



action of churches together in scotland
7 Forrester Lodge, Inglewood, Alloa FK10 2HU
Charity number: SC000295

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Spring edition 2008

TOGETHER

Why would anybody become a Christian today?

Whatever answer we might give to the question, the encouraging reality is that many people are still coming to faith in Christ. However, surprisingly little research has been done to find out more about what is happening and to help us reflect on how best we can reach out to others.

During 2005 a number of Scottish Churches sponsored research which was coordinated by Nick Spencer of the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity. A series of in-depth interviews was carried out, by a team from various Churches with 41 people across Scotland, of all ages and backgrounds, who had made a public profession of faith at some point in the previous two years. Nick Spencer analysed all of the material and out of it produced a report entitled 'Journeys and Stories'. This details the bewildering variety of crises, coincidences, encounters, experiences, sermons, signposts, and obstacles that made up their journeys!

The book reminds us that God cares for each person as an individual and approaches them in the way that is appropriate for them. "The journey of faith does not take place along a conveyer belt". For many the journey to faith was gradual, but for some it was sudden and decisive. Interacting with other people was crucial in the majority of cases but one or two were more affected by books or films. The church had a significant and positive part to play in most of the journeys but for others church was more of an obstacle than a signpost. Time and again the seemingly insignificant and incidental details had a significant impact. Nick Spencer says that the stories remind us of 'the intimate and personalised way in which God deals with his creatures'.

One of the encouraging features for all local churches is that the stories tell of things happening through contact with 'ordinary' Christians in 'ordinary' congregations around Scotland. It was not dependent on special events or sophisticated programmes. As is said in the book

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“It was, therefore, one of the most interesting and encouraging findings to learn that the Church was probably the single most important factor in people’s spiritual journeys. Time and again respondents talked about the impact that the Church, meaning the body of Christians gathered together largely irrespective of place or circumstance, had on them, usually in overwhelmingly positive terms. There was just ‘something’ different about the people they met there.”

Another quote: “One of the strongest messages to emerge is that living as a community of believers who are welcoming, accepting, inviting, joyful, enthusiastic, encouraging and loving is the most powerful testimony possible. It constitutes a significant contribution to people’s journeys, a compelling invitation to a banquet, perhaps even a sign that the kingdom of God is here.”

In the conclusion Peter Neilson comments: “These stories prompt the question of how the Church of Jesus Christ can best share in those journeys and be part of those stories so that others may make the Great Journey of faith and enter the Big Story of God’s love for the world in Jesus Christ”.

‘Journeys and Stories: Finding Faith in Scotland Today’ by Nick Spencer and Peter Neilson is published by the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity - £5.

*Revd John Fulton
United Free Church*

Annan Drop in Centre

A new facility opened on Thursday 31 January 2008 for homelessness and similar needy people in and around Annan; operated by Annandale Churches Together (ACT) in conjunction with Annandale and Eskdale Health and Homeless Group, with support from the social agencies in the locality. The start of this development has been made possible with a grant from Dumfries and Galloway Area Committee Community Fund together with local donations, including sums from individuals, the Local Health Partnership, ACT itself and through two of the town centre churches. Bids have been submitted for more money to further support the project.

This Centre offers somewhere local for homeless, needy and similar socially disadvantaged people to go for friendship, guidance, information and simple healthy food. The Centre (ADiC) has started as a pilot project for up to one year, to assess the needs and effectiveness of such a facility, with a view to establishing a more permanent provision in the future in the town and perhaps elsewhere in Annandale and Eskdale. ADiC is initially open each Thursday in St Andrew’s Hall. It is open from 11am to 2pm serving light refreshments, with a free lunch available from 12 noon to 1.30pm.

ADiC is staffed by volunteers, including a Centre Supervisor. Volunteers have come forward from a number of churches in the town and anyone else interested in helping in any way should contact the Supervisor on 01461 700324

Robert W Mitchell

For more news, information, resources, developments and events please visit the ACTS website www.acts-scotland.org Local churches together groups are invited to send, information, news and suggestions to enable us to develop a dedicated web space .

Group Make plans for a National Quiet Day

The 'Stop! Initiative Working Group' are a Task Group of ACTS Church Life Network who are currently planning to introduce the 'Stop! In the name of God' initiative to Scotland. The idea, is that everyone will stop what they are doing to take a moment for quiet reflection or prayer. This should happen wherever they are, whether it be in a busy shopping centre, on a country walk, at home or work, or as part of a planned event. It is hoped that 'quiet' places may be accessed for this to allow people to take time out of their busy schedules in national participation.

The group would like this initiative to take on a Scottish theme, and perhaps the day will be on St Andrew's Day in November which is a particularly busy time of the year with Christmas ahead. Much research and work is being undertaken by the Working Group who are planning to have their own website for people to access resources and information to assist in their own planning.

Meanwhile, a Day Conference has been planned to take place on Wednesday 5th March at Scottish Churches' House, Dunblane where all interested parties will gather to discuss ideas and possible ways forward. If you are interested in this exciting opportunity and may be interested in taking part in the national event please contact email: shonapaterson@acts-scotland.org or write to Shona Paterson, ACTS, 7 Forrester Lodge, Inglewood, Alloa FK10 2HU, giving your name, postal address and postcode as well as email address and we will keep you update on progress.

'Being Church' in areas of new development

The 'Being Church' Task Group of ACTS Mission Network are currently looking at the feasibility, processes and procedures of the provision of worship in areas of new development.

There have been regular meetings engaging with those from the Scottish Executive and from those working in the areas of Town and Country Planning with a view to taking the idea forward.

A Day Conference has been planned for 28 May at the Church of Scotland Offices, 121 George Street, Edinburgh and anyone with an interest or relative experience who would like to attend should email shonapaterson@acts-scotland.org or telephone: 01259 222362

Journey of the Christian Faith

Is a journey which takes the 10 Commandments to 40 cities and towns across the UK in June/July 2008. The first location is in Stornoway on 1 June and the last is in London on July 11. Churches and Christian organisations are particularly invited to participate. For further information please contact:

<http://www.journeyofthechristianfaith.org.uk>

Breaking down walls in the 21st Century.

Last year a diverse group of church representatives met together on the island of Iona for a week entitled 'Breaking down walls in the 21st Century'. Although primarily intended to be for those under forty, the result was mix of young, and not so young, Roman Catholics, Scottish Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists, Quakers and members of the Church of Scotland, Church of England, United Reformed Church and the United Church of Christ. For a week we lived together in community, gaining knowledge of our different traditions and beliefs – some similar to our own but others often very different. In order to grasp a sense of the melting pot resulting from such an immense variety of experiences, whilst simultaneously acknowledging our own backgrounds and traditions, we learned the importance of living in community, and how this enabled exchanges to take place which would be unlikely in our everyday lives. The simple acts of eating, washing dishes, walking and singing together, were often where the most meaningful and challenging dialogue took place.

The week was coordinated by Murdoch Mackenzie, a member of the Iona Community, whose enthusiasm for Ecumenical Studies undoubtedly triggered the creation of the event and the presence of many of its participants. The leaders were Keith Clements, former general secretary of the Conference of European Churches, Freda Lambert, a retired teacher and representative of Catholic women on a number of groups, and Kathy Galloway, present leader of the Iona Community. Throughout the week we were challenged by the leaders, and each other, to consider the types of boundaries that exist in the world and the ways in which we can challenge their existence. We were also encouraged to reflect on the walls or barriers that we – consciously or subconsciously – erect ourselves. Fundamentally, as representatives of such a vast number of denominations, we were challenged to consider what Christian unity may look like through ecumenism which does not deny the heritage and traditions which each of us brings, but instead incorporates our differences in order to enrich the unity we strive for.

My personal highlights of the week include playing the piano for an 'Act of Commitment' service led by Kathy Galloway, singing in the pub until the wee small hours with newly-made friends of all ages, completing the 'off-road' pilgrimage round the island, and making plans to create an ecumenical youth network throughout Britain in order to continue the work we started on Iona. My thanks go to the Ecumenical Relations Committee of the Church of Scotland and the Duncan McClements Trust for Ecumenical Training, whose funding and assistance enabled me to attend this unique and thought-provoking event on Iona.

Fiona Buchanan

Easter Resource material now available from ACTS

This year's Easter resource material 'The Week Link' has been prepared for us by Revd Stephen L Brown of Fraserburgh United Reformed Church.

The introduction starts 'Easter week is a bridge too many wash away. Palm Sunday is on one bank, Easter Sunday the other. Sadly, the worldly detour round chocolate, chicks and bunny rabbits is too often preferred to the more demanding and risky religious crossing. Easter needs the 'week link' to make the connection and resurrect a true appreciation of all that has been done for our sakes.....'

This material is available free from our website www.acts-scotland.org and for those without these facilities it is available in hard copy at 10p each. There may be an additional postage charge for large orders. Please send your order to:

Shona Paterson, ACTS, 7 Forrester Lodge, Inglewood, Alloa FK10 2HU
email shonapaterson@acts-scotland.org
or telephone 01259 222362

and we can send an invoice

“Journeying Together”

9 & 10 May 2008

Invitations have been issued through the offices of the Churches to members of the clergy who are in the first five years of their ministry – full time or part time - to attend an ecumenical Conference in Scotus College during May.

The Conference programme is designed to allow for a sharing of participants' experiences of their journeys and to provide new resources for the next stages.

The cost of the Conference is being met by a grant from ACTS and there is no charge to participants. Booking forms can be obtained from Tom Moyes

tommoyses@acts-scotland.org

Tel: 01259 222363.

The closing date for bookings is 25 March

If the Land no longer provides..... can we help?

rsabi is the only Scottish charity dedicated to relieving poverty and hardship among people who have depended on the land. An approachable and caring source of financial help, advice and support to people in times of need. Rsabi helps people who have worked full time on the land in Scotland for at least 10 years including, agriculture, crafting, forestry, horticulture, fish-farming, game-keeping and rural estate work. Dependents of qualifying people are also helped.

If you would like more information please contact rsabi 0131 472 4166
Email rsabi@rsabi.org.uk or write to The Welfare Manager, RSABI, The Rural Centre, West Mains of Ingliston, Newbridge, Edinburgh EH28 8LT

Faith in Older People

Faith in Older People is an independent charity set up to support the spiritual care of older people and their families by offering training and support to pastoral carers and ordained members on an ecumenical basis and amongst people of other faiths. Work is also undertaken with health and social care staff to enhance the understanding of the spiritual needs of older residents and to contribute to their well-being.

FiOP brings together an understanding of the issues affecting people as they grow older and the spiritual dimension in caring. We offer a range of training courses and seminars which can be tailored to your requirements and we would be delighted if you made contact to discuss training potential.

Training Co-ordinator – Mary Moffett
Development Co-ordinator – Maureen O'Neill
www.faithinolderpeople.org.uk
Email info@fiop.org.uk

Church without Walls Tented Village

Are you a change maker? Then the national Gathering on 3 & 4 May at the Royal Highland Centre, Ingliston, organised by Church Without Walls is the place to be.

The national gathering will provide a space to talk about, listen to, local and global voices telling of their journey of risk taking and change.

ACTS will be part of the Tented Village providing a space where those networks and groups who work together for ecumenical progress in Scotland will tell their story.

Further information can be found from

www.cwwresources.org.uk

Churches Agency for Inter Faith Relations in Scotland

Christianity & Scotland's
Other Faiths:

Dialogue with the Baha'i Faith

An opportunity to learn more about the Baha'i faith, the Baha'i community in Scotland, and ways to improve dialogue between Christians and Bahai's

10.30am – 3.00pm

Friday 18 April 2008

Scottish Churches' House, Dunblane

Please register before April 11th either by post, telephone or email. Pay by banker's card if booking by 'phone or email or by cheque if booking by post.

Scottish Churches' House, 1 Kirk Street
Dunblane, Perthshire FK15 0AJ
Tel: 01786 823588

Email:

reservations@scottishchurcheshouse.org

Cost: £20

If booking by post please say if you are a vegetarian and enclose a stamped addressed envelope if you require a receipt.

More 'Other Faiths' events

- Sunday 8 June 2008
Visit to Sikh Gurudwara, Glasgow
- Thursday 25 September 2008
Jesus and Other Faiths
Scottish Churches' House,
Dunblane

Enquires about the two events above (June and September)

Contact :

andrew@cairs.org.uk

or Tel: 01259 222364

Ethical Purchases

According to Ethical Consumer's *Ethiscore Reports*, Samsung mobile phones come bottom of the ethical table, while HTC and Blackberry come top, from a possible maximum score of 20, Samsung, along with Alcatel managed a 5.5, while HTC scored 11 and Blackberry 10.5. Nokia, Motorola and iPhone earned a 7.5 score each.

Other reports include Trainers – where Reebok, Adidas and Nike linger in the bottom half of the table of 19. Toothpaste finds Crest the worst in a table of 24, with 0, & gives other brands such as Macleans, Colgate and Clinomyn a score of 5,6 and 10 respectively. Elsewhere you can see how ethical the various Fair Trade coffees actually are, as well as seeing how well your desktop pc fares.

To access all these reports and more and to see how the ethiscore is compiled see:

www.ethiscore.org/reports.aspx?free=tr

Churches' alert to Sex Trafficking

CHASTE

Not for Sale Sunday

18 May 2008

18 May 2008 is the 2nd celebration of Not for Sale Sunday a movement to inspire and inform churches and communities throughout the United Kingdom to become revolutionary agents against modern day enslavement in sex trafficking. Not for sale is a campaign which has been initiated by CHASTE – Churches alert to Sex Trafficking across Europe; to raise awareness in the UK that women, children and men are currently being sold in the cities and towns of our

How will your church highlight the Easter message? Easter is arguably the most distinctively Christian festival of the year! Lacking in overwhelming commercial razzmatass of Christmas, it is an opportunity for us to not only celebrate the core of our faith, but also communicate it to the wider community.

Thank God it's Friday!

Is a package offered by the Scottish Bible Society offering a positive approach based round a Scripture leaflet that has already 'tested positive' in Australia. Thank God it's Friday starts from a popular attitude among those working a typical 5-day week and can be used in a variety of ways.

A pack of 25 Scripture selections costs £1.50, Invitation Cards (4 per sheet)) are 10p per sheet and a poster is 15p. Post & Packaging rates apply.

For more details please contact:
Susanne or Katrine at
The Scottish Bible Society
0131 347 9808

www.scottishbiblesociety.org

For more information and to get your church involved in Not for Sale Sunday 2008 campaign please visit notforsalesunday.org

*Chaste, PO Box 983,
Cambridge CB23 4WY
Tel: 0845 456 9335
Email: notforsale@chaste.org.uk
www.chaste.org.uk*



Scottish
Churches
House

Jubilee Appeal

ACTS has launched an Appeal as Scottish Churches House approaches its Jubilee in 2010. Scottish Churches House provides a place for people to meet, debate and advance ecumenical learning. A Jubilee Appeal leaflet, reminding us of the history of the House, giving our shared vision of 'a place for the 21st century' and explaining the Appeal itself, is available from Scottish Churches House. A large print version of the leaflet is also available from the House.

The Jubilee Appeal

The launch of the Scottish Churches House Jubilee Appeal coincided with the 90th birthday of Ian Fraser, the first Warden of the House. His continuing support for the House and a generous gift to the Appeal are an inspiration to help us realise the plans to improve the hospitality offered to guests and conference participants. Ian shared his vision of ACTS in Alloa and Scottish Churches House in Dunblane as being 'two arms in the body of Christ reaching out to embrace Scotland and the world'.

Acting Together

Much time and prayer has already been invested. We would like to invite you to make a contribution to the Jubilee Appeal. Gifts should be sent giving your name and address and telephone number to:

FREEPOST RRSX-UHXX-SHJH
Jubilee Appeal
Scottish Churches House
Dunblane FK15 0AJ
Charity number: SC000295

Scottish Churches House
1 Kirk Street Dunblane Perthshire FK15 0AJ
Tel. 01786 823588 Fax 01786 825844
www.scottishchurcheshouse.org appeal@scottishchurcheshouse.org

**Donations are sought
by 30 April 2008**