soul by offering rent-free, rates-free accommodation and by paying most of the utilities bills. The congregational committee sees the cafe as one of the pillars of the May Street operation and we pay tribute to Avril for her unstinting efforts to keep the show on the road. Despite all the difficulties, we are still there, and that is a reason to give thanks to the customers, the staff, the supporters and, primarily, God.

Urban Soul relies increasingly on special events to augment its day-to-day income, and we are indebted to various people who have taken ownership of this aspect of the cafe's life. In particular, we are grateful to Paul Boyd for his major contribution towards the popular monthly Urban Soul Live concerts. Urban Soul is keen to cater for groups during the day or in the evening so if you are looking for a chic and welcoming city centre location for the next meeting of your group, look no further.

Among those who are already using Urban Soul in this way are the Street Pastors, who use the cafe as their meeting place on Friday and Saturday nights. The volunteers get their briefing at May Street, don their uniforms and then head out to various nightspots with the aim of keeping young people out of harm's way. Often, they do not arrive back at May Street to debrief until 2am or later, but the work they do is invaluable.

On Sunday evenings, Urban Soul is the venue for The Underground, an informal worship service run by our friend and occasional preacher, the Rev Lee Eagleson. His outreach is aimed at the 20-40 age group from all religious backgrounds and also those with no previous connection to church. It is a pioneering ministry and one which May Street committee is keen to support.

A more recent outreach is Feed the Soul. This is a weekly initiative aimed at meeting the needs of the homeless. It is run by Damien Smith, who is supported by volunteers including a team from Carnmoney Presbyterian Church. At present this is a pilot project which is kept under review but despite fluctuating numbers committee sees it at present as worth persevering with. From 2pm to 4pm each Sunday, the doors of May Street lecture hall are thrown open to all and free lunches served of soup and sandwiches. Our thanks to Damien and all those involved in this operation.

Nowadays it is important for all those involved in volunteering for outreach to be aware of their obligations under safeguarding policies for children and, more importantly in our case, vulnerable adults. In September May Street Kirk Session signed up to the Presbyterian Church's safeguarding guidelines, Taking Care. We are in process of ensuring that all volunteers are approved under the Access NI criminal record checks scheme.

In recent years our income has been boosted by donations for the use of our premises for concerts and conferences but committee has been aware over the past year that income from these sources has been decreasing. The sanctuary is a beautiful and historic venue with excellent acoustics, and this helped us secure one booking in May for a wedding which resulted in a generous donation, for which we are grateful. And in October, May Street Church was the setting for a concert by the Grosvenor Choir, which was celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

There is a growing public awareness that May Street Church is an architectural gem. Dating from 1829, it is one of the few Georgian buildings in the centre of Belfast still being used for its original purpose. This level of interest is underlined each September when we take part in the European Heritage Open Day event run across Northern Ireland by the Department of the Environment.

We open the church to the public for a weekend and are pleased to be able to give visitors guided tours and answer their many and varied questions. There is a definite wow factor as people who have passed the outside of the building many times step inside for the first time. And increasingly, we find visitors from overseas among those who sign our visitors' book.

We would love our sanctuary, halls and meeting rooms to be used more frequently. Since January 2011, the charity Music Theatre for Youth has been using the upstairs Parlour room for its offices, which has both given a bit of a buzz to the church during the week, and also produced donations for our coffers. An added bonus was that for a time, MT4Uth used our halls and the sanctuary for rehearsals and concerts. Now, however, MT4Uth has decided to relocate its office at Titanic Quarter, so at the end of December 2013 we bade farewell to the team after three happy years. We wish MT4Uth well in their new home.

We are delighted, too, that since September 2012 we have been able to accommodate the renowned Belfast Community Gospel Choir, which uses the lecture hall for its fortnightly rehearsals. The lecture hall is also the location for a midweek meeting of Weightwatchers. May Street ladies provide a monthly luncheon for a Boys' Brigade officers group who meet for fellowship and food. It is lovely to see the hall coming alive again. In addition, we have been able to play host to the BB for its annual parade service.

But committee is aware that for all its landmark importance, May Street Church is lacking in modern amenities and disabled access. To this end, we have been submitting applications for grant aid to help us regenerate the "schoolroom" area of our basement, adjacent to Urban Soul Cafe. The idea is that we can open up a large space which will be capable of being used for a wide range of purposes – for concerts, meetings, workshops, drama, music, rehearsals, training or small conferences.

The project would see the schoolroom being modernised and upgraded, with a proper heating system, new lighting, and improved flooring which would include flood protection measures. As part of the scheme, we would like to see the entrance lobby to the lecture hall – our main access from the street, being improved and made more welcoming.

At the same time, our emergency exit at the rear of the building would be further improved. The result, we hope, is that the schoolroom would qualify for an entertainments licence. If this development goes ahead, it will not only be an asset in its own right, but it will significantly increase footfall in Urban Soul Cafe. The more groups we can attract to our new 21<sup>st</sup> century venue, the greater the demand for catering from Urban Soul. It is another part of the jigsaw.

All this costs money and we are delighted to have been offered a grant of £200,000 under Belfast City Council's Local Investment Fund. This, however, can only be unlocked if we secure match funding of £50,000, and we are at present at an advanced stage in our application to another funder for this money. At the same time, we have submitted an application to a third potential funder for help with the upgrading of the flooring in the room.

If all the applications prove successful, we could see work starting in the summer of 2014, so watch this space. We have been keeping South Belfast Presbytery fully informed as the process has unfolded, and have been grateful for their support, along with the commitment of various outside bodies which are keen to explore the potential of making use of such a facility. Among those who have expressed an interest are Belfast Education and Library Board's youth team, Include Youth, Belfast City Centre Management, and Volunteer Now. To all of these organisations, we express our thanks.

Filing the application forms has been useful in that it has reminded committee of the importance of good governance. To this end, we have gathered the deeds for the Church Manse from the offices of various solicitors' practices and lodged them back in one place in Church House. Some of the documents dated from 1829 when the handwritten lease was signed for the land upon which our church is built. The copperplate writing is beautiful, but thank goodness for computer keyboards.

The Presbyterian Historical Society has been helping us by assembling an archive of our church magazine "The Greeting". Again, some of the magazines date back to the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and they tell a fascinating story of the development of May Street. Our researches also unveiled dusty copies of some

early congregational reports. Interestingly, the annual report for 1899 suggests that the concerns we have today are little different from those being expressed more than a century ago.

The Kirk Session report in 1899 speaks of “room for regret” over the “removal of families to the suburbs”, which it says has led to the “withdrawal of both members and resources.” The report also bemoans the level of support for the May Street Centenary Fund. While a considerable sum has been subscribed, it says, “only a few comparatively have yet taken their part”. Plus ca change and all that.

Despite this foreboding, May Street overcame those problems and today we trust and pray that we will be given guidance as to what the best way forward for our church is. The congregational committee still maintains that we operate a valid and important ministry in the city centre and that our location is too valuable to let go. We believe we have a duty to upgrade our fabric and to create a viable Christian resource in the heart of Belfast.

May Street is imbued with a sense of history and this year we look forward to celebrating a centenary. Our famous pipe organ was installed by JJ Binns of Leeds in the summer of 1914 - at a cost of £850. It is one of the few surviving examples of a Binns Organ still in its original state and we intend to make the most of this anniversary during summer 2014.

Perhaps May Street’s greatest claim to fame, though, is that in 2014, 185 years since May Street Church first opened its doors, we are still in business. Our future lies in God’s hands and there is every indication that 2014 will be even more interesting than the year just past.

ROBIN MORTON  
Congregational Secretary

## TREASURER’S REPORT

*Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2013*

Once again, this report is prepared without complete figures for Urban Soul Cafe as they are still being finalised at the time of writing. Our cafe manager has been suffering from computer trouble but we will have the data finalised in time to publish our audited account for the Annual Business Meeting.

Provisional figures for the main church account are as follows: Expenditure exceeded income by £8,486. Notable expenditure for the year includes Presbyterian Church in Ireland Assessment of £10,542, Water & Sewage of £5,543 due to a water leak (2012: £2,166).

Our opening balance was £39,671 (2012: £21,134), receipts £49,982 (2012: £82,320), payments £58,469 (2011: £63,784) leaving a closing balance of £31,184 (2012: £39,671).

A Community Interest Company (CIC) has now been established to manage Urban Soul Cafe, but it cannot take over ownership of the cafe operation until the cafe is entirely self-sustaining. While much progress has been made during 2013, the cafe still relies on donations from a number of sources to continue its work.

May I take this opportunity to thank our honorary auditor, Gordon Kirkpatrick, for his continued insight to ensure that the accounts present a true and fair view of the financial position of May Street Church. 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

## WEEKLY FREEWILL OFFERING

The WFO has declined by £431 from £14,416.50 in 2012 to £13,985.50 in 2013. This is not as bad as it might seem as some members of the Congregation are supporting the Urban Soul Cafe by reducing their WFO giving.

These members feel it is very important that Urban Soul Cafe continues to act as a vital component of the church’s programme. Unfortunately our other commitments have suffered, such as the United Appeal, Flower Fund, World Development Appeal etc.

In these difficult times financial giving becomes extremely hard but we must thank all who have donated generously throughout the year. With the assistance of outside grants we hope and pray that 2014 will see a more glorious time for our beloved May Street Church.

BARRY BELL  
WFO Convenor

## TUESDAY CIRCLE

Our season started in September with the outing to Dundonald Ice Bowl for a spot of ten pin bowling. Fifteen ladies competed and there was much laughter and encouragement for some whose technique was a bit rusty and I think everyone had a good time. After the bowling there was a cup of tea and biscuits for all and we all went home happy.

The speakers in October were Rev Alastair Kennedy and his wife Anna Mae. The subject was their visit to Peru where their daughter was working with the underprivileged people and there was a great many of them. We saw the pictures on their Power Point presentation, they shared the commentary and it really was a memorable evening. They have done many such trips so perhaps sometime in the future they will share those experiences with us too.

This year we decided to focus our meetings on the months when hopefully the weather would not be frosty, foggy or snowy as last year was in January and March, so there have been no meetings in November, January or February. Ironically, the weather has not so far been too severe but we still think it was a prudent decision.

Our Christmas meal was held at Harrison's Farm restaurant at Greyabbey one afternoon in early December. We chose the timing in order to avoid evening driving and it was a great success. A lovely meal was enjoyed and a pleasant time with plenty of conversation and then some retail therapy as we were told there was another reduction on the merchandise on display so we made the most of the bargains to complete our Christmas shopping.

We plan to have our next meeting on March 25 when Raymond Crooks, alias The Singing Chef, will entertain us in his particular way. He does a little cooking, some singing and will give us his Christian message. A warm welcome is now given to **all members** of the congregation to join us on that evening to enjoy The Singing Chef and a little light supper. Tuesday March 25 at 7.30 pm. See you then.

Further in the future, the April meeting will be a talk by Ian McClune whose interest is clocks old and new and he will share his hobby with us and also invites us to bring any clocks of interest which

we may have at home whether they are going or not and he will have a look at them. Another fascinating evening lies ahead.



**Christmas Cheer:** Enjoying the Tuesday Circle Christmas lunch at Harrison's near Greyabbey are (from left) Betty McVicker, Muriel Nelson, May Mercer and Ena Kirkpatrick. KATHLEEN REA

May and June we hope to organise outings when hopefully there will be glorious sunshine on beautiful spring evenings for a boat trip up the Lagan in May and a visit to a Garden Centre and a meal out in June.

During the year two of our members suffered bereavements. Kathleen Rea's partner, Corry Lyttle passed away suddenly and Annie Booker's husband died after a lengthy illness. We shared with them in their grief and still remember them in our prayers.

We plan to have another year of interest and fun in 2014 so we look ahead with confidence.

ENA KIRKPATRICK  
Secretary

## THE CHOIR

The choir continues to lead the praise at May Street Sunday by Sunday and also at special services to celebrate, Christmas, Easter and Harvest Thanksgiving. We have a very loyal band of members. Most Sundays there is a 100% turnout, something which many other churches would be keen to emulate.

While we enjoy singing together there is also a strong social dimension to the choir, with various events being organised during the year. In April we had an entertaining outing to the Grand Opera House to see, appropriately enough, a production of The Sound of Music by St Agnes Choral Society.

In June we had a relaxing day's outing to the North Coast, enjoying the sea air, the marvellous views and an occasional bite to eat.

Thanks to an invitation by David McAuley, chairman of the Urban Soul management committee, a group from the choir is due to attend a Songs from the Shows production by Lisnagarvey Operatic Society at Helen's Bay Presbyterian Church on Friday February 7. On this occasion we are being joined by several non-choir members from May Street so watch this space – by this time next year our numbers may have increased!

Our famous Binns Organ is celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> birthday this year. Plans are in hand for the choir to celebrate this anniversary. Details will be given to the congregation once everything is finalised.

Everyone in May Street would like to acknowledge and thank our organist Colin Johnston for all the work he does – on a voluntary basis – every Sunday morning. He liaises closely with visiting ministers about the items of praise for each service and thoughtfully chooses all the musical items to be played before and after each service, as well as when the collection is being taken up. At the end of March, Colin is planning to take early retirement from his day job at Bombardier where he has worked for around 40 years. We send him our good wishes for a long, happy and healthy retirement from his “day job” but hope that he will continue for many years to come in his “Sunday job”.

VALERIE MORTON  
Secretary

## PEACE AGENT

We have been welcomed at all the churches with whom we have created an informal grouping for collaboration – St Malachy's, St George's, Belmont and Fitzroy. Meetings from time to time encourage us to share ideas and events.

We had a most thoughtful meeting in November at which we took the opportunity to informally discuss the Haas talks. We agreed on many principles and came up with some innovative ideas, but left any formal submissions to the wider church bodies.

Notable in 2013 was a café church event in Belmont on the evening of Remembrance Sunday

when all five churches were invited to attend a less formal service of worship, which greatly touched many people present.

Notable too was the series of wonderfully calming and delightfully sonorous prayer evenings in St Malachy's, with a Taise inspired theme.

Please do listen out for more announcements about these interesting opportunities to get to know friends better and enjoy worship opportunities in other Christian churches in south and east Belfast and the city centre.

ARTHUR ACHESON  
Peace Agent

## MODERATOR VISITS URBAN SOUL



*VIP Visit: The Moderator, Dr Rob Craig, studies the menu at Urban Soul on November 5 with (from left) his wife Karen, Urban Soul volunteer Harry, Ruby Hutchinson from the Urban Soul committee, volunteer Richard and acting manager Angela Martin. ROBIN MORTON*

November 5 was a special day for Urban Soul, because the cafe hosted a visit by the Presbyterian Moderator, Dr Rob Craig, who was accompanied by his wife Karen, Stephen Lynas from Church House and the Clerk of South Belfast Presbytery, Cecil Graham. The foursome were entertained to lunch and also took the opportunity to inspect the schoolroom, which is awaiting funding for an upgrade.

The visitors were on a tour of South Belfast Presbytery and had started the day at Friendship House, moving on to BB House and then coming across the Urban Soul for lunch. They were welcomed to Urban Soul by acting manager Angela Martin, Ruby Hutchinson from the Urban

Soul Committee, and by Christine Hewitt and Robin Morton from May Street.



**Making Plans:** The Presbyterian Moderator, Dr Rob Craig, inspects plans for the upgrade of the schoolroom with (from left) Ruby Hutchinson from the Urban Soul committee, Mrs Karen Craig, and Christine Hewitt from May Street congregational committee.

The Moderator chatted with staff and also took the opportunity of an update on Urban Soul and the plans for upgrading the schoolroom. A report quickly appeared on Dr Craig's Twitter account. Unfortunately Avril Gracey, the Urban Soul cafe manager, was unable to be present because at the time she was recuperating from a spell of illness. But Dr Craig was able to meet volunteer staff members Richard, Harry, Sandra and Martin.

We're happy to report that Avril is now back in good health and would like to take the opportunity to express sincere thanks to Angela Martin, who took charge of the cafe during Avril's absence.

## URBAN SOUL CAFE

Day by day, Urban Soul Cafe continues to offer homemade soups, stews and sandwiches – plus the ever popular tea and coffee - to a growing number of regular customers. The relaxed atmosphere of the cafe is increasingly being used by regular groups and events in the evening and weekends.

The lovely ladies from the Women's World Day of prayer come in for their coffee and scones before their regular committee meetings and a group of retired Belfast Telegraph journalists sort out the world when they meet each month. The Oaklee Housing Association staff are still among the regulars and the cafe is their chosen venue for team meetings. A group called The Girls were in for lunch after a local tour.

Groups that used the cafe in the run-up to Christmas included the Lawyers Christian Fellowship, which held its annual conference in Urban Soul on October 12. Men from Bloomfield Church and Rosemary Church came for food during the M13 (formerly Mandate) conference in November.



**Good Company:** Some of the team leaders from Dundonald Elim Church who were guests at a Christmas party which was organised by Urban Soul and held in the lecture hall on December 12. VALERIE MORTON

Urban Soul Live ran a fundraising concert on December 7, featuring the Voices of Hope choir from Belfast City Hospital, Melanie Johnston and Stevie Johnston. It was a really enjoyable evening of lovely music and chat.

The 45 young people and leaders of the GB and BB companies from Dundonald Elim came for their Christmas outing in December. The ladies from Ballyholme Presbyterian church came for supper after their Christmas shopping expedition in the city centre in December.



**Happy Christmas:** Jenny Wilson (left) and Valerie Condy present Avril Gracey, the Urban Soul manager, with a poinsettia as a Christmas gift from May Street.

Jim Greer from Belfast Education and Library Board is using the cafe on Thursday evenings to train a group of 15 young people for their summer

humanitarian project in Cambodia. They have left a couple of hamper baskets in the cafe if anyone wants to support them.

Andrew Irvine from Belfast City Centre Management continues the Prayer mornings on the first Thursday each month with local church leaders and business people. We pray for our city.

Among upcoming events are a fundraiser for Urban Soul being organised by Urban Soul volunteer Harry Bruce, which is taking place at 7.45pm on Friday February 21. It is a table quiz with live music for the 18+ age group. Entrance donation: £5. Come and bring a few friends. Good craic and good coffee guaranteed.



**All Set:** Avril Gracey pictured with Damien Smith from Feed the Soul (left) and Urban Soul volunteer Henry as they prepare to cater at a function being run by Urban Soul.

Urban Soul Live, our popular Saturday night gig, is now running on the second Saturday evening of each month rather than the first.

The regular cafe volunteers, namely Harry, Henry, Martin, Sandra, Kathy, John and Richard, bring their own gifts and friendliness to the customers, while Brendan and Ryan have been helpers in the kitchen.

The May Street ladies, namely Jean, Kathleen, May, Ruby, Chrissie, Valerie and Jenny, have been a great support in terms of catering at special events.

We have just heard that our funding application to the Department of Social Development for volunteers has been successful. This means we can get some new aprons and organise training.

RUBY HUTCHINSON  
Urban Soul committee

## THURSDAY SERVICES

May Street continues its outreach to the city centre by running a lunchtime service each Thursday. In recent weeks we have been encouraged by a steady increase in the numbers attending and we hope this will continue. We thank May Street vacancy convenor Dr Rodger Crooks for co-ordinating the service and conducting the vast majority of them. We also express sincere gratitude to Charles Maginnes for faithfully playing the organ Thursday by Thursday - he is a marvellous asset and we are so appreciative of the way he gives up his time to come down to May Street. Thanks, too, to our own Christine Hewitt and David McAuley from the Urban Soul management committee for all their dedication to this valuable outreach.

Our services run from 1.05pm to 1.30pm each Thursday and are open to all. We regularly attract office workers, shop staff and people who just happen to be in town for socialising or shopping. All come with the same desire - to take time out of their busy weekday lives to spend 25 minutes praising God. Many of our regulars say it is a valuable opportunity in the midst of the working day to rebalance their priorities.

As well as attending the service, many of our regulars call in at Urban Soul for a bite of lunch either before or after the service, which is much appreciated. They emerge, hopefully, with both body and soul refreshed.

Please feel free to drop in to the service if you happen to be in town on a Thursday lunchtime.

## COLLECTORS

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

## WEDNESDAY OPEN DOORS

Thanks to Kathleen Rea and May Mercer for organising the regular opening of the church doors at lunchtime on Wednesdays. Week by week

Kathleen, May and their team are on duty to show visitors around our historic church. Sometimes people wish to sit quietly by themselves, and we are happy to facilitate this. It gives another opportunity for our doors to be open and for passers-by to come in and see for themselves the magnificent interior of May Street Church.

## EUROPEAN HERITAGE DAY IN DERRY

Following our busy European Heritage Open Days on the weekend of September 14/15, May Street Church was invited to send representatives to a lunch in the Guildhall in Derry on Saturday November 23 to celebrate the success of EHOD 2013. The venue was chosen, of course, because Derry was UK City of Culture 2013.



**Derry Delight:** *Christine Hewitt and May Mercer from May Street chat with Michael Coulter, director of European Heritage Open Day, during the reception in Londonderry on November 23. KATHLEEN REA*

At nine on a bright autumn morning Kathleen Rea, May Mercer and I set out in the bus from Belfast to Derry and travelled for some two hours through sunshine and showers enjoying the countryside of Counties Antrim and Londonderry from the top deck of the double decker bus!

Arriving at the Foyle side station we made our way to the adjacent Diamond where we were given a warm welcome to the newly refurbished Guildhall and ushered upstairs to the main hall where we were seated around lunch tables with others representing European Heritage premises from all over Ireland.

Restoration of the Guildhall was completed in May 2013 and the building now boasts a new interactive visitors point with cafe and an exhibition exploring the Plantation downstairs and the grand upstairs main hall dominated by one

of the most beautiful organs in Europe where the reception took place

Before lunch the Lord Mayor and various notables including the European Heritage director Michael Coulter made welcoming speeches and then distributed the prizes for the Art and Photography exhibition 2013 which had been made into a calendar. The prize-winners were from all age groups/categories, children to adults.

We each received a gift of this calendar – one is now proudly on display in the May Street kitchen - and then enjoyed a splendid buffet lunch of hot casseroles, cold salads and desserts, tea and coffee to follow. Around the tables we enjoyed conversation with the other guests including two of our regular BB officers who come to May Street Church for their monthly lunch!

At 2pm we embarked on a guided tour of the Diamond and Derry city walls led by our excellent guide who explained the history and relevance of each building and gate. We saw the outside of the both the First Derry Presbyterian and St Augustine churches and were able to go inside the Church of Ireland St Columb's Cathedral built within the historic 17th century walls in 1633.

Our tour was meant to last for an hour but took more than two hours since we were all enjoying it so much and reflecting on all the history on this, its 400th anniversary. However we still had time for some coffee and retail therapy Austin's and Foyleside shopping centre before making our way home!

A wonderful day was had by all and we once again thank the organisers and May Street Church for 'allowing' us to be their representatives. Thank you!

CHRISTINE HEWITT

## FEED THE SOUL

The outreach to the homeless which takes place in the May Street lecture hall every Sunday afternoon celebrated its first anniversary at Christmas. We express thanks to Damien Smith, who is in charge of the operation, for his commitment and dedication. Numbers fluctuate, but those who come to enjoy soup, sandwiches and a cup of tea appreciate the hospitality. They also value the welcome and the fellowship.

Feed the Soul currently operates from 2pm to 4pm each Sunday afternoon and May Street congregational committee sees the concept of outreach to the homeless as being a valuable initiative. At Damien's request, Feed the Soul was accepted in principle as part of May Street in November 2013. New protocols are now being worked out with the Feed the Soul committee which will govern the operation of the outreach.



**Thanksgiving Day:** Feed the Soul invited May Street members to join them for soup and a sandwich in the lecture hall on Thanksgiving Day, Sunday November 24. Enjoying the refreshments are (clockwise round the table) Evelyn Gourley, May Mercer, Colin Johnston, Kathleen Rea, Valerie Morton, Christine Hewitt, Damien Smyth (Feed the Soul), Martin Kane, Susan Mackay and Mark. **ROBIN MORTON**

We also wish to express thanks to all those volunteers from within May Street and beyond who have worked to support Damien in his efforts. In particular, we are encouraged by the involvement of a number of members of Carnmoney Presbyterian Church.

We remember the work of Feed the Soul in our prayers and ask God to point us in the right direction.

**ARTHUR ACHESON**  
Clerk of Session

## THE UNDERGROUND

The Underground continues to meet every Sunday evening in Urban Soul Cafe in the basement of May Street Church. We moved to an earlier start time of 7.30pm (from 9pm) in November 2013.

There has been a distinct shift in strategy over 2013. We are seeing the gathering less like

an outreach service and more like a training and building of a core to plant a future church. This has been the result of God's leading I believe, but has also been confirmed through the influence of Redeemer Presbyterian in New York.

A visit from Al Barth, Redeemer's Global Director of Church Planting, in late October has really focused our thinking. Since September we've been looking at the book of Ephesians and God's design of this entity that Christians know as the Church. We now have a leadership team of three guys beside myself.

At the beginning of March the 'Core' (the leadership team and others committed to the plant) will be having some 'time away' to seek God's vision for the shape of such a church. Your continued prayer and support is much appreciated as we continue to see God's plan unfold for us.

**LEE EAGLESON**

## MAY STREET GIFT SUNDAY

May Street followed the practice of recent years by organising a Christmas Gift Sunday on December 8. Children and adults brought presents and gifts to leave at the Christmas Tree for the Salvation Army. There to receive them was Major Jacqueline Wright from Thorndale Family Centre in Duncairn Avenue in north Belfast.



**True Spirit:** Major Jacqueline Wright from the Salvation Army pictured with children who donated gifts to the charity on May Street's Gift Sunday in December. Pictured from left are: Justin Gourley, Amy Gillespie, Ben Acheson, Charlotte Acheson, Matthew Wilson, Oscar Gourley, Anna Wilson and Caitlin Gillespie.

In a letter of thanks to May Street, Major Wright wrote: "Let me say a sincere thank you for your continued support for our centre. The toys etc were very much appreciated and we were able to ensure that our families had some 'extras' for

Christmas. Please be assured of our continuing prayerful support for your church fellowship and every blessing for 2014.”

Jenny Wilson from May Street, who organised the event, said: Many thanks go to everyone who helped make this day such a success.”

Our thanks go in turn to Jenny Wilson for making all the arrangements on behalf of May Street.

## **CHRISTMAS THANKS**

May Street Church was looking suitably festive during the Christmas season, so thanks to all those involved in putting up the tree, the lights and all the decorations – and for taking them down again and packing them all away. It was a big job and those who were involved deserve the thanks of all members of the congregation.

Thanks too to Elizabeth Doran who once again handled all the Christmas post at May Street. The internal postal service worked like clockwork and members were able to send cards to other members at no cost. Thanks to Elizabeth for a first class service and thanks to those members who chose to make a donation to the Flower Fund in lieu of the stamps they would otherwise have had to buy.

We would also like to convey good wishes to Elizabeth for a speedy recovery from a foot injury which she suffered during a fall in Little May Street as she was leaving church on January 5. Hopefully she will soon be out of plaster and back to her usual nimble self.

## **STREET PASTORS**

We held our annual meeting on January 27 in the appropriate surroundings of Urban Soul Cafe in the basement of May Street Church, the location in which our teams meet and hold their briefings every Friday and Saturday night before heading out on the streets.

Our annual report shows that during 2013 we clocked up 1,560 volunteer hours, equating to 91 nights out and 110 teams on the beat. We lifted 3,937 bottles/glasses and took them out of harm's way, and distributed 441 pairs of flip-flops to those who might otherwise have cut their feet on broken

glass. We assisted 117 people to transport, gave general assistance in 250 cases and prevented assault in 39 incidents. We recorded 181 spiritual conversations and 51 prayers.

The figures reflect many ordinary followers of Jesus from different churches giving up time to go out onto the streets to care, listen and help. Primarily we help those coming out of pubs and clubs around 1.30am to 3am. We've also helped on St Patrick's Day and at cross-community festivals. Thankfully this year, St Patrick's Day was much quieter and only 60 bottles were lifted, compared to over 1,000 in 2012.

We have again said goodbye to many volunteers who have moved on from Northern Ireland, received some who have transferred from street Pastors schemes in GB and welcomed many new volunteers. We now have 47 active volunteers plus three who are on the bench, recovering from various ailments. It is such a positive and refreshing witness to those on the streets to see people from different churches working and serving together.

We are delighted that by the end of the year we now have two teams out each Saturday evening, instead of one, enabling us to help so many more people.

This year we did more training than ever before and we now have a pool of transfer who we know can deliver excellent and appropriate training. We continue to enjoy excellent co-operation with the PSNI, Belfast City Council and other voluntary organisations. There is no competition as we know we complement each other on the streets.

A new addition to our armoury is toffees! We have prevented fights by getting alongside people and offering them a toffee while calming them down. Chewing and “mouthing off” is difficult to do at the same time. We also now have space ponchos – thin foil blankets that protect against the wind and cold.

We are aware that some men are taking advantage of women who are drunk. We recently intervened when we saw a man trying to get a woman into a car and we suspected she did not know him. When challenged, he quickly left and we cared for the woman.

In 2014 we would love more people to support

## STREET PASTORS AGM AT URBAN SOUL



**Top Team:** Trevor Betts (left), interim co-ordinator with Street Pastors and speaker Andrew Irvine show Urban Soul manager Avril Gracey a copy of the organisation's annual report which was launched at a function in Urban Soul on January 27.



**Birthday Boy:** Peter Mason and fellow Street Pastors member Maureen Myles celebrate Peter's birthday during the function at Urban Soul. To mark the occasion, Peter was presented with a special desert topped with a candle and everyone sang "Happy Birthday" to him.



**Grubs Up:** Enjoying dinner at Urban Soul at the Street Pastors function on January 27 are (from left) Geraldine Mallon, David Whitall, Rhera Donaldson, David Patterson (chairman) and Allison Robinson.



**Main Speaker:** Andrew Irvine from Street Pastors tells the group's annual meeting of the successes and challenges of the past year.

Street Pastors by praying and becoming Street Pastors. We have a range of presentations and would love to come to your church to explain how people can get involved, so please contact us if you are interested.

TREVOR BETTS  
Interim Co-ordinator

### FROM THE ARCHIVES

An article by Leslie McKnight from 50 years ago – as it appeared in *The Greeting of December 1963*.

The Lawn Tennis Club organised a jumble sale in Cromac Square Hall on Saturday afternoon,

November 23. Prior to the sale, members were kept busy calling at the homes of members of the congregation for parcels of jumble. These requests were gladly undertaken, and those who attended the sale had an opportunity to buy a fur coat, a television set, a radio, a vacuum cleaner, a companion set, a bed spring, books, pictures, dresses, frocks, hats, shoes, shirts, chairs, ornaments and lots of other things. Unfortunately, the weather was not very kind to us and this undoubtedly restricted the attendance of prospective buyers. The amount realised was £27.11.1 (equivalent to £459 in today's money) and we would like to thank all the members of the Congregations for their generous contributions. We also appreciate the kindness of Mr J Creelman

in letting us have the use of Cromac Square Hall for the sale and for all his personal help. The members of the Tennis Club worked very hard indeed in this effort to increase our income, to meet heavy expenses.

## **DEADLINE**

The deadline for all contributions to the next issue of The Greeting is Sunday April 6.

## **THE GREETING ARCHIVE**

Valerie Adams, librarian at the Presbyterian Historical Society has created an archive consisting of back copies stretching back over a century of The Greeting, the May Street Church magazine. This is a unique record of life in a city centre congregation, and we are grateful to Valerie for all her endeavours.

The archive will be of interest to May Street members, to former members and to the families of people who once were members. It will be invaluable to those who are researching their roots. The archive also contains some other historical annual reports and other documentation.

The PHS library is open to the public, by prior arrangement. The library is located beside Union Theological Conference at 6 College Green, Belfast BT7 1LN. The website is: [www.presbyterianhistoryireland.com](http://www.presbyterianhistoryireland.com) and there is even a blog at: [www.phsireland.org](http://www.phsireland.org).

The PHS library is open Tuesday and Wednesday 9.30am -1.00pm and 1.30pm-4.30pm, and Thursdays 9.30am- 1.00pm. Telephone: 028 9072 7330.

Plans are also afoot to have the existing May Street records in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland "digitised" which should preserve them for future generations.

ROBIN MORTON

## **MAY STREET DEEDS**

It proved necessary as part of the ongoing process for applying for grants for May Street to provide copies of the deeds for May Street Church and for our Manse at Castlehill Farm, Castlereagh.

It turned out that the deeds were not in the May Street deed box at Church House, but instead, still with our solicitors where we had lodged them during the negotiations with Barnabas Ventures in 2009. Our thanks to Alastair Rankin of Cleaver, Fulton & Rankin and Donald Eakin of McAuley Ritchie for their willing co-operation in this process. It is good to know that the deeds are back in the care of the Financial Secretary at Church House

## **WEBSITE UPDATE**

Thanks are expressed to Colin McKeown, May Street old boy and creative director of Whitespace, for his assistance in moving forward with the upgrade of the May Street website, which is being carried out by an IT company called Xzopia. The project is edging towards a conclusion but already you will notice a marked improvement in the appearance of our website and in the content. Have a look by logging on at [www.maystreetchurch.com](http://www.maystreetchurch.com)

## **TAKING CARE**

Representatives of May Street, Urban Soul and Feed the Soul attending a Prebyterian Church Taking Care meeting held at Cregagh Presbyterian Church on November 25. The information was most helpful and we are now hoping to attend a specific course being organised by the Taking Care office at Church House which will deal with vulnerable adults. Work is progressing on ensuring that all volunteers who work in May Street, Urban Soul and Feed the Soul have received Access 21 criminal record check clearance, which is now one of the requirements.

## **REV NIAL BAYLY**

It is with regret but with thankfulness for the many facets of his life that we record the sudden death on October 21 of the Rev Niall Bayly. For several years Mr Bayly was in charge of pastoral care at May Street and during that time he was a source of great reassurance and comfort to those he visited so regularly. A service of thanksgiving for Mr Bayly's life was held at St George's Church of Ireland, and May Street was well represented. The service was conducted by the Rev Derek McKelvey from Fisherwick, where Mr Bayly worshipped.

## **BOYS' BRIGADE PARADE**

The Boys Brigade used May Street lecture hall as a rallying point before their traditional pre-Christmas parade in Belfast city centre on the evening of Monday December 9. Accompanied by a band, the BB officers and boys paraded around the City Hall to much admiration from shoppers and those attending the Continental Market.

## **WELCOME VISITORS**

May Street's senior minister, the Rev Jim Barnes, accompanied by his wife Myrtle, their daughter Ingrid from Toronto and a friend of hers, Laura, joined us for worship on Sundays December 22 and 29. It was lovely to have them all back in May Street and to see all of the Barnes family looking so well. Ingrid and Laura took a break in the warm sunshine of the Canary Islands before heading back to the snow and low temperatures of Toronto.

## **NEW ARRIVAL**

Congratulations to Urban Soul committee member Ruby Hutchinson and her husband Norman on becoming grandparents for the first time. Their son Mark and his wife Emma, who live in Liverpool, are the proud parents of Isla Ruby Ruth Hutchinson, who was born on January 23 and who weighed in at 6lb 3oz. The baby's middle names come from her two grannies. Ruby said: "We thank God for our little miracle and gift from God." Great news all round!

## **THIS I KNOW**

I do not know what next may come  
Across my pilgrim way;  
I do not know tomorrow's road,  
Nor see beyond today.  
But this I know - my Saviour knows  
The path I cannot see;  
And I can trust his wounded hand  
To guide and care for me.  
I do not know what may befall,  
Of sunshine or of rain;  
I do not know what may be mine,  
Of pleasure and of pain;  
But this I know - my Saviour knows,  
And whatso'er it be,  
Still I can trust his love to give  
What will be best for me.

I do not know what may await,  
Or what the morrow brings;  
But with the glad salute of faith,  
I hail its opening wings;  
For this I know - that in my lord  
Shall all my needs be met;  
And I can trust the heart of him  
Who has not failed me yet.

## **THE BEST FRIEND**

I found a friend when life seemed not worth living.  
I found a friend so tender and forgiving.  
I can't conceive how such a thing could be,  
That Jesus cares - for even me.  
Each day, each year, my faith in him is growing.  
He's ever near, his love is ever flowing.  
I have no fear, my worldly cares are few.  
I can depend on him to see me through.  
I found a friend - and he is your friend too.  
Because he came my soul will live in glory.  
I'll praise his name and tell my Saviour's story.  
What friend so true would give his all for you ?  
I found a friend and life began anew.  
I'm sure you'll find that he is your friend too.

## **HE GIVETH PEACE**

He giveth peace!  
The storms may rage - the billows roll  
And beat upon thy weary soul;  
Though skies be dark and overcast,  
The storm will not forever last,

He giveth peace !  
Dear restless heart, be still and know  
That he who walked life's path below  
Will surely understand and care,  
And all thy heavy burden bear.  
Thy loving father knows thy heart,  
He sees the tears that often start,  
With arms outstretched he yearns for thee  
To come to him that you might see -  
He giveth peace!

Whatever he may send - 'Tis best!  
It may be that it's meant to test  
Thy willingness to follow him.  
Press onward then - tho' faith be dim.  
He giveth peace!

**Poems contributed by Elizabeth Doran**