Ecumenical Opening for Renovated RC Cathedral

On Sat 9 April, St Andrew's RC Cathedral in Glasgow reopened after a major renovation with an ecumenical service of Evening Prayer. Archbishop Mario Conti led the service along with Rev Neil Galbraith, CofS, Moderator of the Presbytery of Glasgow; the V Rev Dr Gregor Duncan, SEC, Bishop of Glasgow and Galloway; and Rev Alan Anderson, Methodist, Superintendent of the Glasgow Circuit. There were many ecumenical friends in the congregation. There were also civic leaders, including Alex Salmond, First Minister.

The service involved the Cathedral Choir and St Mungo Singers, instrumentalists and the actors from the archdiocesan arts project. Music included 'Praise to the Holiest in the Heights', 'All People that on Earth do dwell', Iona's 'O God, you are my God alone', Bruckner's 'Locus Iste'
(written for the dedication of a church), Bach's 'O Sacred Head', a responsorial 'Psalm 23', a version of the Magnificat, and 'Holy God We Praise Thy Name'. It was an excellent, uplifting and inclusive service.

Many of those who had been involved in the planning and work of restoration were there to see the fruits of their labour and receive thanks from the Archbishop.

The cathedral is stunning. It is bright, spacious and welcoming. One key feature is the beautiful new baptismal font that greets people as they enter. Another is Howson's striking painting of St John Ogilvie. There are a number of other new works of art specially commissioned for the renovation. Now open alongside the cathedral, there is a Cloister Garden.

At mass on Sunday 10, the formal consecration of the cathedral and dedication the new altar were celebrated with the new Papal Nuncio to Scotland, Scotland's bishops, local civic leaders and people from all over the archdiocese. The cathedral reopened to the public on the Monday.

On your next visit to Glasgow, you may well wish to spend a few moments in this beautiful and prayerful setting. You would be very welcome.

Brother Stephen Smyth
General Secretary, ACTS

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**Being Effective Disciples in Today’s Countryside**

Scottish Churches’ Rural Group, 2011 Rural Conference
Tuesday 30th August
The Stables Meeting Room, Falkland Estate, Falkland
9.45am to 4.00pm

A programme of particular interest to rural Clergy
For Booking Form and programme
Contact: shonapaterson@acts-scotland.org ☎ 01259 222362

Cost (includes lunch) £10 payable when booking
Ecumenical visit to Geneva
The Church of Scotland’s Committee on Ecumenical Relations has arranged for a small group of new Secretaries, Conveners and representatives from the Member Churches of ACTS to visit the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva this November. During their stay the group will meet those who work in the ecumenical bodies of the World Council of Churches, Conference of European Churches, and World Communion of Reformed Churches.

New Fund for Ecumenical Women
Former Vice President of the World Council of Churches, Dr Pauline Webb, has enabled a fund for young women to experience international ecumenical conferences and events. Preference will be given to women under the age of 40, attending international ecumenical events for the first or second time. Favourable consideration will be to women from ethnic minorities and to women with expertise who may not achieve funding from their own church. Encouragement will be given to women from the four nations. Grant will be unlikely to exceed 75% of the conference costs and funding will be awarded at the discretion of a panel of women from the four nations (Scotland, England, Ireland and Wales) Applicants will be women resident within the four nations and be a member of a Church which is in membership of CTBI (Churches Together in Britain and Ireland), or the national instruments (ACTS, CTE, Cytun, ICC/IICM).

For an application form
email: church.life@ctbi.org.uk,

or write to:

The Pauline Webb Fund
ChurchesTogether in Britain and Ireland
39 Eccleston Square
London
SW1V 1BX
The series of Conferences begun by the Working with Children in the Church Community Core Group in 2009 is to be continued this October. The theme for the 2011 Conference, to be held in the International Christian College in Glasgow, is “Bringing about Change”.

Change is never easy nor without pain. Speakers from a range of churches will talk about their work with children in the church and changes they have sought to implement in order to make their work more effective. We want to show that, although not easy, change is possible.

There will also be workshops designed to help equip those attending to make changes in their own situations – providing new ideas to overcome difficulties and suggesting new approaches to enliven work.

Fuller details of the Conference and enrolment forms will be sent to congregations in August/September but those who work in their church communities with children under 12 years of age should note the date of the Conference now.

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A social enterprise in partnership with the Edinburgh Inter-Faith Association is running a market at the top of Leith Walk, Edinburgh (outside St Mary’s) from 4th August to 4th September initially.

In a time of economic crisis and people being less able to make donations, it is hoped this will be a welcome opportunity for churches, community groups and charities to generate some income for their important work.

It will also be an opportunity to share skills and resources. Stall space is offered to not-for-profits groups, particularly those working with the homeless, mental ill health groups and minority groups.

If you are interested please contact Vicky MacDonald at hello@edinburghmarkets.co.uk
As Scottish Churches House prepares to close its doors for the last time, much has been said and written about its work and achievements, its popular ecumenical programmes and the prominent people who have shared in the ecumenical and business life of the place. However, little is known about its life behind the scenes. This story is unique. It tells of the provision of love and care from the staff of Scottish Churches House for the people who have passed through its doors to attend meetings and conferences or simply to enjoy other experiences, such as painting weeks, walking weeks, retreats etc.

You might remember the old song written by Helen Taylor and May H Morgan ‘Bless this House’? It was made popular by old crooner Perry Como – back in the days…. My grandmother had the lyrics in a picture frame which hung up in her hall, and as a child I felt a warmth and safeness seeing it in its place beside the front door. It was a similar feeling to the ambiance of Scottish Churches House, twenty two years ago, when I started to work there as an assistant to Christine Hoskings. The House had been born from love, the hard physical graft of the work camp led by Ian Fraser back in the 1960s was driven by a love and passion for ecumenism and a belief in the power of unity. That love was ever present in the ethos of the House. The staff regarded their colleagues and place of work as a second family, caring for the place with all the love and passion that it had been born from.

People like Theresa Macholla and the late Cathy Brown who would bring in curtains and duvet covers from their own home, or buy material from their own small pay packet and ‘run up’ matching sets on the old sewing machine which sat in the laundry room, not only because they took a pride in their work, but also because the House meant so much to them. Then there was Anne Graham and Liz King in the kitchen, assisted by Cathy Symon, who even in her sixties would cycle the seven miles to work every day, only to have to cycle back after a busy day’s work. Anne and Liz would spend hours tirelessly studying recipe books, trying out new dishes at home before bringing them to work - just to be sure they would be offering high quality meals, continued on page 6…. 
they hoped the guests would enjoy. Coffee time was a time when everyone would come together, domestic staff, kitchen staff and office staff – gathered together at one table, sharing news of their day, giving support, encouragement, friendship, love and laughter - just as families do. When it was someone’s birthday Anne would provide a special coffee time, with cake and tray bakes for everyone to share. On Tuesday mornings all staff would gather in the small chapel for prayers. At that time, the House was run by Kenyon and Betty Wright, with the dedicated help of Anglican Nuns, Sisters Barbara Maude, Mary Nina and Philippa, then later Mother Janet and Dorothy Stella. What a team! Their enthusiasm and care kept it all going and they were a great help to everyone.

My time was mostly spent with Christine and Flora Adam (both now retired). Flora was Kenyon’s Personal Assistant, she had a lovely singing voice and often sang for guests. Then there was Margaret Boon who looked after the bookings then, and is now House Manager. Margaret is the longest serving member of the staff having started work since leaving school in 1982. The staff marked the occasion in 2007 with a special tea after work.

There was also the late Chris Joyce who became Bursar. It was such a happy place, buzzing with people and we were all kept exceptionally busy. But the House was more than just a workplace, it was a place where the staff team shared each others lives - the good times, the great times, the bad times, and sometimes the difficult and tragic times. It was then the House became a haven, a place where the love and support of colleagues and friends, our second family, helped keep everyone together through stormy times. A haven, for a while shared by the parents of the lost and injured children of the Dunblane Tragedy.

This is the side of Scottish Churches House that was never seen by the people who came through its doors for meetings. Those guests, whose needs continued to be catered for no matter what the circumstances were ‘downstairs’, would know nothing of the struggles behind the scene, and rightly so, as the staff carried out their tasks in such a professional manner any personal difficulties would be put aside. Often guests would be quite oblivious to the dedicated team behind the running of the House, those in the background who were not seen but whose outstanding efforts radiated throughout, making it that warm and welcoming place loved by all.

Of course times change and people move on. From the office side, Kenyon and Betty eventually left and the staff was joined by (the late) Maxwell Craig who became General Secretary and Dan O’Connor who became House Director.
Christine Hoskings retired and we welcomed Mary Shanahan, then Lesley Macdonald and Rodney Matthews, as Associate Secretaries. Chris Joyce left and Janet Garner stepped in as Bursar for a while. (The late) Cathy Brown and Theresa Macholla retired and through the passage of time we were blessed with a new team of domestic staff, headed by Margaret Gordon. Kate Buchanan and Una Melvin (her two sisters) were aided by sisters-in-law Rhona and Brenda Hassel. Meanwhile, in the kitchen Anne Graham left to pursue other interests, Cathy Symon retired and Liz became Head Cook assisted by Marlene Fraser (now retired). You might not know Marlene, but you will have tasted her shortbread mmmm!! Margaret Gordon had a tireless enthusiasm and led her team well. She was always cheery and was very involved in charity work especially for the Children of Chernobyl. Sadly both Margaret and Una passed away untimely and very close together. The staff are still stunned by this loss. Of course there are many other staff who worked behind the scenes but there’s just too many to mention. You probably could share some of your own fond memories.

Throughout the years, the ethos of the House has never changed. Even now, Margaret Boon has her father in to help out with odd jobs and assist with the senior citizens. He runs errands for supplies and helps out in the garden, paints walls and undertakes minor maintenance. I guess you could say he is just part of the family!

Of course the background staff had little to do with guests, generally, such is the nature of their work. However, this all changed when the Senior Citizens enjoyed their breaks at Scottish Churches House. It was the staff who pulled together the entertainment programme, putting on shows, quiz nights and accompanying them on Day outings. The staff came to know all the Senior Citizens by first names, as many returned year after year and this extended the family ethos to include them during their stay. It was amusing to see folk walking through the corridors in slippers and calling the General Secretary ‘Son’. A particular favourite with the Senior Citizens was the Carol Concert which was held during their Christmas break to the House. Here the staff, past and present, together with friends and guests would gather in the Conference Room (now the Fraser Room) and join in worship and carol singing. The time was often shared with local clergy and children from the local Saint Mary’s Primary School – just a stones throw from the House. After the Service everyone retired to the dining room for mince pies and Christmas Cake, the kitchen staff had tirelessly been preparing for some days before. This was a great opportunity for everyone to meet and greet, especially those we had not seen since for a while.

The last Senior Citizen week took place this May and the following poem was read out by guest Elizabeth Campbell who has kindly given her permission for us to use it in this newsletter. Please see next page…
Have you heard of Scottish Churches House, in the centre of Dunblane?
It’s a House that’s warm and welcoming, and lives up to its name
It welcomes folks from many faiths and makes them feel at home
The staff are very friendly and that helps to set the tone.
The food is always tasty and is made without our labour
When sitting round the table we hear many tales to savour
We’re sad to know it’s closing but one thing is for sure
We’ll remember all the times we’ve shared, as memories endure
It’s the people we’ll remember and all the fellowship
All the music, prayers and laughter and the funny little quips.
We know from long experience that things are always changing
Not a thing in life stands still and may need re-arranging
So for all the time together and for all the folks we’ve met
We thank the Lord for this House, which we never will forget.

Many people will miss not having Scottish Churches House in their lives any more, but none more than the people who have worked there so faithfully over the years. We all thank the Lord for Scottish Churches House, its staff and its guests and treasure together the memories which will live on in our hearts forever.

Shona Paterson

Saying goodbye to current staff: (front row L-R) Nan Nicol (Kitchen Assistant started 2007) & Brenda Hasell (Domestic Assistant started 2000) (back row L-R) Shakila Saparamadu (Volunteer); Liz King (Head Cook started 1985); Mhairi Robertson (returned to staff 2009); Kate Buchanan (Domestic Supervisor started 1995); Diane Henderson (Deputy Head Cook started 2003); Willie Clezy (Margaret Boon’s Dad – volunteer); Margaret Boon, House Manager (Started 1982)

(all photographs included in this article are used with permission from Scottish Churches House)
Prospects offers general support, advice and training to churches. It provides initial and ongoing support and training for churches wishing to develop a group for people with learning disabilities as well as opportunities for sharing and learning together.

Their aim is to raise awareness among Christians in Scotland about the needs of people with learning disabilities and to equip churches to be more effective in how they welcome people with learning disabilities and share the good news about Jesus in a way they can understand.

Regular newsletters, holiday weekends and an annual celebration are all offered as well as a range of teaching materials, CDs, DVDs and Bible Study notes.

Interested? Please contact

Ivy Blair
Mission Development Co-ordinator
☎ 07828939520
✉ ivyb@prospects.org.uk

www.prospects.org.uk

Racial Justice Sunday
11th September 2011

Racial Justice Sunday 2010 saw the leaders of the Churches which have worked in Scotland for many years extend a warm welcome to the newly planted Churches which are serving members of the ethnic minority communities which have established themselves in many parts of Scotland.

A new organisation, Minority Ethnic Christians in Scotland (MECTIS) designed to help these newly planted Churches speak with a common voice, was inaugurated at the special national Service held in Wellington Church in Glasgow.

This year’s Service, which will also be held in Wellington Church, is being planned as an opportunity to celebrate the growing co-operation between MECTIS and the longer established Churches. Bishop Joe Aldred, Churches Together in England’s Officer for Minority Ethnic Christian Affairs, has agreed to preach and parts of the Service will be led by groups from within MECTIS.

Two African choirs will be featured – one of which will sing on the steps outside Wellington Church for half an hour before the Service begins at 19.00.

All are welcome to attend the Service and to be part of the celebration. All are also welcome to come to the halls after the Service to share in the meal which the ladies of MECTIS have volunteered to prepare.
On Monday May 23rd, the day before the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland received the ecumenically prepared Report on the Churches’ Attitudes to Travelling People, Jess Smith, an author and herself a Scottish Gypsy Traveller, presented her monologue “Sorry is the Hardest Word” at the Scottish Storytelling Centre in Edinburgh’s High Street.

An audience of more than fifty people, including several Assembly Commissioners, came to hear Jess speak of the injustices and cruelties which had been inflicted by Scottish society on the Travelling Community over the centuries. However, the evening began in an unexpected way. A Maori chant was performed by a visitor from New Zealand, Mrs Christine Wilson, who had come to Scotland especially to express her people’s fellow feeling for the Scottish Gypsy Travellers and to meet with Jess. Christine, who is the widow of a chief of a Maori clan, wore her own ceremonial cloak and carried her late husband’s cloak to symbolise his agreement with the sentiments which she was expressing.

While pulling no punches about the pain inflicted on the Travelling Community, Jess captured her audience’s attention with humour and pathos as she told her tale of what led her to a confrontational encounter with a prominent Scottish politician and to her day in court.

After her monologue Jess was joined on stage by the Rev. Tilly Wilson, also a Traveller, for a period of open discussion. As members of the audience raised points and expressed their support, Jess and Tilly were able to provide vivid examples from their own experiences of the treatment meted out to Travellers.
Many of you may already know that SCVO is working in partnership with Glasgow Caledonian University to develop the first work-based post graduate course in citizenship and human rights. As an early induction is likely, interested parties should sign up promptly for this exciting opportunity to make the changes that lead to a fairer world for those presently discriminated against.

Applications are sought from students and offers support from sponsors. Some employers are building the cost of a studentship into new projects. Applications are particularly encourage from those in the Highlands and Islands and extra support may be available.

The course is:

- Created by Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) in partnership with the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)
- Postgraduate course by learning contract (work based learning,) delivered by blended learning (largely online)
- Entrance by Recognition of Prior Learning – formal and informal
- 3 exit points – at certificate (Yr1), Diploma (Yr2 and Masters (Yr3) levels

Course details from:

www.gcu.ac.uk/lss/study/professionalpostgraduate/msccitizenshiphumanrights/

A highlight in the build up to the 2012 Game is the official Torch Relay starting about three months before the opening ceremony. The relay sees the torch carried throughout man towns and cities across the UK. The first 74 towns and cities to be visited by the London 2012 Torch Relay have been announced and the More than Gold team want to tell you what this means for you and your church.

The places named are where evening events will take place to celebrate the Olympic Flame. The expectation of the Games organising committee is that there will be a spectacular welcome. This could involve entertainment, shows and concerts with local flavour.

To help the churches get ready for this great opportunity, More Than Gold is creating a local task force in each town where the relay is to stop. This group will help run community events that support the official celebrations. The aim is have churches and MTG partner agencies working to put the church at the centre of plans and celebrations that take place. To be part of this exciting event email:

info@morethangold.org.uk
Responding to Anti-Sectarianism

As you will know, much has been said in the press and media, in general, about the problems of sectarianism, and its related offensive behaviour problems in football.

Roseanna Cunningham MSP has been carrying out briefings with a range of church and faith group leaders on the forthcoming ‘Offensive Behaviour in Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland)’ Bill. The Bill is being processed through parliament with the hope of it being accepted by 30th June.

A few weeks ago, ACTS General Secretary, Brother Stephen Smyth, Assistant General Secretary, Rev Lindsey Sanderson and Racial Justice Officer Rev Francis Alao met with the Minister to discuss matters in relation to the problem and ways forward.

The difficulty in securing prosecutions for sectarian behaviour at football matches has been because the charge of ‘breach of the peace’ is defined narrowly by the courts and the relationship between the offence and human rights law provokes the question, “when this takes place at or near a stadium, whose peace is being breached”? The mismatch between the legal position and public expectation has been considered in a new Bill designed to provide new definitions of behaviour which will become illegal.

Further information:  www.scotland.gov.uk
And/or  www.actsparl.org

Training Opportunities from Scottish Refugee Council

2nd Aug
An Introduction to working with Asylum Seekers and Refugees
This one day course identifies fundamental issues facing asylum seekers and refugees today and highlights current legislation and entitlements.

1st Sep
UKBA Asylum Support – The Essentials
A one day course looking at the systems of accommodation and financial support available to asylum seekers from the beginning to the end of the asylum process. It also examines challenges faced by practitioners working in the field of asylum support

Contact: Jamie Spurway
Scottish Refugee Council
5 Cadogan Square
Glasgow G2 7PH
Tel: 0141 248 9799
Web:  www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/training