TOGETHER

January edition 2010

ACTS welcomes new Racial Justice Officer

Revd Francis Babatunde Alao was recently appointed as the new Scottish Churches’ Racial Justice Officer. Until recently Francis, an ordained minister, worked with ‘Heart for the City’, a project based at Maryhill, North Glasgow which has links with the Scottish Episcopal Church. He is the senior Pastor of the Glasgow International Christian Church, the worshipping community of Heart for the City, situated in Glasgow Caledonian University.

Ordained in Nigeria in 1996, Francis oversaw a church and taught at a federal tertiary institution before relocating to the UK for further studies and exploring ministry opportunities. Francis has Honours and Post Graduate degrees in Religious Studies and Social Ethics respectively from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. He then proceeded to Glasgow Caledonian University for his second post graduate degree in marketing and management.

Since coming to Scotland Francis has been passionate about networking Churches and Christian organisations together. He is particularly keen on bridging the gap between the established Churches and emerging Churches in Scotland, believing there is much the churches can learn from each other, and together they can find new opportunities for engaging in God’s mission.

Francis is married to Becky. A gospel singer who recorded her first gospel album in 2009 and they are blessed with three children, Sharon, Stephanie and Stephen. Francis can be contacted through the ACTS office. His email address is: francisalao@acts-scotland.org

Royal Highland Show
Ingliston, Edinburgh - 24-27 June 2010

The Rural Churches’ Stand is looking for volunteers from the rural churches, (all denominations) especially those who enjoy engaging in conversation, meeting strangers and who would be happy to spend one day assisting with the running of the Stand. If you would like to be part of this exciting event please be in touch with Sheila Reeves, Church of Scotland on 0131 225 5722 or email sreeves@cofscotland.org.uk for further details.
Rural Futures Conference

A fascinating conference was held in December, hosted by Scottish Churches’ Rural Group on Rural Futures. The day looked at how the rural landscape might look by 2025 with the many changes and challenges to our climate and economy. Speakers included:

Richard Wakeford, Director General of Rural Futures, The Scottish Government who spoke about Strategies for the Future World;

Veronica Burbridge, National Director, Royal Town Planning Institute of Scotland who led the address ‘Planning for Rural Scotland 2010-2025;

Stuart Housden, Director of RSPB Scotland spoke of The Impact of Environmental Concerns on the Rural Landscape:

Ken Rundle, Scottish Agricultural College asked What will Farming Look Like? – giving a clear and interesting overview, while

Riddell Graham, Visit Scotland looked at the Future Face of Rural Tourism:

Pam Rodway, Soil Association gave participants an interesting insight to Crofting Connections, with the day’s Speakers ending with

Norman McAskill, Rural Policy SCVO who delivered interesting information about internet Networks and Connections in Rural Scotland:

Copies of the report will be available to download as a pdf from the ACTS website www.acts-scotland.org as soon as the final draft has been approved. Copies may also be available in hard copy for a small cost to cover printing and postage from Shona at the ACTS office tel: 01259 222362

Following on from this conference a second SEC Rural Commission Conference in association with ACTS Rural Group will take place on Saturday 20 February at St John’s Inverness from 10.40am to 4.00pm. Attendance is free but places must be reserved.

Registrations please sent to:

Mrs N Higgott, Fairview, 48 Saltburn, Invergordon IV18 0JY or email: office@moray.anglican.org closing date 17 February 2010.

‘They’ll know we are Christians’

Many of you will be familiar with the above hymn, which begins ‘We are one in the Spirit…’ and which includes the refrain. “They’ll know we are Christians by our love.” (‘Common Ground’ publisher St Andrew Press)

One of the first letters received by our office this year was from a Mr AJ New of London who has composed an alternative musical setting for these words. He offers to send a copy of the full piano score to anyone who writes with the request and encloses a large or medium size self-addressed envelope. If you would like copy please send your SAE and request to:

Mr AJ New, 9 Maidstone Road, London N11 1TR
Being Church
ACTS Mission Network’s Task Group ‘Being Church in areas of new development’ has been exploring the possibility of worship provision in an area which is to become a new super village at Forestmill, Clackmannanshire. The Task Group met in December last year with those from Clackmannan Parish Church who had been making their own enquiries and it is hoped the Task Group will be able to assist in providing information and support to the local churches in achieving worship space and/or consideration of the churches presence in this planned new development.

A mapping exercise of other areas in Scotland will soon be prepared by the Task Group which will show where new development is to be planned. Further engagement with the local churches will then be offered in these areas in a similar way. The Group understand a large development is planned for the Lanark area and the Task group would be interested in meeting representatives from the churches in that area.

The Task Group’s membership offers a wealth of professional expertise, both in the areas of secular organisations and those in senior positions within the churches. If anyone would like to know more about this Group please contact: Shona Paterson 01259 222362 email: shonapaterson@acts-scotland.org

Church & Society
During 2009 the Church and Society Network met four times. As well as carrying out its usual agendas of exchange of information and opinion on current affairs, it oversaw two successful ventures which kept the Churches in the public eye. Early in the year the Scottish Churches Education Group published “A Christian Vision for Education in Scottish Schools”. This paper aroused considerable interest and led to a meeting between members of the Group and the Education Secretary. In November around sixty people attended a Conference in Edinburgh entitled “For everyone born a place at the table – Tackling income inequality in Scotland”. The Conference was jointly organised by ACTS and the STUC. A report is to be published in 2010 and it is hoped that there will be further co-operation between the Churches and the Unions in taking forward the recommendations within the Report.

Faith Studies
This Network oversaw the publication of “Talking of the Trinity”, four “playlets” designed to encourage ecumenical groups to discuss the importance of the Trinity to the Churches. It also supported the Working with Children in the Church Community Core Group when they organised a Conference, attended by over 100 people, which highlighted effective ways of keeping children within congregations. During the afternoon sessions of its three meetings the members of the Network explored some of the difficult issues surrounding assisted dying, the place of those with disabilities in the life of the Churches and human sexuality. Both publications can be freely downloaded from www.acts-scotland.org/resources/publications
What’s on at

Scottish Churches National Sponsoring Body for Local Ecumenical Partnerships

Third Local Ecumenical Partnership Gathering

‘Getting to know you’
Augustine United Church
George IV Bridge, Edinburgh

Saturday 13 March
10am - 3.30pm
Cost: £5
Pre-school creché available
(if booked by 26 February)

Further information and booking forms from
Rev Lindsey Sanderson
01259 222361
lindseysanderson@acts-scotland.org
website: www.acts-scotland.org

Closing date for bookings 26th February

The 2010 General Election

The General Election must come before June 3rd 2010. When it does come, how can Christians – and others - decide on how to vote? Attending a hustings meeting is one way of finding out what candidates’ opinions are. Could the Churches in your area get together to arrange a meeting?

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland has prepared online resources designed to help groups which want to do this.

A leaflet outlining the steps you need to take to organise a hustings meeting and a booklet offering information on the important questions of this election campaign can both be found on www.churcheselection.org.uk.

The announcement of the Election date could come anytime. Now is the time to begin to discuss how a hustings meeting can be arranged by an ecumenical grouping in your area.

Grasping Nettles Programme:

February 3  Mission Impossible?
Is our mission in the 21st century to convert the whole world? Come and hear Professor Mona Siddiqui in conversation with Rt Rev Brian Smith, Bishop of Edinburgh. Cost £15
Includes meal at 5.30pm, tea and Coffee or £5 for talk/tea and coffee only

March 2 – 4  Lenten Retreat
The Angel’s Question: The biblical story of Hagar’s desert encounter with an angel provides the backdrop for a consideration of our own faith journeys and, in particular, the chance to explore the angel’s question, “Where have you come from and where are you going>”
Drawing on literature, poetry, psychology and spirituality, this lent retreat will appeal to all who, on their journey, have encountered pastures green, stumbling blocks, dead ends and bright horizons.
Led by Dilly Baker, author of ‘A Place at the Table.’ Cost £170/£150

March 3  What Motivates our Politicians?
In light of an impending election, Scottish Churches House will welcome politicians of different parties to share something of their beliefs
Cost £15  Includes meal at 5.30pm, coffee or £5 for talk and tea/coffee only

Further information or reservations from:
reservations@scottishchurcheshouse.org or telephone: 01786 823588

website: www.scottishchurcheshouse.org