action of churches together in scotland
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TOGETHER

Scottish Churches House

With much regret, ACTS Trustees propose to close the current business operation at Scottish Churches House (SCH), effective from 15 July 2011. The future of the House after that date is still being discerned.

The Trustees are especially grateful to the SCH staff for their forbearance, support and continued hard work during these difficult times. Staff are being kept fully informed of developments and are now involved in a formal consultation process.

ACTS Trustees wish to re-iterate their thanks to the Interim Management Group (IMG) and the Interim Board of ‘Scottish Churches House Ltd’ (SCH Ltd) who over the last five years have achieved so much and striven so hard to ensure the future of SCH. It is also with much regret that we have come to accept together the current harsh…..

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Launch of CT Connect

Launched last month, CTBI’s new social networking site CT Connect offers new opportunities to build an on-line community and work together on agendas for unity. It provides a quality space for Christians to seek and share information and best practice, share resources for worship and spirituality, …..

More on page 3…….
financial realities affecting the House. Trustees deeply appreciate the generous support - and share the subsequent sense of disappointment – of those many individuals and groups who have contributed to the SCH appeals.

Looking back over a number of years, there has been much discussion about the role and viability of the House. Member Churches were becoming increasingly reluctant to subsidise running costs. In 2005 the then ACTS Executive set up the IMG to oversee and develop the work of SCH. A major aim was for SCH to become full self-sustaining. It soon became apparent that the condition of the House needed to be addressed.

In 2007 the then Scottish Churches Forum (ACTS) authorised the IMG to launch the Jubilee Appeal in order to refurbish the property and develop the work. The appeal was substantially successful and major refurbishment accomplished. In 2009 the new ACTS Members Meeting accepted a proposal from the IMG to establish an independent company, ‘Scottish Churches House Ltd’, to lease SCH and develop the work. The proposed lease was negotiated on a care and maintenance basis for a peppercorn rent.

Regrettably, since 2008, the global economic crisis has had serious repercussions, including on the market for conference and retreat centre provision in the UK. The financial position of SCH has been seriously affected.

ACTS Trustees and the new SCH Ltd held a final meeting in September 2010. Projected deficits were critical and neither body could foresee a viable economic future for SCH. It was decided not to pursue the SCH Ltd option. Following further legal and financial advice, ACTS Trustees propose to close the business operation at Scottish Churches House.

At an Extraordinary Members Meeting in January 2011, ACTS Member Churches affirmed the Trustees’ proposal to close the business and endorsed their decision to invite enquiries from other organisations who may wish to lease the SCH property on a care and maintenance basis for a peppercorn rent. ACTS does not have the resources to maintain the property.

Looking forwards, there have been a handful of ‘expressions of interest’ in taking up the lease of SCH. The closing date for tenders is Friday 8 April 2011. Tenders will be evaluated by Member Churches and Trustees will take a decision on Wednesday 11 May 2011.

........article ends on page 3
ACTS Trustees ask that you keep everyone involved in, or affected by, these difficult discernments and decisions regarding Scottish Churches House in your hearts and prayers in these next months.

**World Sunday for Peace**

The World Council of Churches invites us to support the idea of a World Sunday for Peace and to celebrate this in your own context. Promoting the idea that peace is something we all need and that all of us can and must build this into our daily lives is a good starting point. On Sunday 22 May 2011 WCC hosts in the Caribbean Conference of Churches and the Jamaican Council of Churches will be in charge of the day’s programme at the IEPC. They are planning a day filled with peace activities in and around Kingston for the 1,000 participants.

This special Sunday for peace is to be celebrated throughout the world – together with those in Kingston. This is why WCC is proposing that all churches mark the date of 22 May 2011 as World Sunday for Peace – to follow up on the example of our Jamaican friends in Christ.

**CT Connect means we are More Together, Less Apart.**

Visit: [www.churchestogetherconnect.org](http://www.churchestogetherconnect.org)

Free Website for local Churches Together Groups: more at [http://www.ctbi.org.uk/528](http://www.ctbi.org.uk/528)

Local Churches Together Groups are now listed at: [http://www.churchestogether.org/](http://www.churchestogether.org/)

**Christian Writers Day**

5 March 2011
11am – 3.30pm at The Salvation Army
45 Marketgate, Abroath DD11 1AU

Covering numerous aspects of writing including: Reporting for the media and interviewing techniques
No cost and includes lunch
Booking essential: 01224 496007
Fifteen years ago, the Church of Scotland Rural Committee started a Churches Stand to emphasise the ‘Kirk’s’ role. From a small stand on the outskirts of the showground the Churches Stand now has a prime location at the centre. The Church of Scotland invited Scottish Churches Rural Group to join this outreach so establishing its ecumenical character. The importance of the stand as a statement of churches working together cannot be overestimated. The 170th Royal Highland Show in 2010 attracted 187,644 visitors over 4 days making it an all time record for the event and ensuring it continues to be one of the UK’s top agricultural shows and Scotland’s leading international agricultural event. Children get free entry but it is estimated that 30,000 children attend the show. A small Committee, drawn from member churches of ACTS, are at this moment making plans for the stand for 2011. The stand is simultaneously a source of information on current topics and a place of prayer. It gives credibility with our communities and so endorses our position as a serious partner by Government.

On the opening day (Thursday) Church leaders visit the stand and this year we anticipate launching a … document on the Contribution of Pilgrimage to a Future Scotland at the Show. Thursday and Friday are mainly agricultural days while the Saturday and Sunday see many visitors from Scotland and beyond. Prayer places a major part of our work during the Show – we remember the whole Show each morning in prayer; prayers are collected each day from people visiting the Stand and we have an afternoon prayer time.

How can you help?

- Pray for our preparations and for the effective outreach during the Show
- Pray that we could be alongside others during the day minister to their needs
- Pray that we could network with others during the Show to help the Churches represent our rural communities together.
- Tell members of your churches to visit our stand

We need volunteers to help staff the stand from the churches. If you are a face painter could you volunteer for a Saturday or Sunday? Anyone who would like to volunteer for a day should contact:

Lesley Cameron at 0131 225 5722 email: LCameron@cofscotland.org.uk
**Pilgrimage**

Pilgrimage has engaged peoples of faith for much of recorded history. The Hebrew Scriptures describe in detail pilgrimages made by the patriarchs, those who remain important to several faiths. The Christian Scriptures recount the journeying of the apostles and their companions and it is clear that in the following centuries pilgrimages to Jerusalem or to sites associated with Saints had become a normal part of life for many. There has always been a range of reasons for going on a pilgrimage and the journey can take days to complete or may form part of a shorter journey to a specific site.

But what do we think pilgrimage has to offer this generation? Are the traditional reasons for pilgrimage with their Catholic roots still relevant today – or for those from the Reformed Churches, does pilgrimage have another purpose?

Scottish Churches Rural Group are hosting a conference for those from the churches looking at the possibilities of re-establishing pilgrimage routes throughout Scotland. They have already been engaged in conversation from those working for the secular agencies whose purpose is in creating, promoting and maintaining long distance…

walking routes. At the time of writing this article, they were preparing for a Parliament Reception hosted by Robin Harper MSP setting out a Manifesto for Action and to offer an opportunity to work and learn together.

Not only does pilgrimage provide an opportunity for spiritual reconnection to faith, it also supports tourism, health and the economy of rural economies by the number of visitors who may pass through their villages, stay over and make purchases from local shops.

At a time when secular agencies and the Government are pushing for a healthier, more connected society, this makes it a good time for the development of a church agenda.

The conference, which is to be held on 24th March 2011 at the Church of Scotland offices from 9.45am to 4pm will explore the views of the different churches in Scotland. It will examine the future purpose of pilgrimage and how it might contribute to making disciples today.

**To register please send a cheque for £10 (which includes lunch) made payable to ACTS with your name and contact to:**

Pilgrimage Conference, ACTS, 7 Forrester Lodge, Inglewood, Alloa FK10 2HU

Limited places early booking advised
Easter Resource from ACTS…..

Through the Week is this year’s title of the popular Easter resource available free from ACTS website www.acts-scotland.org. You will find the link on the right hand side of the home page under ‘Through the Week’.

Prepared by Revd John Butterfield of the Methodist Church and Convener of ACTS Church Life Network, this year’s material offers a meditation for each day from Palm Sunday to Easter Day.

Hard copies (limited to 2 per person) are available from the ACTS office for £1 which includes postage. Please contact Shona Paterson on 01259 222362 or email shonapaterson@acts-scotland.org

Lent Resource from CTBI…..

The Unreconciled is this year’s theme for Lent 2011 and explores issues of reconciliation and how we respond when our efforts fail. It looks as questions such as:

- Who is responsible for ‘world peace’?
- Why do bad things happen to good people?

And many more.

In this journey through Lent we look not only the initiatives that work but also those never spoken about and where deep divisions are covered by smiling faces.

Further information is available from Revd Peter Colwell CTBI 07939 139 881

Don’t miss this …………..

- Facilitation Skills Programme for Religious and Clergy
  Monday 6th to Friday 10th June 2011 (9.30am to 5pm daily) Cost £645 per person at 49 Dowanhill Street, Glasgow G11 5HB. To book or enquire please call 0141 337 1070. Email: info@kinharvie.org.uk

- How then shall we live? A reflective day at the beginning of this thoughtful season; journeying with the life of Christ; listening, seeing, creating and asking ‘How then shall we live?’ Lochiehead workshop Monday 14th March 2011 from 10am to 4pm. Cost £10 per person please call 0131 669 2431 or email admin@soulmarks.co.uk
News from:

The United Reformed Church:

The Scottish United Reformed and Congregational College is preparing to mark its bicentenary with a Conference on 10th June. The College was founded 200 years ago on 13th March to provide training for Congregational ministers who later served in Scotland and many other places in the world. Several of our churches are freeing themselves from costly Victorian building which no longer can be economically heated and repaired. Galashiels, Beith, Priesthill and Stonehouse URC are all leaving their existing buildings. Granton URC is knocking down its existing building to construct a modern church incorporating affordable housing.

Faith in Older People

The Debate:

One of FiOP’s aims is ‘to promote and deepen understanding of the spiritual care needs of older people wherever they are situated’ FiOP know that many people find spiritual care difficult to define and through a range of events and materials and have tried to de-mystify the issue by aiming to bring it alive for those who provide care – whether physical, emotional, mental or spiritual.

Toward the end of last year a Debate ‘Is there a difference between good person-centred care and spiritual care?’ was held in the Lifecare Centre, Stockbridge, Edinburgh where views were heard from Revd Malcolm Goldsmith, Professor Frank Clark and Professor Mary Marshall.

Faith in Older People would like to hear your views on whether you feel there is a difference between spiritual care and good person centred care and how you enable the spiritual care need of older people to be met. Please email your response to info@fiop.org.uk

Website:
www.faithinolderpeople.org.uk

Back to Church Sunday

25 September 2011

This is the largest single local-church invitational initiative in the world and encourages people to invite a friend to church. Packs for 2011 will be available to buy online from Traidcraft throughout May and June but you can register now. Visit: www.backtochurch.co.uk

For updates and information.
Roll Away the Stone

The Church of Scotland will be in Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh on 22 May for a ‘Celebration, Inspiration and Discovery’. They will begin with reflections around a huge cross and, at the bandstand, the fountain areas and avenue and in St Cuthbert’s Church there will be spaces for worship praise and singing. Included in the programme is Easter Play Scenes, Church Stories, Fischy Music, 5-a-side football, Choirs and Storytelling, as well as a Picnic, Bands, Orchestra, Comedy and Puppets. Look out for further information from: www.rollawaythestone.org.uk

Naturally Inspired: Eco Stories

The natural world is our greatest resource for learning and healthy living. So how can stories help us engage all age groups with the wonderful world of nature? From forest schools to landscape legends, the sounds of nature and its hidden secrets, this workshop lays out creative and practical approaches for all areas of formal and informal education, led by Donald Smith, Rosie Mapplebeck, Claire Hewitt and Stuart McHardy. Includes a two-mile landscape walk. 19 March 10.30am – 4.30pm £32 to book please call 0131 556 9579 or email: reception@scottishstorytellingcentre.com

Fair Trade Fortnight

28 February – 13 March offers the opportunity to support Fair Trade by taking part in their ‘bunting record attempt’ Curious? Visit: www.fairtrade.org.uk/show_off_your_label/

Seeds and Roots:

The Mission and Discipleship and Ministries Councils of the Church of Scotland have been supporting some fragile experiments in new models of church over the past couple of years. A new DVD tells the stories of seven of these ‘fresh expressions’, most of which are not quite what are generally recognised as church yet, but the missional instinct of these pioneers is driving them on to plant new expression of church in areas and among networks not presently being reached by our churches.

Further information and to order contact Mission & Discipleship on 0131 225 5722 or visit www.madstuff.biz The DVD costs £10.

If you have something you would like to have included in the next newsletter (May 2011) please send it by end April to: Shona Paterson, ACTS, 7 Forrester Lodge, Inglewood, Alloa FK10 2HU or email: shonapaterson@acts-scotland.org