



The Greeting

CONGREGATIONAL MAGAZINE OF MAY STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BELFAST

VOL 100 NO 2

Web site: www.maystreetchurch.co.uk

APRIL 2008

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DARCY – WHERE’S YOUR FLAK JACKET?

Whoever said the National Trust is for older people? Who came up with the advertising line that a day out at the National Trust brings relaxation and rest amidst the calm of rolling fields and stately homes replete with their own Mr Darcy wandering nonchalantly towards their own grounds for tea and an evening spent around the harpsichord? Well, on this one I speak from experience and I assure you it is nothing like this whatsoever.

Recently my wife and I took out National Trust membership, an action which in my humble opinion immediately explodes the first myth - that it is for older people. Our membership came through, providentially we thought, one day before we set off for a three day break in Chester. Once there, Deborah was keen to take me to Tatton Park, her ancestral home – where her family line of Egertons had once lived. Her father had paid

a visit once and on that occasion they were quite excited that an actual family member was there. They rolled out the red carpet and took him on a special tour to meet the great and the good of the National Trust staff on site. However, this time we experienced a totally different reception.

It was Monday when we arrived at Tatton Park for my first ever visit to a National Trust property as a member. I was realistic enough not to expect red carpet but it was a little disappointing to find the park closed. Well, kind of closed. One swing gate was closed but the other lay open and was easily wide enough to take a car. One small sign said: 'Shakespeare Festival Today.' This amounted to two invitations, a half open gate and a Shakespeare festival to an English teacher adds up to a second invite and after all, it was home! So we travelled on in. After coming all this distance it would be a pity not to roll up the drive and see the house, so that's exactly what we did.

There were a lot of children, buses and cars



EASTER GREETINGS



so we didn't feel as though we were particularly intruding, especially as we were, after all, National Trust members and family. I am also happy to say, we didn't even abuse things but soon left again. However on the way out we pulled over by a lake to take a photograph. At this point a National Trust four wheel drive vehicle pulled up and the driver shouted: "The park is closed today" before immediately driving off. So did we, but Tatton Park is a big place and unfortunately we missed the exit turn for the main road.

All of a sudden, we found ourselves reverberating from a loud bang, the force of which was sufficiently strong to make the car actually shake on the road. We had been hit by the force of an explosion that had gone off just beside us and discovered that we were caught in cross-fire as army engaged in a full-scale shoot out around the car. It was a little like a Jane Austen plot on steroids, where she had employed Joan Collins and John Grisham as sub-editors. We drove on and stopped to inspect if the hire car had sustained any damage. It seemed OK on the surface. However as we drove on we discovered we had come to a locked gate, which is where we realised we had taken a wrong turn. A number of police cars were parked there so we asked for directions to the exit. They weren't sure, so we headed off again and found it very shortly and finally exited the park.

That was my first experience as a National Trust member, shouted at, shot at and locked in. If you want tranquillity, stay at home. If you want an adrenalin rush and a near-death experience, join the National Trust. It was a good day, I'm all for the National Trust but Mr Darcy had better be careful wandering around like that with his shirt half off, better he wears a flak jacket when out and about – it would help to keep the women away too.

And all this brings me to my point, old heritage buildings can give you quite a surprise. They may not be quite what you expect. One such example is May Street. We have plans to further develop the café and to introduce a new church service where the emphasis is on marrying conventional Irish church with a contemporary experiential interaction.

Already from Tuesday to Thursday you can see Dan Forshaw playing one of his saxophones on the steps of the church and people are beginning to notice the increased life about the place. One lady that I recently met in Belfast said to me:

"Oh that's the church with the saxophonist." We now have Suzi Salt behind the counter at Urban Soul, wonderfully backed up by Amelia Morgan from America and new our financial genius Mark Johnston helping with the business plans. Chris Hewitt, Adam Harbinson and Debbie Lindores of course continue to be there in their various roles.

After Easter, plans are in hand to offer small beakers of hot coffee to those who are getting of buses or walking past. We intend to be on the pavement outside Urban Soul from 7.30 to 9am and to start building a relationship with workers as they head towards work. Dan will also be playing the saxophone and the coffee will be handed out by businessmen and women. Soon this coffee will be our own specifically blended coffee packaged under the Urban Soul brand name.

Then in May we will have John Kelly and the Irish Chamber Orchestra coming to play. All of this is quite an achievement for one small church; this project will also include a number of concerts and a cross-community dimension involving the primary education sector. When you add everything up, May Street is becoming quite an exciting place to be around. However, we do make three promises, we will neither shout at you, shoot at you or lock you in, so if you are interested in helping please ring or contact us.

KEITH DRURY

COMMITTEE MEETING

A meeting of the Congregational Committee will be held at 7.30pm on Monday April 21, followed by a meeting of Kirk Session.

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

Report of the annual business meeting of May Street Presbyterian Church, held in the lecture hall on March 10, 2008.

The Rev Keith Drury presided, and 27 members were present. Attendance and apologies were noted in the attendance register. Mr Drury welcomed everyone and opened the meeting with prayer.

Minutes: The minutes of the 2007 ABM, which had been published in The Greeting, were agreed and adopted on the proposal of Arthur Acheson, seconded Kathleen Rea.



**A stunning performance
The Irish Chamber Orchestra
Belfast City Centre
May Street Church 7th May 2008**

**For further details see
www.maystreetchurch.co.uk**

Reports: Annual reports, which are published in this issue of The Greeting, were presented on behalf of the Kirk Session, the Congregational Committee, the Weekly Freewill Offering and the Finance Committee. In the absence of the treasurer, Andrew Acheson, his father Arthur Acheson presented the report on behalf of the Finance Committee and gave a rundown of the accounts. In response to Derek Gourley, he apologised for the fact that a donation of £70 raised from the sale of a table tennis table had been overlooked but said it would be included in the 2008 accounts.

Mr Drury thanked all the officer-bearers for their work, and commended them for their reports. He also thanked the auditors. Arthur Fannin proposed the adoption of the reports, and this was seconded by Frank Boyd and agreed.

Appointment of auditors: Gordon Kirkpatrick and Geoff Hill were re-appointed as auditors on the proposal of Arthur Acheson, seconded Jimmy McCrossan.

Congregational organisations: Reports were then presented on behalf of the Thursday Outreach, the Youth Church, the Choir, the Tuesday Circle and the Peace Agent. These reports are also published in this issue of The Greeting.

Congregational committee: Mr Drury reported that an election for members of the committee had been held in accordance with the regulations of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. A new committee had been elected to serve for three years. The members are: Andrew Acheson, Janet Booker, Frank Boyd, Valerie Condy, Arthur Fannin, Brian Gourley, Christine Hewitt, Colin Johnston, Gordon Kirkpatrick, Robin Morton, Alan McCrum, Roy Williamson, Jenny Wilson and Stephen Wilson. Mr Drury expressed thanks to the outgoing members of committee.

Outreach report: Mr Drury reported that 2007 had been a dramatic year, and one of great change. He said numbers at the Thursday lunchtime services had taken a dip, primarily as a result of the tight enforcement of parking regulations in the vicinity. More recently, however, the numbers had gone up again, with more business people in attendance. Another boost had been the involvement of saxophonist Dan Forshaw, who played on the steps of the church before the service.

Urban Soul was proving to be a great interface with visitors, and many conversations had developed around the coffee bar. Sometimes they were with people who had not attended a church for years, or who had never been churchgoers. These were things that it was impossible to include in business reports or accounts.

Mr Drury reported that the Board of Mission in Ireland, which funded staff costs at Urban Soul, was taking an increasing interest in events. The board had set up a sub-committee which was preparing a report on ways in which the outreach could be intensified. God was blessing the work in May Street, and a dynamic year lay ahead.

Any other business: Arthur Acheson reported that the clerkship of South Belfast Presbytery was vacant and said that expressions of interest were being invited from ministers and elders.

Vote of thanks: Robin Hewitt proposed a vote of thanks to organists Colin Johnston and Charles Maginnes, both of whom were providing their services free of charge. This was passed by acclamation.

That being all the business, Mr Drury closed the meeting with prayer. Supper was then served by the ladies of the congregation.

ROBIN MORTON
Congregational Secretary

KIRK SESSION

Last year, I said that going on holiday was risky – if you were away from May Street for a week, you were out of date. This year if you went for just a weekend, things had moved on and you were sure to have missed something!

The business of May Street is ever changing. The great thing is that the message remains the same. We really can relax in the presence of God our Father. So rush and turmoil, although it seems incessant to us, our outdatedness is very temporary and we soon catch up.

Most of us have by now grown so used to having a great café in the basement that we cannot imagine ourselves without it. Can it be less than a year since it opened?

We greatly welcome the warmth and vitality of the new mission in our midst. We are delighted that people whom we might have previously

regarded as strangers are visiting May Street on regular basis and becoming part of the work of the church.

Thankfully, none of this is new to the May Street congregation. For almost a generation, the midweek outreach has included lunches and services. The very best of this tradition remains alive and exhilarating with the use of the sanctuary and the lecture hall as well as the new basement café. We appreciate this continuing work by the Minister and his able workforce who give freely of their time to maintain and develop this important aspect of our city centre mission. Development, of course, includes the longer opening hours of the sanctuary as well as new services of prayer, healing and communion which happen on Tuesdays and Wednesdays during term time in addition to the now traditional Thursday service.

None of this work is easy and all of it is time consuming. It is also timely. Other worshipping presences in the city centre have diminished or disappeared completely. Our opportunity to neither diminish nor disappear but to develop is clearly the right choice although it may seem the hardest and most demanding in the short term. Of course we are not just here for the short term. We are here to stay and to choose the prayerful option, not the easy one. The hardest option in the short term will lead us to the right future.

We have been greatly encouraged in our work by the Board of Mission of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and by South Belfast Presbytery. Their constant support relates to the spiritual and practical dimensions as well as the financial resources, all of which underpin the May Street and City Centre Ministry. The regular meetings of the Advisory Board assist the Minister, Kirk Session and Committee, ensuring relevance and linkages with the wider church.

Current debate in Kirk Session relates to the prospect of not only maintaining and developing traditional worship services but also recognising that contemporary society is not driven solely by tradition. Nor can tradition itself be underrated as a resource! The skill of arranging for appropriate linkages and choices between contemporary styles of worship and our traditional forms is developing well in May Street and we trust that no member or visitor will feel out of place at any time, in any part of the church, its people, buildings and activities.

As our work has developed, so too have our buildings. Even as we anticipate the greater changes which have been agreed (subject to planning approvals) with Barnabas Ventures, the prospect of continuing minor adaptation is real. New missions create many surprises, not the least of which is the continuous change in how we use the place. Do we need a door here or a window there – more seats or fewer seats in a particular place – a gate or a railing altered – lights, paint or music?

Thank God we can relax in this place. We love to see our children and our parents, grandparents and friends mixing and matching with each other and with our Minister and the various staff and volunteers who assist in the work.

We use the church freely and well. There is a new atmosphere here, surrounded and enhanced by the best of tradition and building (as one visitor has said) on the prayers of generations of people which one can feel in this place.

As a caring, worshipping congregation, we celebrate and give thanks for the lives of the following members who died in the past year and for the special talents and gifts which each brought to May Street:

Audrey Hanna, 19 February 2007,
John Eccles, 24 June 2007,
Sheila Johnston, 2 December 2007,
Lily Crawford, 6 January 2008.

The Rev Niall Bayly continues to assist the minister with pastoral care for the congregation and we thank him for his dedication to this aspect of our ministry.

Our organist Colin Johnston and the choir continue to enhance the worship services. Charles Maginnes is a regular organist on Thursdays. These talents are complemented by the many other musicians who have brought their musical abilities throughout the year to the church sanctuary and the basement café.

The work of our Minister, the Rev Keith Drury, is inspiring. Here we have not just a minister, but a writer, a painter, a businessman, a friend and a leader. Keith and Deborah's wedding was one of the highlights of the year, an occasion in which relatives, friends and members of the congregation rejoiced. May Street and Belfast city centre are fortunate that Keith continues to feel

passionate about this work as it develops under his leadership. We trust that we are listening well and keeping up to the mark!

Keith's leadership has brought together a staff resource such as I have never before seen in May Street as well as all our dedicated volunteers, some who are members of the congregation and others who have joined us without formalising any membership.

They work in so many ways for the mission of May Street.

I give thanks for my fellow elders, members of the congregational committee, the congregation and friends of May Street and the wider church who remain constant and supportive as we respond positively to the world of constant change in which we live and as we pray for God to bless our work in His name.

ARTHUR ACHESON
Clerk of Session

CONGREGATIONAL COMMITTEE

The May Street congregational committee has had another eventful year. Over the past 12 months we have held eight full meetings and have also convened after church on seven occasions to transact urgent business. In the calendar year 2007, a total of 150 items came under our purview, compared with 148 the previous year.

Continuing uncertainty about the outcome of the planning application by Barnabas Ventures/Mizpah Properties for the £36m development at May Street has led us, by and large, to adopt a care and maintenance approach to our church buildings. The May Street trustees have been offering assistance to Barnabas in pursuing the application. It now seems that a revision to the original application will be made, in order to accommodate a design change which will result in the block on top of the church being rotated by 45 degrees. You may soon see a revised planning application in the Press.

Despite the constraints, the building sub-committee, under Alan McCrum, has kept itself busy. A priority has been repairing the electrical fault which caused our heating problems in the sanctuary. It now appears that the problem has been resolved, so thanks to all concerned.

DEADLINE

The deadline for all contributions to the next issue of the Greeting is Sunday
June 1

The committee has been keen to facilitate the ongoing development of outreach work in Urban Soul and to this end, a sub-committee is being formed which will be responsible for the day-to-day running of this facility. The membership is drawn both from the May Street Sunday congregation and from the midweek members who have been playing such a key role in the outreach work. We are pleased to see new life being breathed into the basement and excited by the outreach opportunities which arise. The Thursday evening jazz club has been a notable success and has attracted many new and curious faces to May Street. We wish Suzi Salt, our new catering supervisor, and her staff God's blessing in all their work.

This venture coupled with the lunchtime opening of our sanctuary during the week – thanks to the involvement of the ever faithful Christine Hewitt – means that May Street is gaining a much higher profile. The opening of an hotel in Alfred Street and the ongoing revival of the city centre, both in the evenings and during the day, means that our location is proving more pivotal than ever. The icing on the cake was the unveiling last week of the £400m Victoria Square complex. This shifts the retail heart of the city closer to May Street, and should increase footfall past our church. This will provide an opportunity of which we must avail in the months ahead.

The downside of our more open access is that we are more vulnerable to theft, and there have been a couple of unsavoury incidents in which intruders have stolen money and a laptop from our premises. We are grateful to the PSNI who offered their advice and assistance. As part of a review, the committee is considering appointing a security guard who can monitor the situation when the doors of Urban Soul and the church are open to the public. We remain keen to facilitate an open door policy, but must ensure that our security is not compromised.

Another new departure has been the May Street Economic Forum, set up under joint convenors

Keith Drury and Raymond Sexton. The objective has been to analyse the Northern Ireland economy from a Christian perspective and to make proposals for the way forward. An interim report has now gone to the Varney Review, which is studying ways of making the local economy more competitive.

The congregational committee has been encouraged by the way in which our new treasurer, Andrew Acheson, has adapted to his role. Roy Williamson was a hard act to follow, but Andrew has been more than up to the challenge. The only problem is that having two A Achesons in attendance at committee meetings plays havoc with my shorthand.

A day of great joy for the committee and congregation was April 7, the day of the wedding of our minister Keith Drury and his wife Deborah. The schoolroom was transformed into a function room in order to host the wedding reception and everyone had a ball. A second post-wedding reception was held on December 29, this time for the daughter and son-in-law of business development executive Adam Harbinson. A new line of business could be opening up for May Street.

These are but two examples of the increasing demand for use of May Street's facilities. Despite the strict enforcement of parking regulations, May Street is ideally situated for groups which wish to meet in the city centre. Our users have been as diverse as the Presbyterian Ministers' wives and the Electoral Office to Opera North. In September, we played host to the Centre for Contemporary Christianity's conference, which brought 100 delegates to our premises for three days. We not only accommodated but somehow managed to feed them as well. No mean achievement. A slightly less orthodox use of our premises was the time in October when May Street Church was used as a location for the shooting of a film about Zombies invading the earth. Strangely, I did not hear it being mentioned at the Oscars - but there is always next year.

As Andrew will be telling us, the income generated by means of donations as a result of such activity helps defray our ever-increasing overheads for items such as insurance and electricity. Our thanks go to Valerie Condy for her role in co-ordinating the bookings. Thanks are also due to church officer Debbie Lindores who in addition to her cleaning duties is often called upon to open up the premises

for outside groups and to secure them.

As you will be aware, an application has been lodged for an entertainments licence for the sanctuary. This will facilitate us in opening the church to a wider audience and hopefully earning some income from various events. Plans are already in hand for a concert by the Irish Chamber Orchestra on Wednesday May 7, which should be an evening for us all to savour. Please put the date in your diary.

I mentioned car parking and the difficulties posed for May Street by the more formal arrangements now in force. Parking on Little May Street is now prohibited, putting regular workers and staff to considerable inconvenience. However, Arthur Acheson is investigating the possibility of Little May Street being abandoned by the Department of Regional Development, and ownership of the street passing to the church, the main user. Another option is something called alleygating, which means fencing off the street, but with May Street able to use it as a private car park. We are indebted to Arthur for his determination to broker a solution.

The Greeting continues to keep members up to date with events at May Street and Urban Soul, and in the wider community. This year marks the 100th anniversary of the church magazine and plans are in hand to mark the centenary later in the year. In the meantime, I should as editor like to record my thanks to all my regular contributors and also to Elizabeth Doran, whose work in collecting and distributing the magazine is of enormous assistance to me.

As well as keeping members informed, The Greeting is a valuable tool when it comes to raising May Street's profile and marketing ourselves to the outside world. The magazine is now available both in printed version and on the May Street website, where a valuable archive of past issues is being built up. Our thanks go to Adam Harbinson for all his hard work in organising the website and keeping it up to date. Interest is increasing all the time, with 2,700 hits being recorded in a single day recently. In addition, we are starting to benefit from links from other websites, which directs a lot of traffic to us. And thanks to the marvels of technology, it is now possible to download a recording of the Minister's sermons - very useful if you happen to have nodded off during the live version.

Thanks to various initiatives ranging from Georgian Christmas to the Clarence Court outreach project, May Street has developed many linkages with outside bodies such as Belfast City Centre Management, the PSNI and Government departments. In a world in which networking is increasingly important, we are reaping the rewards of having engaged with our neighbours and those who work, live, shop or socialise in the city centre.

In closing, I should like to thank the members of committee for their hard work and support. Challenging times lie ahead but as a new committee gets down to business, I know we will have plenty of issues to discuss and decisions to take. As ever, May Street is confronting change, both within and without. As 2008 unfolds before us, it is vital that we remain flexible, agile and open-minded - and seek to exploit to the full every opportunity which presents itself.

ROBIN MORTON
Congregational Secretary

WEEKLY FREEWILL OFFERINGS

Each year I warn you about the danger of letting the WFO drop into "free-fall". This is a very real danger, bearing in mind the small number in our congregation and our position in the centre of the city.

We all come a distance into Church and this nowadays can be a large expense, but the congregation has performed most generously by keeping the WFO total as high as it is at £23,184 - only a very little lower than last year. Well done!

It is my unfortunate lot to have to ask for more and more. Thank you for what you have done and in anticipation of a healthy sum this year, 2008.

I would ask you to give generously also to the funds for which envelopes have already been provided along with your WFO envelopes.

Fabric Fund - There is always something needing repaired or renewed.

United Appeal - The work of our Presbyterian Church in Ireland as a whole. This affords us the opportunity to help in work and in areas we do not normally subscribe to.

Harvest Thanksgiving - Here we thank

God for the bounty he has provided for us.

World Development - We return God's bounty of which we have sufficient to the starvation-rocked nations of which there are many. We can make that difference between life and death.

The Flower Fund - Spare a copper or two if any left for this fund which never ceases to enhance the beauty of our lovely church thanks to Kathleen Rea and her ladies.

In closing I would like to express my thanks to our honorary treasurer Andrew Acheson who has undertaken this onerous task with great goodwill, ability and to Geoffrey Hill, Gordon Kirkpatrick and Arthur Acheson for their uncomplaining work on the finances of our church.

Barry Bell
WFO Convenor

FINANCE COMMITTEE

SUMMARY

The opening bank balance on January 1, 2007 was £78,147. Total receipts for the year amounted to £115,597 and total payments for the year was £119,527, giving a closing balance of £74,217 at December 31, 2007. The Fabric Fund account had a surplus of £3,291 and the general account a deficit of £7,221, giving an overall deficit of £3,930 for the year. It should be noted that the payment from Presbyterian Church in Ireland of the Urban Soul (formerly Lightwell) Grant money (amounting to £30,000) that was due in December 2007 arrived in January 2008 and is included in the accounts for the year. Including this payment there remains £40,712 of the £90,000 received from PCI since 2006.

RECEIPTS:

WFO receipts decreased from £24,614 to £23,184, but the Sabbath Collection rose sharply from £2,558 to £6,676. United Appeal donations increased from £1,290 to £1,840, this being 68% of the target of £2,700 set by Church House, but we paid the full target, as usual. Investment income (including bank interest) fell slightly from £2,114 to £2,103. The use of halls income was

£4,210 (2006: £5,793). The contributors for the use of our facilities during the year were:

Boys Brigade organisations, Weight Watchers, The Mandate, Belvoir Lettings, Irish Co-operative Womens Group, Presbyterian Ministers Wives and The Election Office.

Receipts for periodicals were £114 (2006: £151) and other sources of income amounted to £3,093 including a donation from the estate of the late Mr Hugh Sloan in the sum of £2,500.

Urban Soul receipts amounted to £12,153 and details can be found in the Urban Soul section.

Thursday Outreach receipts amounted to £5,178, with further details in the Thursday Outreach section.

During 2007, the Flower Fund was amalgamated into the main account of the church, and the receipts figure of £1,209 includes the transfer of the bank balance of the fund which stood at £754 at the time of transfer.

Fabric Fund receipts amounted to £16,337 (2006: £15,463) the majority of which came from the ongoing Mizpah Property development stage payments (£12,000) alongside generous donations from Tuesday Circle and individuals.

The Tax refund of £7,095 related to Gift Aid for the tax year ended April 5, 2007. It is worth noting that we could have claimed a further £2,228 from the taxman if all Weekly Freewill Offering contributions could be included in the Gift Aid scheme. If you are a taxpayer, the church can reclaim the tax that you have paid on any donation that you make – not just WFO. Please contact myself (Andrew Acheson) or our WFO Convenor (Barry Bell) if you would like more details.

PAYMENTS:

Assembly assessments were up in line with prices at £22,284 against £21,307 for 2006, and our ministerial expenses dropped from £6,583 to £6,376. Salaries and pulpit supply increased from £6,838 to £9,312, due to the extra hours put in by our Church Officer Debbie Lindores helping out with the activities around the café. Light and Heat costs decreased from £7,266 to £5,027, but this is mostly to do with the timing of payments to the utilities companies – the average for the last three years is £5,540 so the figure for 2007 is close to average.

We managed to reduce our insurance premium in 2007, and have also only paid pro-rata up to October 31, 2008. This is due to the change over to a new insurer who has a special policy for Presbyterian churches in Northern Ireland, and who renews all of their policies on September 1 each year. After inviting the head of the insurance broker to Urban Soul for a coffee (to allow him to assess the uses to which we put the church during the week, of course), the Rev Drury has gained a commitment that our premium will remain static for the next two years providing our circumstances do not change. Thus our rent, rates, insurance and water charge decreased from £9,020 to £6,848 reflecting the above reduction in insurance payment.

Our payments for The Greeting were up from £1,320 to £2,125. There are five issues of The Greeting each year, but we were only invoiced for four issues in 2006, and thus paid for six issues in 2007, including a bumper edition with some wedding photographs in it. Our payments for periodicals were down from £155 to £134. Our printing, stationery and advertising fell from £2,242 to £918, but it should be noted that the Urban Soul part of this cost is now included in Urban Soul costs, and is detailed later. Repairs and Renewals also fell from £1,714 to £0, as all repairs and renewals during 2007 were to the fabric of the building and are included in the Fabric Fund account. Telephone expenditure was up from £596 to £1,612, due to a payment of £750 being issued to the Rev Keith Drury to cover mobile phone expenses from previous years. Youth Church expenses increased from £9 to £92, mostly covering a trip to the pantomime at Christmas.

Other expenses fell from £1,775 to £1,557 and details can be found in the notes to the accounts. Special offerings (money collected on behalf of other charities) increased to £2,405 in 2007. Income tax refund paid out fell from £1,599 to £31. This was due to two factors: two years' tax refund was claimed in 2006 and in 2007 the committee ratified the finance committee's proposal to include the tax refund as part of the United Appeal target, due to the fact that we collect less than our target and make up the difference from general church funds. Bank fees rose slightly from £108 to £120, but these are now fixed for the foreseeable future. Urban Soul payments during the year amounted to £42,776, with further details in the Urban Soul section below. Thursday Outreach payments

amounted to £1,789 for the year, including £600 donated to Tear Fund, Oxfam and The Leprosy Mission. Flower Fund payments amounted to £374, although we suspect that there are some invoices pending from our supplier of flowers.

As in previous years, the expertise of our own members has again been put to good use, with our organist, Colin Johnston, having provided his services free of charge. Charles Maginnes also provides organist services free of charge on Thursdays. Alan McCrum has made another heroic effort during the year to keep our buildings and facilities in good order while we await the outcome of the new Mizpah Properties/Barnabas Ventures development proposal.

Repair works amounted to £13,046 and was spent in the following areas:

General cleaning & materials	£278
Church:	£7,420
Made up of: Security doors	£878
Cleaning & painting	£3,573
Repairs to heating system	£2,602
Door repairs	£242
Glazing	£125
Church Hall & Kitchen:	£1,173
Made up of: Boiler servicing	£597
Kitchen equipment	£13
Glazing	£563
Manse	£4,175
Made up of: Management company	
service charge	£120
Tiling	£3,710
Dishwasher repair	£145
Garden	£200

The refurbishment of the basement was completed early in the year with £7,287 being spent on: the electrical, plumbing and heating systems.

Electrical work	£195
Plumbing & heating	£7,092

GIVING TO OTHERS:

A most important aspect of church finances is that of the level of our giving to others. In the last year, we distributed a total of £5,755 to others, the beneficiaries being:

United Appeal	£2,700
World Development	£1,085
Leprosy Mission	£1,100

Presbyterian Orphans Society	£250
Tear Fund	£200
Oxfam	£200
Earl Haig	£85
UDR Benevolent Fund	£85
Cooke Memorial Prize	£50

The above includes donations (totalling £600) sent from the Thursday outreach in favour of Leprosy Mission, Tear Fund and Oxfam.

INVESTMENTS:

Investments stand at a notional valuation of £26,000.

URBAN SOUL (formerly known as Lightwell):

Urban Soul receipts for 2007 were £42,152 against payments of £42,776. The third instalment of the PCI grant towards personnel costs was received in January 2008, amounting to £30,000. Donations and grants from third parties amounted to £11,653 with Mustard Seed Foundation contributing £2,425 (being the US\$5,000 third year contribution), major contributions being received from the McClure Trust at £450, other personal donations of £740 and congregational contributions through Lightwell envelopes bringing in £2,955. Added to these were cash receipts of £4,783 and the coffee club donation of £300. These sums, together with £500 income received from sales the Coffee Dock in the early part of the year (and which was amalgamated into the Urban Soul café later in the year), add up to the total of £42,152 in receipts for the year.

Urban Soul total payments amounted to £42,776, the major part of which was personnel costs of £26,708 and which were covered by the PCI grant of £30,000. Other costs included the final payments for refurbishment work mentioned earlier of £7,287, furniture and equipment at £3,397, consumables at £3,318 printing and advertising at £1,457 and miscellaneous items at £609.

As mentioned earlier, at the end of the financial year, the PCI Grant Account stood at £40,712.

Looking into 2008, the finance committee met and did some approximate calculations to show the costs relating to the daily running of the café as follows:

Expenditure (approx average per month):	
Coffee	£150

Food	£300
Band	£600
Heat & Light	£200
Total	£1,250

Donations (approx average per month):

Total	£1,550
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Thus the café is currently contributing around £300 per month to church funds, and the PCI grant account will cover the projected personnel costs for the next twelve months or so. However, Urban Soul's finances will need to be closely monitored over the coming year as more new initiatives are devised and introduced to enhance our city centre Mission.

THURSDAY OUTREACH:

In 2006 it was decided to incorporate the accounts of Thursday Outreach into the accounts of the church, as the work undertaken by the Outreach team was considered a vital part of the work of our church in the city centre. The Thursday Outreach receipts for 2007 were £5,178 and payments were £1,789 (including donations to others). This is an average surplus for the year of some £330 per month, and is an amazing achievement by the team. The Thursday Outreach has made a major contribution to church funds in 2007 and has helped to keep the deficit for the year at a low level.

FINALLY:

I would like to extend thanks to Roy Williamson who helped me to assume the role of Honorary Treasurer in March of 2007, and he has been a source of much help as I got to grips with the details of the church finances in a year with some major changes.

My sincere thanks are also due to our two honorary auditors, Geoff Hill and Gordon Kirkpatrick who gave up their time to check that my work was to a satisfactory standard, our WFO convenor, Barry Bell, for his continuing work looking after the money coming in and who has been able to keep me on the straight and narrow regarding the expectations of the treasurer! And of course, my dad, our Clerk of Session, who has been asking me difficult questions and keeping me honest for longer than anyone else and is still very good at it!

I look forward to the development of Urban Soul and the whole of the May Street City Centre

Mission into 2008 and hope to be able to continue to do my small part to help with the work here.

ANDREW ACHESON
Honorary Treasurer

TUESDAY CIRCLE

At the end of the 2007-08 season we are still going and maintaining our 24-strong membership and looking ahead to celebrating our 40th anniversary next year. We are also conscious of being the only organisation presently in existence for members of May Street congregation.

We are pleased to welcome Debbie Drury and Chrissie Hewitt as new members and as always, we extend a warm invitation to any lady who would like to enjoy an evening of fun and fellowship to come and join us at the Tuesday Circle meetings in the lecture hall on the fourth Tuesday of each month.

The past season started in October, as a large number of our members were having a late holiday. So rather than have a speaker and only a very small number present, we re-scheduled. The rest of the programme went according to plan, with speakers as follows:

October - Brian Tracey, crime prevention officer from Donegall Pass police station.

November - Bob Brookes, gardener and broadcaster. On this occasion our numbers were swollen by guests from Fitzroy Presbyterian, Fisherwick Presbyterian as well as family and friends.

December - We had a pleasant Christmas dinner at Spa Golf Club.

January - Belfast City Council consumer advice department.

February - Belfast City Council recycling department. Dr Tim Walker inspired us with his enthusiastic talk.

In April we will hold our annual general meeting and spring outing, this time to Carrickfergus for a meal.

We decided not to advertise our catering this year as we have been receiving repeat bookings from people who have heard from others who have heard from others who have enjoyed our food and hospitality. Really, this is the best form of publicity.

We had visitors from Banbridge, Markethill, Raloo (Larne) and for the third year, St Columba's reunion.

When we have bookings for Thursday evenings, we encourage our visitors to drop in at our Urban Soul café and several who have done so have enjoyed the brand of entertainment of offer.

Sadly we lost our long time member Sheila Johnston on December 2. Sheila was a founder member and always enjoyed her time with us. She served on the committee and held office many times. She will be sadly missed.

We also remember our member Dorrie Morton, who is in a nursing home. We pray for her and her family.

ENA KIRKPATRICK
Secretary.

THE CHOIR

Although the choir is small in size, it continues to fulfil an important role in leading the praise in the May Street sanctuary Sunday by Sunday.

Highlights of the choral calendar were, as usual, Christmas, Easter, Harvest Thanksgiving, and Remembrance Day, all occasions on which we provide special music and singing.

But we also get out and about and this year the annual choir outing took place on Saturday June 2. This year we went to the Castlereagh Hills Golf Club, where we enjoyed a delicious evening meal and a convivial evening of fellowship.

We remain deeply indebted to Colin Johnston who keeps us in tune on the organ week by week. Thanks also go to Robin Hewitt, who from time to time accompanies the choir on the piano, thereby freeing Colin Johnston to join our ranks. We appreciate the extra support given to us by Chrissie Hewitt, who augments our numbers on special occasions.

It with sadness and yet with thankfulness for her life that I record the death in December of Sheila Johnston. Sheila was a long-standing member of the choir but she also contributed to many other aspects of life in May Street. She was a great friend to us all and is sadly missed.

As is now traditional, I close my report by making the annual appeal for new members. There

is room for everyone, even if singing-wise, you are a bit of a Dustin the Turkey!

VALERIE MORTON
Secretary

THURSDAY OUTREACH

The services in the Church and lunches in the lecture hall which take place each Thursday play an important part in the weekday activities of our Church.

Numbers in the first half of the year continued to be very good. However, after the summer break, while the attendances at the services were only slightly down, the number of lunches required in the lecture hall did not quite recover to the previous level.

Nevertheless the ladies of our congregation responsible for the catering each week under the supervision of Jean McCrum and Ena Kirkpatrick have been kept busy.

This is reflected in the generous contribution to the church's finances through income from the Lunches and retiring offerings after the church services, also local charities outside the congregation have not been forgotten.

We send our best wishes to Louise Adams who is recovering from the unfortunate fall she had on Christmas Day on the steps of the church. Louise is greatly missed as she was always present to welcome people to the Thursday services.

The opening of our church continues each Thursday with services from 1.05 - 1.30pm in the church and lunches in the lecture hall from 12.00noon - 2.00pm.

Please note that there will be a break with no services or lunches on March 27 or April 3. Thursday opening will resume on the April 10 when the topic at the service will be "Does God believe in Atheists?"

We record with regret the passing of Sheila Johnston on December 2. Sheila was one of the small group of three from the congregation who, under the ministry of the late Rev Keith Weir, got the Thursday services and lunches up and running in the autumn of 1989.

SAM NELSON

PEACE AGENT

Many thanks to all who supported me in my role of peace agent during the year. It proved to be a year in which we embraced some new ideas.

Clarence Court outreach team organised the annual Easter party at Chapel Fields Fold on April 4. This was, as always, a most enjoyable event.

In June, I felt it was time that all the churches involved in our peacemaking group sampled the delights of our Urban Soul café here at May Street. Consequently, on June 11, the representatives of St Malachy's, St George's, Belmont and Fitzroy descended into our basement where the Rev Keith Drury gave a presentation on our work and future plans with Barnabas Ventures. All present felt it was a very informative and interesting discussion and supported our direction. They were all even more impressed, however, by the exquisite coffee and sticky buns!

In November we attended the annual Remembrance Day service at Belmont on Remembrance Sunday. Brian Gourley presented the Bible reading on behalf of May Street. Thanks again to Brian for agreeing to help out.

We have been examining ways to develop the peacemaking group and move on to different areas of focus. Therefore we have decided to start to make contact with other religions.

The first of what I hope will be a series of meetings took place in Urban Soul on Monday February 11 with Dr Mamoun Mobayed from the Islamic faith. We were given a presentation of the basis and beliefs of Islam, followed by a question and answer sessions. Part of this discussion involved the nature of Islamic prayer, the role of women in Islam and the operation of Sharia law - which I'm sure you will agree was very topical following the Archbishop of Canterbury's comments.

As always, I would greatly appreciate any ideas for future events and would really like to appeal for a bigger support. Anybody who hasn't come to peacemaking event before would be very welcome. I'm sure you would find it informative and enjoyable. My thanks go to those who have supported this very

important work throughout the year.

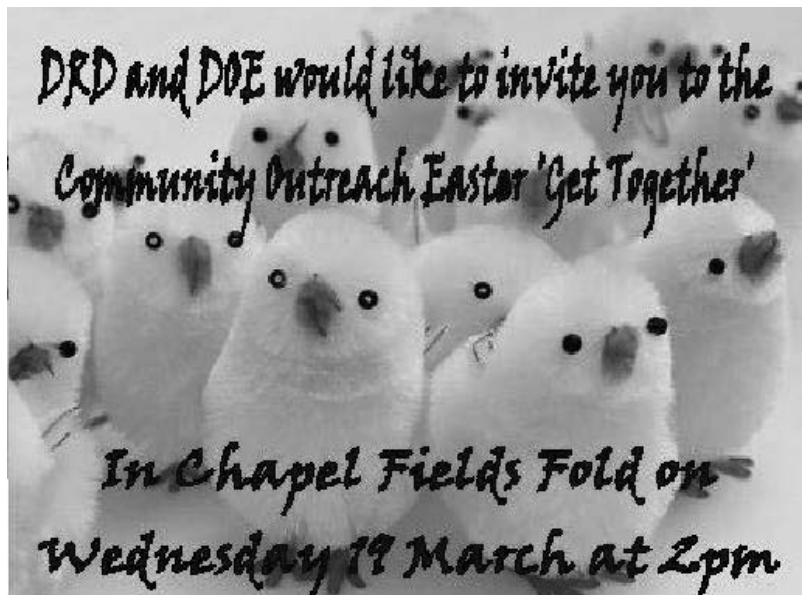
STEPHEN WILSON
Peace Agent

URBAN UPDATE

After many years of anticipation, the £400m Victoria Square finally opened for business on March 6 and already the impressive new complex is acting as a magnet for shoppers and strollers in the city centre. When the second phase opens in June, there will be 93 retail outlets, effectively increasing the size of the shopping offer in Belfast by one third.

The array of stores includes fashion shops and cafés, many of them locating in Belfast for the first time. The biggest retail attraction is House of Fraser, whose store is the largest the group currently has in the UK. Among the in-house attractions is a Hamley's toy shop, from which there is a marvellous view down over the Law Courts and Laganside. There is also underground car parking for 1,000 vehicles. Up top, however, a big attraction at Victoria Square is a visit to the dome, which offers a new perspective on the Belfast skyline. In June, as part of the second phase, a new eight-screen cinema will open, and the centre will be thronged from morning until night.

Already the footfall in May Street has increased, as the city centre shifts on its axis and more people flock to the regenerated area between Cornmarket and Ann Street. This provides an opportunity



for May Street Church, which suddenly finds itself more in the heart of the city. One obvious possibility is to attract people leaving Victoria Square on a Thursday evening to drop in at Urban Soul for a coffee before heading home.

But as Victoria Square opens, plans are already progressing for the next major retail development in Belfast - the north-east quarter.

The £360m Royal Exchange project is a mixed use scheme which will stretch from Royal Avenue to Donegall Street, and the target is to open for business in 2013. The blueprint includes a new department store anchor, two further major stores, leisure amenities such as restaurants, bars and cafés, apartments and offices, a new hotel, a 700 space car park and newly-designed cultural and artistic space.

The Department for Social Development has agreed heads of terms with the development consortium, which comprises William Ewart Properties, ING Estates and Snoddons Construction.

Meanwhile, Barnabas Ventures/Mizpah Properties is still awaiting a decision from the Department of the Environment's Planning Service on its application for a development adjacent to and overhead of May Street Church.

ROBIN MORTON

COMMUNION DATES

Dates for Communion services at May Street during 2008 are: Sundays April 20, June 15 and October 19. The Harvest thanksgiving service will be held on Sunday October 14.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Dan Forshaw is truly a musical artiste and someone whose performances are not to be missed. Our own Robin Hewitt has given him the thumbs up as an accomplished and very able musician, as indeed has John Kelly CEO of the Irish Chamber Orchestra. This is high praise for our resident saxophonist and it is wonderful that as a church that we are able to bring such high quality and professional music to Belfast City centre. Dan is also completing a BA degree in Theology leaving him admirably qualified for the task. You can also hear Dan on a Thursday night at Urban Soul.

Mark Johnston, who joins us as financial director

for Urban Soul, formerly worked as a financial analyst at BP and also assisted in their marketing department. Mark brings a whole skill mix that is very needed with his ability to understand figures and draw up business plans. He is also passionate about coffee shops with a Christian angle, so he feels very at home at Urban Soul.

One final person to mention is Amelia Morgan all the way from USA. Amelia - a psychology graduate - has been volunteering at the Urban Soul café over the last while and whilst her plans are not completely settled because she will be returning to America soon, we are hoping that she will be able to return again in the near future. Amelia has a lovely way with people and she has added greatly to all that we are doing at Urban Soul.

KEITH DRURY

HITTING THE RIGHT NOTE

The Greeting invited Dan Forshaw, May Street's resident saxophonist, to tell us what brought him to Belfast and to Urban Soul. Here is his reply:

Why did I come to Northern Ireland? I'll try not to make it too slushy!

I was born in Blackpool and met Katy, who is from Bangor, while we studying at London School of Theology. Katy was studying a theology and counselling diploma and I was studying for a BA in theology, music and worship. Last Easter, having completed our Spring term studying at London School of Theology, Katy returned back to Northern Ireland, leaving me in London. I lasted about three days before I jumped on a plane and came to Northern Ireland, for the first time!



Music man: Dan Forshaw, who plays the saxophone from the steps of May Street church before our midweek lunchtime services.

A few days later we were engaged and managed to set a date for Monday, August 6, 2007. We were very fortunate that so many things (including parents with deep pockets!) allowed us to get married with such a short engagement. Katy already had a house and a job in Belfast to return too, so the most logical option was for us to set up home in east Belfast. Katy teaches the nursery class at Cowwood Primary School in north Belfast and I work at Urban Soul, perform (mostly back in London and the north-west of England) and teach saxophone, clarinet and composition.

I have a passion to see the arts, and music in particular, renewed in the Church. I am excited about the potential of May Street, in particular Urban Soul which I hope will become a flagship for urban evangelism not only in Belfast, but across the UK and Ireland. Urban Soul offers a more contemporary angle on a magnificent old building the future is about building from the past. I am keen to help develop Urban Soul throughout the week and for our new interactive services on a Sunday, such as we are doing on Good Friday.

DAN FORSHAW

- *Further information on Dan and his music is available from his website at www.danforshaw.com. His latest EP "Live in London" came out in January and you can listen to tracks on www.myspace.com/danforshaw. Tracks from his "Language of Emotion & Message" compilation are available for download via i-tunes.*

THURSDAY LUNCHES

With the introduction of the tighter regime at NCP, we have found our numbers have declined at the Thursday lunches as car parking has become more difficult during the day. However, this has refocused us and we are starting to see numbers rise again with nearly all attendees coming from the business community. If you know someone who is working in Belfast, why not bring them along, or tell them about our Thursday Service at 1.05pm. This term we have had a number of speakers who have proved to be very popular.

CAR PARK SECURITY

Members of the church who use the car park in the evenings are reminded of the importance of ensuring that the car park is secured before going

into the church buildings. We had an unfortunate incident on March 10 when the gates were left open and a car belonging to one of our members was broken into. It is important that we are all particularly vigilant at this time.

COLLECTORS

Apr: Kathleen Rea, Gordon Kirkpatrick, Frank Boyd, Valerie Condy, Ed Hill, Geoff Hill.

May: Kathleen Rea, Gordon Kirkpatrick, Robin Morton, Jenny Wilson, Arthur Acheson, Arthur Fannin.

June: Kathleen Rea, Gordon Kirkpatrick, Alan McCrum, Barry Bell, Robin Hewitt, Clive Gilmour.



Bird's eye view: Historic May Street Church as seen from the Belfast Eye - a good opportunity to check over the roof. Photo: Robin Morton.

ECONOMIC FORUM

Re-printed from Business Telegraph, March 10.

AN ECONOMIC think-tank set up by a church in central Belfast has set 2015 as the deadline for the creation of a self-sustaining economy in Northern Ireland.

The May Street Economic Forum, which began its deliberations in March last year, said the present opportunities had to be seized. The Forum has drawn together a number of business people from both the public and private sectors.

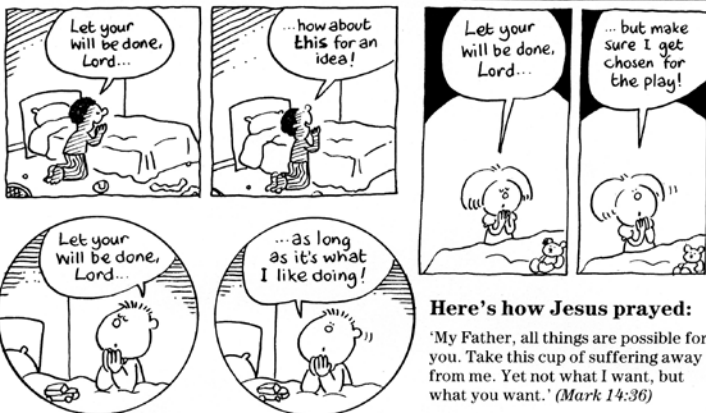
The initiative was developed by May Street Presbyterian Church, whose minister, the Rev Keith Drury, is one of the joint convenors. He said:



Wedding Bells: Pictured after their wedding at Gonville and Caius College in Cambridge on December 15 are Peter Hewitt and Karis McKee. Peter is the son of May Street elder Robin Hewitt and his wife Mavis, while Karis is the daughter of Alex and Rosalind McKee. As might be expected, it was a harmonious occasion. Robin Hewitt was formerly principal tutor at the City of Belfast School of Music, while Alex McKee was head of music at Stranmillis College and Rosalind McKee recently retired as head of music at Grosvenor Grammar School, one of the schools which participate in our annual Georgian Christmas on May Street event.

“The churches must play a role in developing the economy for the benefit of all. There is an onus on us as church people to engage in economic dialogue and to come up with practical ideas.”

do we REALLY want God's will?



Mr Drury said it was vital that in any economic uplift, the needs of inner city areas were not overlooked.

Raymond Sexton, a Dublin businessman, who is the other joint convenor, said he believed that the Northern Ireland economy could be made much less reliant on the public sector.

He said: “The Northern Ireland economy may currently seem to be flat packed. But the resources required for it to develop within new competitive markets are in the box. With the right atmosphere and attitude we can collectively grasp the opportunity for prosperity and lasting peace.”

The report is now to be submitted to the Varney Review team as part of its deliberations on making the local economy more competitive.

YOUTH CHURCH

This year the Sunday School has been enjoying a more regular time together as we have organised a rota that seems to suit most people. Having Sunday School and Chrissie’s creche on alternating fortnights seems to have settled quite well. I feel it is important that the children are able to learn together and grow together. A poster on the choir room door gives all the dates until the end of June.

We have been learning about Noah, the many people who are good to us and look after us and of course about how much God loves and cares for us.

This year saw the return of the Sunday School’s Christmas outing. For a change, we headed in to Newtownards to the Web Theatre and had great fun watching the pantomime “Sinbad the Sailor.” Many thanks to the church for funding this.

I have taken new photographs of all our children who come along to Sunday School. So watch out for the photographs changing in the choir room and come up and see our lovely smiles!

Lastly, I would like to thank William, Harry, Sophie, Craig, Andrew, Anna, Ben, Christopher, Justin and James all for coming along this year! Our numbers are great!

JULIE WILSON
Suprintendent