



action of churches together in scotland

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February edition 2012

TOGETHER

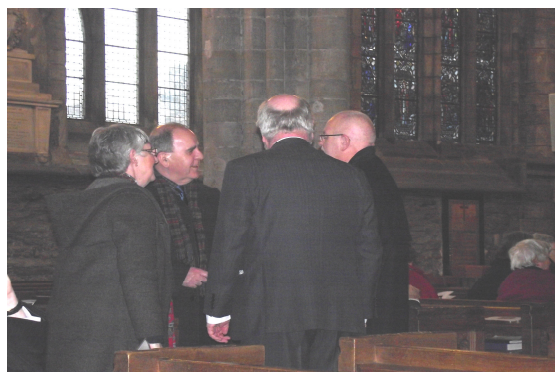
Scottish Churches House - An Act of Thanksgiving

200 friends, old and new, gathered in Dunblane Cathedral on Sat 21 Jan 2012 to give thanks for the contribution over 50 years of Scottish Churches House to the work of ecumenism in Scotland and beyond. Fittingly, the service took place on the Saturday of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

The service was thoughtful and touching, creative and participative, full of reminiscences and trusting in hope. The experience enabled people to celebrate the many achievements and fond memories of the House, to lament its loss, and to pray for the future of ecumenical relationships and action, especially here in Scotland.

Everyone was welcomed by Rev Colin McIntosh, minister of Dunblane Cathedral, and ACTS Convener, Rev Douglas Galbraith. Other service leaders included representatives of Scottish Friends of Ecumenism, Friends of Dunblane Cathedral and ACTS. Prayers were from the House's book of Daily Worship; readings from Scripture; hymns by Ian Fraser; sharing of stories among the congregation; symbols of freedom and justice, reconciliation, national identity and ecumenical unity; and, a conversational bite of oatcake.

*Alison Elliot, Ross McLaren, Bob Fyffe and Stephen Smyth share some memories (below)
Photographs with this article: ACTS*



Three speakers shared their reflections on different aspects of the life of Scottish Churches House. Ian Fraser, the House's first Warden and leading light, spoke first of the early days, especially the inspiration of Margaret, his wife. He then reflected on the hopes, risks, creativity and witness that were so much part of the story of the House. He very much regretted the decline in support for the House in recent years and especially the decision to close. Ian concluded in a characteristically strong and ardent voice.

(continued on back page)

Children's Conference Series continues into 2012

The Working with Children in the Church Community Core Group has decided to hold the next in its series of Conferences on 24th November in Edinburgh.

The Core Group's Conferences are designed to provide support for those who work in their congregations with children of primary school age while offering fresh ideas and renewed inspiration.

Programme details and venue will be sent out through church channels later in the year and will also be posted on ACTS website (www.acts-scotland.org)

Combating Human Trafficking

The Anti-Human Trafficking Ecumenical Group, set up by the Churches in 2011, has been preparing a report, at the request of the Church of Scotland's Church and Society Council, on strategies to combat increased human trafficking which might occur around the time of the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2014.

The Group has decided that, to help raise awareness of the issues surrounding trafficking, it will host a Conference in the West of Scotland in November 2012. The Group plans to invite people with detailed knowledge of trafficking in Scotland to address the Conference and the date of the event will depend upon when the speakers have been secured.

Further information will be posted on ACTS' website as soon as it becomes available. (www.acts-scotland.org)



High Class Coffee House

seeks new Christian managers or lease holders.

They are looking for people to adopt the town, look after it and serve the best coffee in a wonderful environment. **Thirst Coffee House** has been run with a Christian ethos and set up from the beginning to make a difference.

They are now looking for the right people to take it on and up to the next level. As a successful business, plans are in place to expand significantly.

People with Christian drive and enthusiasm have a great opportunity in front of them by either leasing or managing. Living accommodation can be included on site and Thirst would love to hear from interested people. Close to Glasgow and yet in rural Ayrshire, Stewarton is a wonderful part of the world to live in with excellent schools and transport links. The coffee house can be seen at:

www.thirstfor.co.uk.

please call Pete on:

07786 436900

(Photograph: Thirst, used with permission)

Church of Scotland in Belgium

As part of its on-going commitment to ecumenical relations, the diocese of Namur in Belgium invited a delegation from the Church of Scotland to be part of the activities during the WPCU. Under the auspices of the Ecumenical Relations committee, the delegation comprised Rev Linda Walker (Glasgow) and Rev Alan Miller (Stirling), who are both able to preach in French, as well as Alec and Rhoda Grant (St Andrew's, Brussels) and Peter and Alice Tulloch (Scots Kirk, Geneva).

Hosted by Father Thaddee Barnas at the monastery of Chevetogne, the week's very busy programme included participation in services, round table discussions, visits to religious communities and projects in the area and a little sightseeing. The opening service was held in Salzinnes, a suburb of Namur and the closing service in the Collegiate Church of Notre-Dame in Dinant.

In all the communities and congregations we were warmly welcomed and great interest was shown in the Church of Scotland – how it is organised, the role of elders, the celebration of the sacraments and the ordination of women.

All the members of the delegation greatly appreciated the opportunity to discover more about both the ecumenical work of Chevetogne where there are both Catholic and Orthodox monks and to meet and join in worship with fellow Christians of a variety of traditions – a children's mass at the parish church of Bouge, Vespers at the convent at Ermeton and the Saturday evening vigil in the Orthodox church at Chevetogne being particularly memorable.

Linda Walker



*Photo from L-R
Father Thaddee Barnas,
member of the Orthodox
community at Chevetogne
and President of the
Ecumenical council of
Namur, Rev Linda Walker,
Auxiliary Minister in
Glasgow Presbytery,*

Father Cedric Claessens, pastor of Sainte-Julienne, a Roman Catholic charismatic community and Rev Alan Miller, Minister in Stirling Presbytery. Photograph from Linda Walker used with permission.

Heart & Soul 2012

Celebrating the Life of the Church

When? Sunday 20 May from 1pm - 6pm

Venue? West Princes St Gardens
Edinburgh

What's on?

Storytelling, Massed Choir,
Church Stories, Comedy,
Drama, Puppets, Seminars,
Bands, Youth and Kids activities,
Scotland African Choir, Fischy
Music, Picnic, Interviews

How much? Nothing! – It's free just
come! For more information
please visit the website at
www.heartandsoul2012.org.uk

or telephone the Principal Clerk's Office on
0131 225 5722 (Church of Scotland)

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2012....

How did you mark the occasion?

EPACTS (Blairgowrie) held a week of lunches in Riverside Methodist church Hall. All the member churches took part and there was very good participation. Offerings were sent to Christian Aid.

CUMBERNAULD - Midday prayer followed by soup was offered every day from Monday 23 to Friday 26 January at Holy Name Episcopal Church, 15 Fleming Road.

ST ALOYSIUS (Garnethill, Glasgow), was open to all on Thursday 19th January at 7pm for a prayerful tour of the church which was followed by a cup of tea.



www.farmsunday.org

The seventh annual Open Farm Sunday is to take place on Sunday 17 June providing a great opportunity for the public to get to know how their food is produced and how the countryside around them is cared for. Visitors will be able to learn from farmers themselves how natural plant and insect species are encouraged to thrive alongside crops and they will get a closer look at farm animals and learn how the needs of wildlife are balanced with modern food production. The event is organised by LEAF, a charity helping farmers to produce food with care for the environment, while working with their local community. An increasing number of farmers are signing up to support LEAF to demonstrate how they are integrating modern farming with environmental conservation. Two farms are already making preparations for the day event; Balmanagan Farm in Kircudbright will host an open day on 17th June while Goathill Farm Dairy in Stornoway have made plans to open on 16th June. Farmers are to gather in Crieff towards the end of February to expand on the event which will offer more regional venues and people are encouraged to check the website www.farmsunday.org nearer the time for updated information on participating farms.

The World Day of Prayer

The World Day of Prayer is on **Friday 2nd March** this year and its focus is to be on women in Malaysia. There are more than 28 million people in Malaysia, half of them women and almost 7 million of them are non-Muslim. There's a growing trend towards full time working among these women, which presents similar challenges to those of women in Scotland, balancing work and children and home – but with even less support. Therefore with this growing trend towards full time working, there's also a growing need for spiritual guidance. Bible Societies are supporting a multi-year Bible Engagement Project to help these women develop strong spiritual foundations so they may raise healthy and well adjusted families based on the teachings of God's word. World Day of Prayer is celebrated ecumenically in more than 180 countries world wide.

For information visit:
www.wdpScotland.org.uk

News from Pakistan

The Prison Ministry team of The All Saints Church, Peshawar, organised a special Christmas programme for Christian prisoners in the Central Jail in Peshawar. Holy communion was conducted by Rt Rev Humphrey Peters, Bishop of Peshawar and the Prison Chaplain Rev Raheed Nazir, together with other priests and people from the local Christian community. After the service a Christmas cake cutting ceremony took place followed by a fellowship lunch, with Christmas gifts for the prisoners. The Bishop and his team learned of the problems and issues facing prisoners and assured them of their support. The Prison Ministry also provides moral and legal support to Christian prisoners and others in the jails of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province.

(adapted from 'Frontier News'
Jan 2012 edition
used with permission)

Racial Justice Sunday Service Goes East.

This year's national Racial Justice Sunday Service, which is organised by the Scottish Churches' Racial Justice Group and Minority Ethnic Christians Together in Scotland (MECTIS), is to be held in Edinburgh on September 9th. In previous years the Service has been held in Glasgow but the Racial Justice Group and MECTIS are aware of several congregations, drawn from different ethnic minority groups, which worship in Edinburgh and hope to establish closer relationships with them.

Support for Spiritual Care Teams in Further Education Colleges

The Steering Group which is taking forward the plans to form a support group for Spiritual Care Teams will soon have a website of their own on which they will be able to publish useful documents. The web site is being set up for the Steering Group by Scotland's Colleges and its address will be publicised through the "News" pages of ACTS' web site (www.acts-scotland.org)

Free Speech Protected in Anti-Sectarian Bill

A 'freedom of expression' clause has been included in this new legislation which will soon be in force. This will not only protect the 'right to discuss and criticise religion' but also 'an individual's right to try to convert people to their religion or beliefs'. Put simply, nothing in section 5 prohibits or restricts

- discussion or criticism of religions or the beliefs or practices of adherents of religions
- expressions of antipathy, dislike, ridicule, insult or abuse towards those matters
- proselytising, or
- urging of adherents of religions to cease practising their religions

Information from © 'Parliamentary Prayer Scotland and used with their kind permission

Easter Resource from ACTS.

This annual resource is free from ACTS website www.acts-scotland.org. Norah Summers, from ACTS Church Life Network is in the process of preparing it for publication this year. Copies will also be available in paper copy to purchase. An email alert will be sent to all those registered, but please keep an eye on ACTS website in the weeks to come.

Pray Now 2012. This useful and extremely popular resource offers prayer activities which allow time and space, a collection of modern prayers and suggestions for good 'lead-ins'. Carefully written by individuals, prayer groups and leaders of worship this ecumenical resource attracts a wide, diverse and international readership. Available now from or phone Norwich Books & Music on 01603 785925; or e-mail orders@norwichbooksandmusic.co.uk. ISBN: 9780861535972 - Credit card payment accepted.

Scottish Churches' Rural Group

SCRG's Annual Report 2011 has recently been completed showcasing its extraordinary work and achievements over the past year. Pilgrimage was a major focus, with a Scottish Government hosted Reception to kick start the initiative this time last year. A month later a conference at the Church of Scotland offices delivered the vision to the churches. At the Royal Highland Show in June, Church Leaders gathered to sign the Declaration of Commitment to support, in principle, the development of Pilgrim Routes in Scotland. Since then, supported by ACTS, SCRG has handed the project over for further development and the inaugural meeting of the Scottish Pilgrim Routes Forum has taken place signifying the way forward in establishing pilgrim routes throughout Scotland. As well as achieving the continued success of the Churches Stand at the Royal Highland Show – an event which keeps growing in popularity, SCRG have also contributed to Government Consultation Papers on: Food Advocacy; The Future of the Cairnorms and Rural Communities; Woodland Expansion; Rural Education and Ofcom's Securing the Universal Postal Service. Consultation papers were also submitted on Faith in the Countryside and What Matters for Rural Scotland. Participation in the Sustainable Agriculture Conference, Rural Conference in Swanwick and SCRG's own Rural Conference held at Falkland, kept everyone going.



*Participants at Rural Conference, Falkland
Photo © SCRG may be used with accreditation*

During 2012 the following topics will be discussed and many, or all are likely to become agenda items.

- Broadband provision in rural areas
- Rural deprivation
- Affordable rural housing
- Future of Scotland rail services
- Food Advocacy and the Supermarket Giants
- The progress of rural migrant workers
- Gypsy travellers
- How the churches deal with secular agencies.

Revd Professor David Atkinson steps down as Convener of SCRG and Bill Harvey has kindly agreed to take up this post. Nick Cooke has been Convener of the Pilgrim Working Group but has now handed the findings of research and discussion over to members of the new Forum. Meanwhile, all the 'ordinary' members of SCRG carry on in their own dynamic way all ensuring that rural matters are given a voice in our churches – and beyond.

The full report may be found on the ACTS website at:

http://www.acts-scotland.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=412:scottish-churches-rural-group-annual-report&catid=1:latest-news&Itemid=2

SCOTTISH CHURCHES VISIT TO WCC, GENEVA

Last November (14th to 16th), thirteen representatives of churches in Scotland took part in this visit, organised by the Church of Scotland, to the WCC (World Council of Churches) in Geneva. There was a very full programme of presentations by senior staff from the WCC, CEC (Council of European Churches) and WCRC (World Communion of Reformed Churches) and additional visits. It was particularly good to hear appreciation of the Scottish Churches contribution to the successful Edinburgh 2010 Conference.

A key focus for the WCC is the forthcoming assembly in Busan, South Korea 2013. Other concerns may sound familiar to us here in Scotland: the nature and purpose of ecumenism; ecumenical relationships, models and structures; governance, management and accountability; resources, especially finance; representation and decision making; ecclesiology, history and identity; mission and common action.

Clearly, change is in the air everywhere. A key challenge is how to discern what should be held on to and developed and what should be honoured but put aside.

I hope that the experience of our little group in Geneva will inform and encourage reflection and conversation among ACTS member churches as we face the next stage of our ecumenical pilgrimage – together.

Br Stephen Smyth
General Secretary
ACTS

WHY BELIEVE?

‘Why Believe?’ is a resource to encourage the Scottish churches to provide a reasoned case for Christian belief (apologetics) amid the challenges and opportunities of today’s Scotland. It brings together a group of Christians of different denominations, administered within the Mission & Discipleship Council, and also supported by ACTS (Action of Churches Together in Scotland).

The leaflet, ‘What can I say?’ which gives brief responses to what is said by some about Christianity may be downloaded from:

http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/5479/what_can_i_say.pdf

Two conferences have been organised for 2012:

In Edinburgh on 12 May ‘What can I say?’ with Amy Orr-Ewing as keynote speaker, and ...

In Glasgow on 27 October ‘How can I say it?’ with Jeremy Begbie.

(Further details will be available soon.)

The emphasis will be on workshops aimed at helping church members explore contemporary ways of responding to new questions as well as classic issues, like science, suffering and pluralism, and will explore the opportunities of today’s changing social contexts in presenting the claims of Jesus Christ. The group has created a new website, providing access to a wider range of resources, including text, audio and video clips.

Visit: www.godsearchscotland.org.uk

The Drummond Trust Stirling Conference in association with the Scottish Storytelling Centre and the Smith Art Gallery and Museum on Saturday 24th March from 10am to 5.30pm



Ian Masson Fraser

This conference provides a rare opportunity to explore the ways in which Ian's gifts of thought and language have expressed themselves, in unique witness for our times.

Arguably, Scotland's greatest living theologian, Ian's theology is lived out in action, prayer and poetry. Other contributors on the day include Kathy Galloway, Elizabeth Templeton, Tim Duffy, Douglas Galbraith, Alison Jack and Elspeth King. **Venue:** Allan Park South Church, Dumbarton Road, Stirling with further events in Holy Trinity Church and the Smith. **Cost:** Includes buffet lunch and refreshments £10 and £8 for senior citizens, students, under 18s and unwaged. **Booking:** Email: reception@scottishstorytellingcentre.com

or telephone: 0131 556 9579

Scottish Churches House.. .. (continued from front page)

He reminded us of Christ's prayer and our call to work for unity. He exhorted all of us who are concerned about ecumenism to 'launch out into the deep' in faith for the future, and 'not to paddle about in the ecumenical shallows'.

Elaine Cameron reflected on the hugely significant contribution Scottish Churches House made in the development of ecumenical women's groups and initiatives. She spoke particularly warmly of her experience of 'Women Sharing'. Alastair Hulbert reminded us of the House's commitment to internationalism and solidarity. The House has hosted

Many ground-breaking dialogues and conferences with international figures. There were also the theological summer schools and international work camps and volunteers. In his conclusion, Alastair suggested that we might not yet fully appreciate what we have lost in the closure of the House. The main address was by Alison Elliot. She looked back to look forward. She considered four elements of the founding vision of the House which the churches still needed to pursue today. These were: being where the action is, being alert to key current issues, addressing conflict in church & society, and creating dialogue where communication has failed. Alison encouraged and challenged our churches today to respond to these concerns in practical ways together – and for all of us to be open to God's surprises. In the hall after the service, surrounded by a rapidly disappearing mountain of cakes, the fellowship was warm and the buzz content. Grateful thanks go to all those who planned, led and took part in this important Act of Thanksgiving for Scottish Churches House. May the Good Lord continue to bless us and challenge us to go in deeper on the ecumenical way ahead – and may we, together, remain open to God's surprises. *(Alison Elliot's address will soon be made available on the ACTS website.)*

ACTS General Secretary, Brother Stephen Smyth



Margaret Peacock carries the Saltire as Douglas Galbraith smiles on..