



KIRK CAN SEIZE ON SECULAR SOCIETY CHALLENGES

Special report by Gordon Bell (gbell@cofscotland.org.uk)

CHURCHES can seize upon challenges and opportunities presented by an increasingly secular society – but only if they move forward and take the message of Jesus Christ to their neighbours, according to a Presbytery report.

The paper, to be discussed by Edinburgh Presbytery tomorrow evening, argues congregations that are more concerned about the survival of old patterns of church life will not be able to spiritually engage with thousands of people in the city who have no faith.

“Unless the Lord Builds the House”, written by Presbytery Clerk Reverend Dr George Whyte, suggests the Presbytery looks at Christ’s mission first and then considers how resources, such as people, buildings and money, can be harnessed to that task.

Proposals were brought forward after an internal survey found that office bearers’ (those within an official role in a congregation) main concerns were falling numbers, ageing congregations and a lack of funds and leadership.

Dr Whyte said: “These are rigorous times for the Church. We do not live in days where the Gospel finds an easy reception so the health of Christian communities is severely tested.

“The people who live within the bounds of our Presbytery need the Gospel even if they are unaware of this fact.

“We should have confidence in the Gospel and in our calling as disciples.

“To be a missionary church is surely a more exciting and fulfilling task than clinging on to what must inevitably sink.”

The report examines how churches could work together to increase mission work in six key geographical areas: the city centre, the inner city, the outer city, the suburbs, the housing schemes, and towns and villages.

By recognising common issues between contexts, churches from different sides of the city could work and learn together to make outreach more effective.

It proposes that every congregation in the city is visited during 2010 to explore their share in the mission of Jesus Christ within the context in which they are called to work, and to help leaders reflect on issues of congregational health and viability.

Edinburgh Presbytery meets tomorrow (Tuesday 30th June) at 6.45pm in Palmerston Place Church, in the city’s West End, to consider the paper. If approved, changes would take effect from September.



Edinburgh Presbytery meets tomorrow at Palmerston Place

WHEELS OF FORTUNE

By Gordon Bell (gbell@cofscotland.org.uk)

A GROUP of cyclists pedaled from Edinburgh to London to raise funds for renovating their church hall.

Five members from Crown Court Church of Scotland, in Convent Garden, London made the 400 mile trek down south last Wednesday (24 June).

Church of Scotland Moderator, Right Reverend Bill Hewitt, waved them off as they began their journey from the Kirk's headquarters on George Street – and was even presented with a special yellow t-shirt as worn by the team.

The hardy five completed the trip in four days, and they were be joined by other congregation members for the final leg through London on Saturday.

Funds are needed to refurbish the Crown Court church hall, as it celebrates its centenary.

Organisers hope to raise over £75,000 throughout the year by holding a variety of special events.



On yer bike! The Moderator with the cyclists outside 121

MODERATOR: SCOTLAND MUST STAMP OUT SECTARIANISM

By Gordon Bell (gbell@cofscotland.org.uk)

THE Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland recently demanded that sectarianism be stamped out in Scotland.



The Moderator speaks to the schoolchildren

Right Reverend Bill Hewitt told a group of schoolchildren from West Lothian that the country must become more tolerant and inclusive, or society would suffer.

Drawing on his recent trip to Belfast, he explained how a young man was brutally murdered after an Old Firm match because of bigoted factions in the local area.

Youngsters from seven schools in Armadale met with the Moderator at the Church of Scotland's headquarters in George Street, Edinburgh, to discuss how faith prejudices divide communities.

They had all been involved with an anti-sectarianism project which aims to tackle the problem amongst young people.

Mr Hewitt urged them to put their differences aside, and said he believed that the pupils, from non-denominational and Roman Catholic schools, had much more in common than they imagined.

The Moderator said: "The Church of Scotland supports any effort to stamp out sectarianism. (Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2) “Communities are coming closer together but there is still some way to go.

“Young people have a very important role to play if we are to achieve a vision of a more tolerant and inclusive Scotland”.

A report to the General Assembly in 2002 said that the Kirk must “tackle the demon in society”.

Moderator dates for July:

2: Visit and service at St Margaret’s Hospice, Clydebank

3: Visit to Carstairs Hospital

9: Attending Calvin anniversary event at Eddelston linked with Peebles Old

13-31: Visit to South Africa

KIRK OFFICIAL CHALLENGES GOVERNMENT ON CLIMATE TARGETS

By Gordon Bell (gbell@cofscotland.org.uk)

A SENIOR Church of Scotland minister has welcomed the Scottish Government’s new climate change targets, but warned they were doomed to fail unless the people of Scotland were involved at a grassroots level.



Speaking after the Scottish Parliament approved the trail-blazing Scottish Climate Change Bill, Reverend Ian Galloway, Convener of the Kirk’s Church and Society Council, said: “We warmly welcome the amendment to the Bill requiring the Scottish Government to publish a strategy for public engagement.

“Without an effective strategy the new law stands little chance of success.

“Congregations across Scotland, particularly Eco-Congregations will have vital role to play in coming months to help the Government get this right.”

A final day amendment tabled by Brian Adam, MSP for Aberdeen North, which requires the Scottish Government to publish a public engagement strategy, was agreed by MSPs of all parties.

Mr Adam said: “The opportunities are there for public engagement in delivering the aims of the bill and places duties on us all to reach the challenging targets in reducing our carbon impact.

“I hope that others will follow the lead taken by the Eco-Congregations and Eco-Schools in making a difference.”

The MSP was supported in the amendment by the Church of Scotland and the Eco-Congregation Scotland movement, which represents over 200 congregations of all denominations across the country.



NEW ELDERS FOR INVERNESS CHURCH

INVERNESS Old High St Stephen's congregation welcomed the ordination of four new elders on Sunday, June 21, at a morning communion service in St Stephen's Church.

Pictured from left to right are: Minister Reverend Peter Nimmo, Jennifer Morrison, Darrell Walker, Fiona Kelly, Malcolm Macrae and session clerk Ken Cantlay.

STREET PASTORS LAUNCH IN PAISLEY

By Gordon Bell (gbell@cofscotland.org.uk)

LOCAL officials are hoping that the new Street Pastors scheme in Paisley will have a positive impact when its first patrol begins in December.

A number of high-profile figures attended the official launch of the group, including MP for Paisley and Renfrewshire South, Douglas Alexander, and Lord Provost Celia Lawson.

Mr Alexander he said he was looking forward to the initiative:

“As a local MP I welcome the Street Pastors launch here in Paisley, we all know that in our community there are young people who have found themselves marginalised and who succumb to drink or drugs.

“They need people who are willing to listen, care and help – and that’s what street pastors aim to do.”

Reverend Peter Gill, minister at Paisley Wallneuk North Church, gave the main address, focusing on the Biblical story of the Good Samaritan.

Street Pastors is an inter-denominational Church project which aims to reach out to vulnerable partygoers in town centres. Pastors engage with people on the streets to care, listen and help.

The concept was pioneered in London in 2003 and has seen some remarkable results, including drops in crime in areas where teams have been working across the UK.

It is believed that police officials have advised pastors to focus on the town centre area, and also at Braehead’s Xscape.

Paisley Street Pastors co-ordinator Jonathan Bacon said:

“I am very confident the Paisley Street Pastors will make a noticeable difference to some of the problems that occur on the streets of Paisley and Braehead.”

Talks are underway for a similar scheme neighbouring Renfrewshire town Greenock.

KIRK MAN – “MSPS ARE A BUNCH OF MISERABLE SINNERS”

THE first Scottish Churches Parliamentary Officer has said that MSPs “are a bunch of miserable sinners”.

Reverend Dr Graham Blount made the remarks at the first of the summer evening services at the historic Old High Church in Inverness on June 21.

He reflected on the current crisis of confidence in financial and political systems and on the current public disdain for politicians, saying: “As any good Presbyterian knows, MSPs are a bunch of miserable sinners ... a bit like the church really”.

Dr Blount, who is now researching politics and theology at New College, the University of Edinburgh's Divinity School, also asked where Scotland was going as a country, saying it needed to ask some serious questions about itself.

Minister Reverend Peter Nimmo has also organised another three high-profile speakers who will address the congregation over the summer months.

Elaine Duncan, chief executive of the Scottish Bible Society will speak on July 12, Reverend Douglas Galbraith, prominent liturgist, musician and hymn writer, on 23 August, and former Herald editor Harry Reid on 6 September.



**Reverend Dr Graham Blount
at the Scottish Parliament**

FROM THE PULPIT

This month Reverend David S. Cameron explains how congregations can help the Panel on Review and Reform:

Last year the Panel was given the remit to:

“Bring to the General Assembly of 2010 proposals for an alternative presbytery structure including, size, devolved powers, staffing, appropriate budgets, along with the resources necessary to facilitate and sustain such changes.”

This could have the potential to transform and revitalise presbyteries as a support mechanism for mission and as a place of inspiration for worship and mission.

As you can imagine within the church at large there are many and varied opinions of how that should happen. The Panel is steering a course through these opinions as we develop an alternative presbytery structure while continuing to emphasise the need for a coherent vision for the church:

to be a church which seeks to inspire the people of Scotland and beyond with the Good News of Jesus Christ through enthusiastic, worshipping, witnessing, nurturing and serving communities.

If we are to achieve this vision, we have to understand where we are going and why.

As we think about what an alternative presbytery structure might work best, we have to ask the key questions:

- What is a presbytery for?
- What functions is it meant to perform?
- Is it performing those functions well, and, if not, why not?
- Are there any changes which could make it perform its functions better?
- Are there some functions Presbyteries could be freed from carrying out?

Presbyteries and congregations have an enormous contribution to make to encourage the realisation of the church's vision.



Reverend David S Cameron

Undoubtedly, there are many aspects of presbytery life that work well – and some Presbyteries work very well.

The Panel has been considering the role which the regional church fulfils in respect to the local church, its relationship with central administration and how this role can best be enhanced.

Congregations and Presbyteries are being invited to participate in further discussions to enable the Panel to consider all possible ways, including role, functions, style, and the funding that would be required in an alternative presbytery structure.

From the information gathered we hope a structure will emerge driven by the vision of what we all want our Church to be.

The Panel's approach is rooted in the belief that God calls us to be open to the directing of the Spirit and to move forward shaped by shared purpose and Kingdom values.

We call upon all congregations, Presbyteries and Councils to work alongside the Panel as this process of consultation continues to help cultivate a climate for change which revitalises the Church following in the best traditions of being a church reformed and always reforming, with mission at its heart.

YOUNGSTERS SCORE WITH GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP COURSE



Pupils from Mount Florida who graduated from the scheme

OVER one hundred young people have scored with the “Give A Kid A Goal” initiative, as a charity graduation ceremony rewarded their achievements last week.

Last Tuesday (23rd June) 120 youngsters received gold medals and scrolls at Cathcart Old Parish Church, Carmunnock Road, after passing the global citizenship course run by Glasgow The Caring City.

The scheme, spearheaded by chief executive officer Reverend Neil Galbraith, taught pupils about international aid and development work, giving them a better grasp of the plight of others around the globe as well as targeting what they could do to make the world a better place.

Awards were dished out by invited mentors from the world of politics, the police, commerce and entertainment.

ZAMBIAN STATESMAN VISITS 121

By Nick Jury (njury@cofscotland.org.uk)

FORMER Zambian President Kenneth David Kaunda discussed his work in tackling HIV/Aids and poverty in a visit to the Church of Scotland earlier this month

Dr Kaunda, the son of Church of Scotland missionary Rev David Kaunda, led Zambia to independence and served as the first President of the Republic of Zambia, from 1964 to 1991.

In 1992 he founded the Kenneth Kaunda Peace Foundation, an organization dedicated to the establishment of peace and conflict resolution on the continent. He now focuses on fighting HIV/Aids and poverty in Africa.

The death of a son from HIV/Aids during the initial outbreak in Africa was the driving force behind Dr Kaunda’s efforts. He vowed never to allow other African children experience such painful and helpless death. This struggle has taken him to various African countries and outside of Africa, with a mission to assuage the pains of victims, sensitize the public and alleviate poverty.



Reverend Ian Gilmour greets Dr Kenneth Kaunda

During his visit Dr Kaunda met the Very Rev David Lunan, former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and representatives from the Kirk’s World Mission Council and HIV/Aids Project.

Dr Kaunda is the second high profile visitor to address the Church of Scotland this year, following Archbishop Desmond Tutu speaking at last month’s General Assembly.

Next issue: August 2009

Deadline for stories – Monday 20th July 2009