



# The Greeting

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

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## WHAT ARE YOU LIVING FOR?

We all live for something; the question is, what? Ben Patterson writes in 'The Grand Essentials': 'I have a theory about old age...I believe when life has whittled us down, when joints have failed and skin has wrinkled and capillaries have clogged and hardened, what is left of us will be what we were all along in our essence.

Exhibit A: a distant uncle. All his life he did nothing but find new ways to get rich. He spent his [last years] very comfortably, drooling and babbling constantly about the money he had made. When life whittled him down to his essence, all that was left was raw greed. This is what he had cultivated in a thousand little ways over a lifetime.

Exhibit B: my wife's grandmother. When she died in her mid-eighties she had already been senile for several years. What did this lady talk about? The best example I can think of was when we asked her to pray before dinner. She would reach out and hold the hands of those sitting

beside her, a broad, beatific smile would spread across her face, her dim eyes would fill with tears as she looked up to heaven and her chin would quiver as she poured out her love to Jesus. That was Edna in a nutshell. She loved Jesus and she loved people. She couldn't remember our names, but she couldn't keep her hands from patting us lovingly, whenever we got near her. When life whittled her down to her essence, all there was left was love...for God and love for people.' What are you living for?

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Word for Today

## PROCLAIMING GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

When Max Lucado participated in a half-Ironman triathlon, he experienced the negative power of complaint. He said, "After the 1.2-mile swim and the 56-mile bike ride, I didn't have much energy left for the 13.1-mile run. Neither did the fellow jogging next to me. He said, 'This stinks.



## A Blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year



This race is the dumbest decision I've ever made.' I said, 'Goodbye.' " Max knew that if he listened too long, he would start agreeing with him. So he said goodbye and kept running.

Among the Israelites, too many people listened too long to complaints and began to agree with them. This displeased God, and for good reason. God had delivered the Israelites from slavery, and agreed to live in their midst, but they still complained. Beyond the hardship of the desert, they were dissatisfied with God's provision of manna. In their complaint, Israel forgot that the manna was a gift to them from God's loving hand (Num. 11:6).

Because complaining poisons the heart with ingratitude and can be a contagion, God had to judge it. This is a sure way to say "goodbye" to complaining and ingratitude: Each day, let's rehearse the faithfulness and goodness of God to us.

*Lord, You have given us so much. Forgive us for our short memories and bad attitudes. Help us to remember and be grateful for all that You have provided. And help us to tell others of the good things You have done for us.*

MARVIN WILLIAMS

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## **BREAKING NEW GROUND AT MAY STREET**

A ceremony took place on Monday November 3 to mark the start of work on the development of a new venue for community based activities and Christian outreach in the heart of Belfast.

The £300,000 project will see the upgrade of a basement area at May Street Presbyterian Church and welcome improvements to an adjoining entrance lobby.

The aim is to transform an underused hall into a modern amenity which will be fit for purpose, easily accessible and open to all – and right in the centre of the city.

The new facility is expected to qualify for an entertainments licence which will open up a range of options which were previously not possible.

Funding is being provided in two tranches for the main scheme: £200,000 from Belfast City Council's Local Investment Fund with match funding of £50,000 from the Alpha Programme, managed and administered by Groundwork NI, Landfill Community Fund (Tax Credits programme).



***Final checks:** Checking the plans at the launch of the May Street Presbyterian Church/Urban Soul regeneration project on November 3 are (from left) Arthur Acheson, Clerk of Session, May Street, Ruby Hutchinson, Urban Soul Community Interest Company, David McAuley, Urban Soul, Mel Waddell, Senior Project Development Officer, Groundwork Northern Ireland, Anita Maguire, Managing Director, Derryleckagh Contracts, Chris Hewitt, Urban Soul, Councillor Lee Reynolds, chair of Belfast City Council's Strategic Policy and Resource Committee and Johnny Murtagh, Contracts Manager, Derryleckagh Contracts.*

In a separate but linked project, May Street Church is to receive £50,000 from Biffa Award, a multi-million pound fund that helps to build communities and transform lives through awarding grants to community and environmental projects across the UK, as part of the Landfill Communities Fund (LCF). This grant is specifically to cover flood protection measures and improved drainage. The work will be carried out in conjunction with the main project.

The contract has been let to Derryleckagh Contracts from Burren in Co Down, and work got under way on October 27 and will be completed by the end of March 2015. The lead consultants in the design team are Boyd Partnership, the Belfast architectural practice.

In addition, support will be provided by the Listed Places of Worship scheme which provides grants to cover the payment of VAT on building scheme in churches which are, like May Street, listed.

# Belfast Street Pastors Report July-Sept 2014



*Here is the latest 3-month report (July, Aug and Sept). Cressida Dick (Asst. Commissioner of the Met Police) said at the Street Pastor conference*

*that in forensics 'every contact leaves a trace.' Streets Pastors leave a trace of the Kingdom of God with everyone we meet.*

### Some highlights

- Helped Coleraine/Portrush get started
- Trained 26 students who want to be Street Pastors in the university area on Monday evenings.
- Nichola Mallon, the Lord Mayor joined us with Fr Martin Magil and Jorge Lopes (Diageo) on the streets

### Keep it up!!

*All in a night's work – here are some figures and real stories from the last few months:*

- 2 very drunk hens escorted to Ibis hotel. One requested and received prayer for a slipped disc
- Police asked SP to assist man with chest pains lying on the ground
- Put a space blanket on very drunk lone female shivering with cold & waited until her friends showed up and got all 3 a taxi home
- Prevented fight while trying to assist a man who had his phone stolen
- Found a distressed woman with a suitcase who was going to stay with friends overnight and then City Airport to go to her daughter in England. Her friends had to rush to hospital and she had nowhere to go with hardly any money. We got her into a hotel for the evening. Family were so grateful.
- Young man having an argument with the doormen at McDonalds, who would not allow him in due to his inebriated state. He began to get quite aggressive, but Street Pastors were able to interject and lead him away to a nearby bench for a chat. Ended up convincing him that it was not the best idea to try to go back into McDonalds and we walked him up to Botanic, where he lived.
- Found a guy in a doorway. We thought he was homeless, but discovered he was on his own and no way to get home (20 miles away). Gave him water, space blanket to keep warm & stayed with him for 1hr, until a parent came to collect him.
- Met a guy lying on the ground. No taxi was going to take them home so we contacted and waited for the SOS bus to take them.
- Spoke to 'M' who thought his life was meaningless. Offered advice and follow up numbers
- Reported an aggressive domestic incident to the Control Room
- Met a guy who wanted to know if God could forgive him for murder

	July	Aug	Sept	TOT	Av.p. month
Volunteer Hours	176	272	200	648	216
Nights out	8	11	8	27	9
Teams out	13	18	15	46	15
Bottles/glasses lifted	763	327	456	1,546	515
Flip-flops used	64	98	94	256	85
First aid kit used	2	-	4	6	2
Assist people to transport	11	31	23	65	22
Street Pastor cards given	52	119	97	268	89
Emergency services called	2	-	-	2	1
Referral to other service	4	3	5	12	4
Anti-social behaviour	6	5	-	11	4
Prevention of assault	4	4	1	9	3
General assistance/advice	27	40	45	112	37
Spiritual conversation	18	25	20	63	21
Prayer	7	8	5	20	7
Spontaneous thanks	75	103	94	272	91

Hi just want to say thank you so much for finding my wee brother last night and contacting my mum and dad, and waiting with him until they got him 😊



- 'We don't want to be converted to Christianity - we're Catholics!'
- 'Just want to say thank you so much for finding my wee brother last night and contacting my mum and dad, and waiting with him until they got him'
- After giving girl flip flops: "Did Jesus send you?" When we replied "Yes" she said "I knew it - only Jesus would give out flipflops"

**Street Pastors use May Street Church as their operational base on Friday and Saturday nights...**

The drawings have been approved by the Presbyterian Church's Church Architecture Committee and the scheme is being supported by South Belfast Presbytery.

Arthur Acheson, Clerk of Session at May Street, said: "We wish to place on record its thanks to the funders who have made it possible for us to start turning our dreams into reality."



**Down to work:** Pictured at the launch of the May Street Presbyterian Church/Urban Soul regeneration project are (from left) Arthur Acheson, Clerk of Session, May Street, Ruby Hutchinson, Urban Soul Community Interest Company, David McAuley, Urban Soul, Anita Maguire, Managing Director, Derryleckagh Contracts, Mel Waddell, Senior Project Development Officer, Groundwork Northern Ireland, Robin Morton, Congregational Secretary, May Street Church, Chris Hewitt, Urban Soul, Councillor Lee Reynolds, chair of Belfast City Council's Strategic Policy and Resource Committee and Johnny Murtagh, Contracts Manager, Derryleckagh Contracts.

The project will see the basement being completely refurbished and the entrance onto May Street being enhanced, with new toilet facilities and disabled access.

Councillor Lee Reynolds, chair of Belfast City Council's Strategic Policy and Resource Committee, said they were pleased to see that work had commenced.

"We believe that May Street Church is a landmark building which has a strategically important location in the city centre and we look forward to this new amenity being much used for the betterment of the wider community," he said.

"The council wishes to encourage the church in its efforts to make full use of its building and to reach out to the community. This project should put May Street back on the map."

Mel Waddell, from Groundwork NI and representing the Alpha Programme said: "We are attracted to this scheme because we think it has tremendous potential in terms of creating a neutral venue for cross-community activities, particularly among young people.

"The church is an iconic building and these improvements will help give it an expanded role in terms of provision for community and inter-faith activities."

Gillian French, Programme Manager at Biffa Award said: "Our funding will go towards flood protection measures which will in turn safeguard the investment being made in restoring the basement. We hope that this attractive new facility will become a hub for the community and will be of benefit to many people."

ROBIN MORTON

## URBAN SOUL OPEN HOUSE

An Open House event was held at May Street Presbyterian Church on November 24 at which a strategy was drawn up as to how the community can best benefit from a new basement venue currently being developed.



**Open House:** Chatting at the opening of the Open House discussion on a strategy for a new basement venue at May Street Presbyterian Church in Belfast are (from left) Rev Richard Johnston, Belfast Central Mission, Julie Ochterbeck, Freedom Belfast, Trevor Betts, Belfast Street Pastors, the Lord Mayor, Councillor Nichola Mallon and Arthur Acheson, Clerk of Session at May Street Church. CONOR McCULLAGH

A little used basement area in the city centre church is being given a £300,000 makeover and the objective is to create a new amenity, chiefly for community and outreach purposes, as part of the church's Urban Soul project.



for seeking to open its doors to a wide range of groups and organisations and I wish Urban Soul success in this process.”

Arthur Acheson, the Clerk of Session at May Street, said: “This project will more than double the capacity of Urban Soul and will turn an under-used basement room into flexible space which can be made available for myriad purposes.



**Digging in:** Work in progress in early November on the basement floor, which is being lowered and waterproofed.

**Meet the funders:** Pictured at an Open House discussion on a strategy for a new basement venue at May Street Presbyterian Church in Belfast are (from left) Mel Waddell from Groundwork NI, the Lord Mayor, Councillor Nichola Mallon, Arthur Acheson, Clerk of Session at May Street Presbyterian Church, Arthur Acheson, Clerk of Session at May Street Church, and George Peel from Biffa Award. CONOR McCULLAGH

At the wide-ranging discussions, various options were put forward and May Street’s Urban Soul Community Interest Company will now drive the process forward.

The event was officially opened by the Lord Mayor, Councillor Nichola Mallon, who said she hoped the new venue would have wide appeal across the community.

“The purpose of our Open House event is to hear from civic leaders and potential partners as to how they would like to see this project unfold. We hope that a dialogue will develop which will be mutually beneficial.”



**Work under way:** The old floor of the schoolroom is taken up as work starts on the regeneration project at May Street in late October.



**Round table talks:** More than 40 people participated in the fruitful Open House discussion which was held in the May Street lecture hall on November 24. Catering for the lunchtime event was provided by the ladies of May Street. A follow-up meeting will take place at lunchtime on Monday January 26. All welcome, please email [maystreetpresbyterian@gmail.com](mailto:maystreetpresbyterian@gmail.com) if you would like to attend. CONOR McCULLAGH

She said: “May Street Church is in an ideal location, being right in the heart of the city, and easily accessible to all. I commend the church

Mr Acheson added: “Our aim is to build on the innovative events that have already taken place under the auspices of Urban Soul Cafe

over the last seven years. We have played host to conferences, concerts, dance studios, training sessions, an art exhibition, a craft fair, faith groups, cross-community youth groups, team-building, business meetings, economic discussions, seminars and discussion groups.



**Concrete progress:** Examining progress in the May Street basement on November 24 are (from left) Ruby Hutchinson from Urban Soul and three delegates from Kirkpatrick Presbyterian at Ballyhackamore - the Rev Christoph Ebbinghaus, Sam Boston and Richie Cronin. The first concrete slabs were laid the previous week, following the removal from the basement by the contractors, Derryleckagh Contracts, of sludge which filled no fewer than 12 ten-tonne skips.

“Our new-look venue will have a non-alcoholic entertainments licence, which means events such as concerts and an alcohol-free night club can be seriously contemplated. We know there is a need out there and we need input to guide us as to how best to meet this need.”

The project has won funding commitments from Belfast City Council under its Local Investment Fund, Alpha (Resource Management) Landfill Community Fund (Tax Credits Programme) and Biffa Award (Landfill Tax Credits programme), the Listed Places of Worship Scheme along with individual members of May Street Presbyterian Church.

The project will see the basement being completely refurbished and the church’s entrance lobby onto May Street being enhanced, with new toilet facilities and disabled access.

The construction phase, which began in October, is well under way and is due to be completed by March 2015.

ROBIN MORTON

## TUESDAY CIRCLE

The ladies of the Tuesday Circle met in October to consider their plans for the forthcoming year. Some of the members were reluctant to travel to May Street on cold winter evenings. It was therefore decided to reduce the number of meetings. The following programme was agreed:

Tuesday December 2 – A Christmas lunch at Hillside Garden Centre followed by a visit to their Christmas extravaganza, which has been described as a “truly magnificent experience”.



**VIP speaker:** Ena Kirkpatrick and Kathleen Rea took advantage of the visit to May Street on November 24 by the Lord Mayor, Councillor Nichola Mallon, to invite her to address a meeting of the Tuesday Circle in February or March. The date will be finalised and an announcement made shortly.

March or April - We hope to arrange an Open Night inviting our own congregation (men included) and other churches. More details to follow.

May – Summer outing.

We take the opportunity to wish everyone a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year

KATHLEEN REA

## THE CHOIR

September and October were busy months for our organist, Colin Johnston, Charles Maginess, our Thursday organist, and Johnston Gray, visiting organist from Ballyholme Presbyterian Church. May Street Church was one of the attractions of the European Heritage programme September 13-14. Not only did visitors come to see and learn about our church but they

were also able to enjoy a variety of organ pieces played by Colin, Charles and Johnston. We celebrated the 100th anniversary of our Binns organ by having three organ recitals on October 16-18. A report is given elsewhere in The Greeting but a big thank you must go to Colin , Charles and Johnston for their input. Two choir members, Kathleen Rea and May Mercer, along with Colin Johnston man the Open Door initiative in May Street every Wednesday 12-2pm. In October one of the visitors was Dean Robert Townley, retired Dean of Kildare. Conversation turned to the topic of the Aaronic Blessing. This prompted Colin to take to the key board and May very competently sang the Blessing. A very moving occasion for those involved. Choir practices will soon be starting in preparation for our annual Carol Service which will be held on Sunday morning December 21. This will be an extra special occasion as it is being conducted by our senior minister, the Rev Jim Barnes. It is always a pleasure to welcome Mr and Mrs Barnes back to May Street and we look forward to seeing them again. Christmas Greetings to all our readers.

VALERIE MORTON  
Secretary

## THANK YOU FOR BEING A FRIEND



**Befriending Month:** Pictured with the Lord Mayor, Councillor Nichola Mallon, at a reception organised by Volunteer Now at Belfast City Hall on November 4 to mark the start of Befriending Month are (from left) Valerie Morton and Colin Johnston (both May Street), Wendy Osborne, CEO Volunteer Now, along with Martin Kate and Chris Hewitt from May Street. If you are interested in finding out more about volunteering as a befriender, contact Volunteer Now, Telephone 02890 232020. For a wide variety of volunteering activities go to: [www.volunteernow.co.uk](http://www.volunteernow.co.uk)

## CHRISTMAS GIFT DAY

May Street's annual Christmas Gift Day took place on Sunday November 30 and thanks to all who came to church armed with presents. As usual the gifts were placed under the Christmas Tree and their next move will be to go to Thorndale Families Centre and Women's Hostel, which is based at Duncairn Gardens in north Belfast.

Thorndale is a residential family centre which provides accommodation and support for 38 families. It provides intensive parenting capacity assessment and resettlement support. It is a voluntary housing association and is faith based, being run by the Salvation Army.

The age range of the children they assist runs from babes in arms to teenagers, so please bear that in mind when you are deciding which presents to donate. The children and their mothers are much in need of our support.

Very many thanks to all who assisted.

JENNY WILSON

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY



**Happy birthday:** Celebrating the centenary of the May Street organ in style on October 18 are (from left): May Mercer, Kathleen Rea, Chris Hewitt and Charles Maginnis.

## CHRISTMAS POST

Thanks to Elizabeth Doran who is hoping to organise the Christmas post at May Street once again this year. This enables members of the congregation to exchange cards without having to go through the offices of the Post Office.

This year, the posting dates are Sundays December 7 and 14. Please note that the cut-off date for posting cards is December 14. Deliveries will be made on December 14 and 21, but no cards can be accepted on December 21.

Please ensure that the recipient is likely to be in a position to receive your card, and please address all envelopes clearly. We are very grateful to Elizabeth for undertaking this role. There is no charge, but those who are using the service are invited to use one of the WFO envelopes to make a donation to the May Street Flower Fund in lieu of postage costs.

## **CHRISTMAS DAY**

This Christmas May Street is joining forces with Belvoir Presbyterian, as happened last year, for a united Christmas Day service. The service will take place in Belvoir and starts at 11am on December 25. It will be conducted by our vacancy convenor, Dr Rodger Crooks. We ask all members of the congregation to give this service their support.

## **CHRISTMAS THANKS**

Thanks to those who were involved in decorating May Street for Christmas. The Christmas tree was erected in time for Christmas Gift Sunday on November 30.

## **REMEMBRANCE DAY**

Wreaths were laid at the memorial tablets in May Street on Sunday November 9 to commemorate those who fell and those who served in World War One and World War Two. The congregation observed a minute's silence and a bugler from the Boys Brigade sounded The Last Post and Reveille. With Colin Johnston at the organ, the choir performed an anthem of O Valiant Hearts, a hymn remembering the fallen of the First World War, the words of which were taken from a poem by Sir John Stanhope Arkwright (1872–1954). The service was conducted by the Rev John Gilkinson.

## **HOW TO CONTACT US**

May Street Church now has an answering machine. It means that if anyone phones when we're not there, they can leave a message.

Our number is 9032-5554. We also now have a dedicated email address, maystreetpresbyterian@gmail.com, and it will be regularly checked for messages. If you want to contact us, please get in touch by email or phone.

## **EUROPEAN HERITAGE OPEN DAY**

May Street Church threw open its doors on Saturday September 13 and Sunday September 14, 2014, for the annual European Heritage Open Day weekend. This was the 17<sup>th</sup> year of EHOD in Northern Ireland and we were rewarded by a steady stream of visitors – 100 on the Saturday and 50 on the Sunday.

Many took the opportunity to have a look at the pulpit, others took in every detail and some just wanted to sit and listen to the marvellous music from May Street's centenarian – our historic Binns Organ. All were well impressed, as was clear from the comments in the visitors' book:

*A beautiful old church*

*Happy memories*

*Well worth a visit*

*Very welcoming*

*Very prayerful*

*Lovely church, so happy to have a chance to see it.*

*Beautiful church, lovely organ music.*

*Passed by so many times, glad I took the time to call in. Beautiful*

*Spoke in the pulpit about student work back in the 1980s!*

*Great building, and brought back memories of Mum singing in Cromac Street Mission.*

*Lovely music and good info.*

*Great to see inside, beautiful.*

*Beautiful building, friendly welcome.*

*Great to see these churches open.*

We had many more international visitors than ever before. Among the home countries and cities



**Memory lane:** Pictured with May Mercer from May Street (centre) are (from left) Billy and Muriel Allen from Dundonald with their daughter-in-law Kim and son Graeme. During her visit, Mrs Allen was recalling her days singing at the Cromac Square Mission, which was linked to May Street.



**Catching up:** Ian Douglas, who was brought up in May Street, checks up the records with EHOD volunteer Sarah Harkness.



**Musical ear:** Enjoying Colin Johnston's playing of the Binns Organ during EHOD on September 13 are (from left) Sandy and Chuck Brown from Palmyra in Wisconsin along with Bonnie and Tom Beale from Kokomo in Indiana, in the United States.



**Striking a chord:** Former May Street organist Harry Pritchard, who is now based at Greenisland Presbyterian, chatting over a cuppa with current organist Colin Johnston and May Mercer from May Street.



**Signing in:** Susan Mackey (left) from May Street welcomes visitors to the church on the occasion of EHOD.

were: Germany, Verona, Denmark, Stockton-on-Tees, Vannes, France, Austria, High Wycombe, Ceceres (Spain), Asherville North Carolina, Kerry, Belleville Ontario, Winsonsin, Quebec, Budapest, Tel Aviv. Quite a world tour!

We were so delighted to have the assistance of EHOD volunteer Sarah Harkness from Coleraine. She was a great help and it was lovely to have a young person as part of our team. She was a great ambassador for EHOD and May Street.

Thanks too to our organists, Colin Johnston, Harry Pritchard and Johnston Gray who took it in turns to play at the organ and created a lovely atmosphere.

ROBIN MORTON

## COLLECTORS

- Dec:** Gordon Kirkpatrick, Brian Gourley, Valerie Condy, Clive Gilmour.
- Jan:** Kathleen Rea, Barry Bell, Robin Morton.
- Feb:** Robin Morton, Jenny Wilson, Arthur Fannin.

## EHOD THANK YOU EVENT

*As a follow-up to European Heritage Open Day, May Street was invited to send three representatives to a Thank You event at Brownlow House in Lurgan. This took place on Saturday November 22, and May Street was represented by Chris Hewitt, Kathleen Rea and May Mercer. This is a report by Christine Hewitt:*

After a warming cup of coffee the Lord Mayor of Craigavon Colin McCusker made a welcoming speech to the delegates who had come from all over the Province. We then watched and applauded as the art and photography prizes were handed out to the children and young people. This year's theme was "Anniversaries" and the standard was high with some very artistic submissions



**Living the high life:** Pictured on the roof of Brownlow House at the EHOD Thank You event are (from left) Manus Deery from EHOD along with Chris Hewitt, Kathleen Rea and May Mercer from May Street.

Before lunch we were given a short introduction to the history of Brownlow House (or Lurgan Castle), which was built in 1833 by Charles Brownlow who was created Baron of Lurgan in 1839 and whose family lived in it until the turn of the century. The building is a most imposing structure not far from Lurgan town centre built from brown sandstone brought over from Scotland and designed in the Elizabethan style by the famous Edinburgh architect William Henry Playfair. It is a rare and fine example of a "Calendar House". Why? Because it has seven main doors, four wings, 12 corners, 52 chimneys and 366 rooms (one extra for leap year)!

In 1895 the changing fortunes of the Brownlow family lead to the whole estate being sold to the Lurgan Real Property Company and subsequently to Lurgan Loyal Orange District Lodge and Craigavon Borough Council for £2,500 in 1904 largely due to the efforts of Sir William Allen (his portrait by Frank McKelvey hangs in the dining room). The grounds are extensive and include a lake and parkland with sweeping drive and entrance gates of fine wrought ironwork. The House and grounds have been recently listed by the DOE in NI as being of "special historical and architectural interest". For example, the octagonal reception room where our lunch was served showed fine examples of 'vert-antique marble' plastered panels painted by Italian craftsmen brought over to Lurgan especially by the Brownlow family.

After lunch we were taken on a guided tour of Brownlow House and saw many interesting features reminding us of its more recent history. At the outbreak of World War One the house became the HQ of two Irish Battalions, and then between 1939 and 1945 various contingents of British and American troops were stationed there and General Dwight Eisenhower is said to have passed through! Another famous story is of a greyhound 'Master McGrath' who won the Waterloo Cup three times and is buried in the grounds with a stone memorial. We also saw the servants' sleeping quarters in the attics (82 were needed in its heyday) and the kitchens and store rooms down below and we walked on the roof to admire the wonderful view and prominent lantern shaped tower and forest of individually crafted chimney pots. We felt like Mary Poppins!

One hugely sad note is that due to an arsonist fire in 1996 almost 75% of this amazing building was destroyed. We saw photos of the appalling damage but also how millions of pounds have been poured in to help rebuild and restore much of its internal structures like the beautiful oak staircase and vaulted ceilings and heraldic stain glass windows. It still retains much of the grace and grandeur of bygone days and we were able to imagine 'upstairs and downstairs' in Lurgan castle! We wish all concerned in the restoration our very best wishes for the future and thank the organisers of this year's EHOD for such a special venue and open day!

CHRISTINE HEWITT

## **BINNS ORGAN CENTENARY FESTIVAL**

The centenary of May Street's Binns Organ was celebrated in style on Saturday October 18, 2014, with a special historical musical evening. Almost 60 people were present for what turned to be a really memorable evening. Our host was Charles Maginnes, the Thursday organist, who was appropriately dressed in tails and top hat, in the style of an organist of yesteryear. He delivered a real tour de force, accompanied by his "glamorous assistant", as he termed his wife Beth.



*Inside the organ: A picture by Charles Maginnes of the innards of the Binns Organ at May Street.*

Proceedings were opened by Thursday service co-ordinator David McAuley, who welcomed all those present and led them in prayer. He then expressed thanks to Charles for the contribution he made to providing music at the May Street Thursday services. He also thanked him for

spearheading the centenary celebrations with recitals on Thursday and Friday lunchtimes.

During the first half of the evening, Charles gave a brief history of May Street and its music. When the church opened 185 years ago on October 18, 1829, praise was unaccompanied, and to lead worship there was a singing clerk, who sat at a desk in front of the pulpit. In 1849, seats were installed for the choir in the dingy gallery, behind and above the pulpit.

In 1903, an organ was installed to accompany the singing of hymns, which had been introduced during the ministry of the Rev Robert Lynd. But this organ was superseded in 1914 when the famous Binns Organ was installed at a cost of £850. The choir gallery was removed, Charles told us, and a room previously used by the choir was rebuilt and used as an organ loft. The organ had been officially unveiled at a service precisely 100 years ago - on October 18, 1914.

With Beth operating the digital projector, photographs and drawings were displayed on a large screen as Charles gave a fascinating account of the inner workings of the organ. He explained the different dimensions of the different pipes, and then moved to the organ to demonstrate how pulling out various stops affected the tone which the organ produced.

Charles' passion and enthusiasm for the Binns Organ was evident. He said that playing the organ was akin to what it must be like for a car enthusiast to drive a vintage Rolls Royce. He said the fact that the May St organ was still in its original condition, unlike many of its contemporaries, made it a particular "gem".

Charles expressed thanks to organ specialist Philip Prosser and his wife Valerie who had been at May St the previous Tuesday to tune the organ. He said Philip had repaired three broken pipes and said that the organ was sounding better than ever for its 100th birthday.

Charles then put the Binns Organ through its paces, playing a wide selection of music - everything from Bach to Psalms, and those present were invited to sing along with the Psalms which were played.

At the end of the first half, a special 100th birthday cake was cut by Charles to celebrate the centenary of the Binns Organ, to a loud rendition of Happy Birthday.

After a break for tea and coffee, kindly provided by SD Bells, prepared by May Street elder Barry Bell, and served along with slices of birthday cake by the May St ladies, we were treated to further renditions on the organ by Charles and then Colin Johnston, the May St organist.

May Street committee member Chris Hewitt came to the communion table to draw proceedings to a close. She proposed a vote of thanks to all who had contributed to the success of the Binns Centenary Organ Festival, but singled Charles Maginnes out for special praise, to loud and sustained applause.



**Pulling out the stops:** The stops of the Binns Organ are used to produce different tones and pitches.

Chris also gave those present a brief update of events at May Street and invited them all to return for a Thursday or Sunday service, or just to pop in and say hello. She said that they were all regarded as friends of May St. Christine said that although it was now a small congregation, May St was in

good heart and was about to commence work on a £300,000 upgrade of its basement, which would enable the church to reach out to the city centre community. God, she said, had not given up on May St, neither had He left the place.

## CONGREGATIONAL COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Kirk Session and Congregational Committee will take place at 7.30pm on Thursday December 4.

## WEDDING BELLS

May Street Church was the setting on Saturday October 25 for the marriage ceremony of former Sunday School leader Julie Alix Wilson and her fiancé Andrew Gillespie. The service was conducted by May Street's senior minister, the Rev Jim Barnes and the organist was May Street's own Colin Johnston. Contributions were also made by pianists Michael Sidwell and readers Helen Mitchell and Anna Wilson (Julie's niece).



**Happy couple:** Andy Gillespie and Julie Wilson sign the register after their marriage in May Street on October 25.

Julie, who is a teacher, is the daughter of May Street committee member Jenny Wilson and the

late Terry Wilson. Julie was given away by her brother Stephen.



**Stylish line-up:** Julie Wilson with (from left) May Street senior minister the Rev Jim Barnes, Julie's mum Jenny Wilson and Andy's mum Ena Gillespie.

After a very meaningful ceremony the happy couple broke with tradition and walked down the aisle to Stevie Wonder's hit song "Signed, Sealed, Delivered".



**Standing room only:** Happy guests gather on the steps of May Street Church for a group shot with the bride and groom, Julie Wilson and Andy Gillespie.

The wedding caused quite a stir outside the church on May Street. The wedding party arrived in a Hummer limousine which drew a lot of attention. A group photograph of all the guests was taken on the front steps of the church after the ceremony. As a result, many passers-by stopped and clapped while car drivers happily tooted their horns.

May Street Church looked magnificent and all the guests and friends who came to watch the wedding were extremely impressed. Julie and Andy are very grateful to many May Street members who helped in a variety of ways to make everything so wonderful for their big day. After the ceremony the couple held their reception in the Belfast Europa Penthouse and this was followed by dancing to a band.

But there was more. The Belfast Telegraph heard about the wedding and contacted Julie for an interview and published a photo of the happy couple taken up in the Parlour just before the service.

Julie and Andy had a golfing honeymoon in Portugal and now look forward to moving into their new home in Newtownards.

## DEADLINE

The deadline for all contributions to the next issue of The Greeting is Sunday January 24.

## COMMUNION

A Communion service will take place on January 31.

## RECIPE FOR LIVING

Some things a man must surely know,  
If he is going to live and grow:  
He needs to know that life is more  
Than what a man lays by in store,  
That more than all he may obtain,  
Contentment offers greater gain.

He needs to feel the thrill of mirth,  
To sense the beauty of the earth,  
To know the joy that kindness brings

And all the worth of little things.  
He needs to have an open mind,  
A friendly heart for all mankind.

A trust in self - without conceit -  
And strength to rise above defeat.  
He needs to have the will to share,  
A mind to dream, a soul to dare,  
A purpose firm, a path to plod,  
A faith in man, a trust in God.

### **CLIMB 'TIL YOUR DREAM COMES TRUE**

Often your tasks will be many,  
And more than you think you can do ...  
Often the road will be rugged  
And the hills insurmountable too  
But always remember, the hills ahead  
Are never as steep as they seem,  
And with faith in your heart start upward  
And climb 'til you reach your dream,  
For nothing in life that is worthy  
Is ever too hard to achieve  
If you have the courage to try it  
And you have the faith to believe  
For faith is a force that is greater  
Than knowledge or power or skill  
And many defeats turn to triumph  
If you trust in God's wisdom and will  
For faith is a mover of mountains,  
There's nothing that god cannot do,  
So start out today with faith in your heart  
And climb 'til your dream comes true" !

### **NO STAR IS EVER LOST**

Have we not all, amid life's petty strife,  
Some pure ideal of a noble life  
That once seemed possible  
The flutter of it's wings and feel it near,  
And just within it's reach? it was, and yet  
We lost it in this daily jar and fret.  
But still our place is kept and it will wait,  
Ready for us to fill it, soon or late.

No star is ever lost we once have seen;  
We always may be what we might have been.

### **BEGIN AGAIN**

Every day is a fresh beginning,  
Every morn is the world made new,  
You who are weary of sorrow and sinning,  
Here is a beautiful hope for you -  
A hope for me and a hope for you.

All the past things are past and over,  
The tasks are done and the tears are shed;  
Yesterday's errors let yesterday cover;  
Yesterday's wounds that smarted and bled,  
Are healed with the healing which night has shed.

Yesterday now is a part of forever,  
Bound up in a sheaf, which God holds tight,  
With glad days and sad days and bad days which  
never  
Shall visit us more with their bloom and their  
blight,  
Their fullness of sunshine or sorrowful night.

Let them go, since we cannot relive them,  
Cannot undo, and cannot atone;  
God in his mercy, receive, forgive them,  
Only the new days are our own.  
Today is ours, and today alone.

Here are the skies all burnished brightly,  
Here is the spent earth all reborn,  
Here are the tired limbs springing lightly  
To face the sun and to share with the morn,  
In the prism of dew and the cool of dawn.

Every day is a fresh beginning;  
Listen, my soul, to the glad refrain,  
And, spite of old sorrow and older sinning,  
And puzzles forecasted and possible pain,  
Take heart with the day, and begin again.

## **A PRAYER IN THE NIGHT**

O Thou who seest all my grief,  
The anguish of my heart,  
The disappointments, trials and cares  
That makes the teardrops start;  
O Thou whose love has never failed  
Though dark the night and long,  
To thee I turn my weary eyes  
And hope springs forth in song.

O Thou who knowest all my thoughts,  
The hunger of my soul,  
The blighted hope of bygone years,  
The dreams of life's lost goal;  
The aching void, the loneliness,  
And all the thorn clad way,  
To thee I turn with faith undimmed,  
And 'mid the darkness pray.

O Thou who givest grace and strength  
For every trying hour,  
Who understandest when I fall  
Before the tempter's power;  
O Thou who dwellest in my heart,  
Whose will is my delight,  
To thee I turn, thy face I see  
And all again is bright.

## **THE STRANGER**

A stranger came to Bethlehem,  
With great gifts in his hands.  
But many people only saw  
A babe in swaddling bands.  
A stranger lived in Nazareth,  
And in his heart was truth.  
But many thought him Joseph's son,  
An ordinary youth.  
A stranger taught in galilee,  
With wisdom from on high.  
To many he was just a man,  
And so they passed him by.  
That stranger walks the world today,  
In hearts that have received

The son of God. No stranger, he,  
To those who have believed.

## **THINK ON THIS**

Let us with humble hearts repair,  
Faith will point out the road,  
To little Bethlehem, and there  
Adore our infant God  
In swaddling bands the saviour view -  
Let none this weakness scorn;  
The feeblest heart shall hell subdue,  
Where Jesus Christ is born.  
No pomp adorns, no sweet perfumes  
The place where Christ is laid;  
A stable serves him for his room,  
A manger is his bed.  
The crowded inn, like sinners' hearts,  
(Oh, ignorance extreme!)  
For other guests of various sorts  
Had room, but none for him.

## **GOD'S UNCHANGING WORD**

For feelings come and feelings go,  
And feelings are deceiving;  
My warrant is the word of God,  
Naught else is worth believing.  
Though all my heart should feel condemned  
For want of some sweet token,  
There is one greater than my heart  
Whose word cannot be broken.  
I'll trust in God's unchanging word  
Till soul and body sever;  
For though all things shall pass away,  
His word shall stand forever.

## **THINK ON THESE.....**

### **LOSS**

His gain is loss.  
For he who wrongs his friend  
Wrongs himself more.  
And ever bears about a silent court of justice

In his breast,  
Himself, the judge and jury.  
And himself the prisoner at the bar  
Ever condemned.

### **THANKS**

Thank God for dirty dishes,  
They have a tale to tell:  
While others may go hungry  
We're eating very well,  
With home, and health, and happiness  
I shouldn't want to fuss;  
By the stack of evidence,  
God's been very good to us.

### **STEADFAST IS THE LOVING HEART**

The loving heart is like a fire  
That gives a quiet glow.  
Who come within its range  
Can feel its warmth and know -  
The comfort and the beauty  
Of a never-failing flame.  
Steadfast is the loving heart  
Unchanged by praise or blame.

### **IF**

If everyone's internal pain was written on their  
brow,  
How many would our pity share who have our  
envy now ?

### **AND SO.....**

And so another day  
That there outstretched once lay  
Between me and my hope is overpast.  
What when the whole long track  
Lord, is behind my back,  
And face to face with thee  
I stand at last ?

### **SOMEWHERE IN THE SHADOWS**

Standing somewhere in the shadows you'll find  
Jesus,  
He's the friend who always cares and  
understands,  
Standing somewhere in the shadows you will find  
him,  
And you'll know him by the nail prints in his  
hands.

### **ONE OF THE SWEET OLD CHAPTERS**

One of the sweet old chapters,  
After a day like this -  
The day brought tears and troubles,  
The evening brings no kiss,  
Nor rest in the arms I long for,  
Rest and refuge and home;  
Grieved and lonely and weary,  
Unto the book I come.  
One of the sweet old chapters,  
That always will avail,  
So full of heavenly comfort,  
When earthly comforts fail,  
A sweet and blessed message  
From God to his children dear,  
So rich in precious promises,  
So full of love and cheer.  
One of the sweet old chapters,  
When comes the lonely night,  
When all things earthly fail us,  
And tears have dimmed our sight,  
This only can relieve us,  
A message from above,  
Then we can rest so sweetly,  
In faith, and hope, and love.

Poems contributed by Elizabeth Doran