



## KIRK GROUP SAYS MINISTERS SHOULD BE TAUGHT ABOUT HIV

By Gordon Bell ([gbell@cofscotland.org.uk](mailto:gbell@cofscotland.org.uk))

A CHURCH of Scotland group wants the Kirk to include HIV education as part of training for candidates entering the ministry.

The HIV/AIDS Project report to the General Assembly calls for a task group to work with the Ministries Council to explore ways HIV and Aids education could be offered as part of preacher training programmes.

By equipping parish leaders at local, regional and national level, it says congregations could better understand the issues around HIV in Scotland and would allow the church to care and support more effectively.

Project officials say an HIV-competent church would staunch the spread of the disease, improve the lives of those living with and affected by it, and ultimately restore hope and dignity.

The report claims if there is no HIV leadership amongst Kirk leaders, there is no leadership in HIV within the Church of Scotland as a whole.

If successful, the training would then be made available to the whole church.



**HIV/AIDS Project Convener, Reverend Robin Hill**

Last year the outgoing Moderator, Right Reverend David Lunan, launched the “Moderator’s Challenge” where local presbyteries were asked to raise £10,000 to help with the church’s work in this area.

The HIV/AIDS Project has also provided special worship materials for churches across Scotland in a bid to raise awareness and stimulate action.

For over two decades Aids has led to the deaths of millions of people and devastated families, communities, and the social and economic fabric of many countries.

### **Good News has three purposes:**

- sharing information about what the Kirk is doing nationally
- providing ideas for congregations to include in their newsletters
- encouraging people to contact the Media Relations Unit with ideas for local or national press stories.

If you would like the Media Relations Unit to help publicise an event your congregation is organising, please contact: [njury@cofscotland.org.uk](mailto:njury@cofscotland.org.uk)

# KIRK GUILD TAKES ON HARD-HITTING ISSUES

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

THE Church of Scotland Guild will deliver a tough-talking report to the General Assembly on the effects of domestic abuse of children and will also tackle human trafficking and prostitution.

This year's General Assembly will hear from the Guild about its continuing mission of prayer sustained action and, in particular, its ecumenical work, specifically the effects on children living with domestic abuse.

Membership of the ecumenical group on domestic abuse has increased to include representatives of other faiths who bring their particular cultural experiences to the shared goal of tackling a problem that affects us all.

The task of working with presbyteries and others to keep the issue of human trafficking in the forefront is an ongoing priority and the Presbytery of Edinburgh, in partnership with other denominations, has worked closely with Lothian & Borders Police on this matter.

The government's welcome ratification of the Council of Europe's Convention on Action against Human Trafficking in December 2008 means commitment to further measures and provision of safe housing and support for victims, and the Guild will be alert to any opportunities where the church might be of help.

Involvement by the Guild in the debate on prostitution has continued and it is concentrating its efforts on tackling client demand, after it was seen that for many punters, and for some sex workers, prostitution is a business transaction like any other.

But any discussion of trafficking for the sex industry must look beyond the factors of poverty and gender inequality on the nature of the demand for this "product," on the responsibility of those who buy women in prostitution and the strategic role they have in the chain of human trafficking.

## GUILD SCHEME LAUNCHED IN CAPITAL

THE Church of Scotland Guild has revealed the six organisations that will be part of its multi-million-pound charitable programme.



**Reverend Graham Finch addresses the Guild**

Members gathered at St Cuthbert's Church, Lothian Road, Edinburgh, on Thursday 23 April for the launch of the Project Partnership Scheme for 2009-12.

Guild members are encouraged to support the nominated projects through worship, prayer and action, as well as expanding their own knowledge of the underlying issues of concern in the world.

The Guild raised £1 million for churches last year.

### The six projects are:

**On the Other Side;** which helps prisoners' families (partnered with CrossReach),

**A New Hunger;** an HIV charity (partnered with the Church's HIV/Aids Project),

**Terrify No More;** an organisation that rescues prostitutes and slaves in Cambodia (partnered with the International Justice Mission),

**A Place for Hope;** an ecumenical centre for reconciliation in Scotland (Partnered with the Ministries Council),

**Mission Run;** which helps spread the Gospel in Madagascar (partnered with the Mission Aviation Fellowship)

**Interfaith Support;** a group that works for peace in Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities in Israel and Palestine (partnered with the World Mission Council).

# TAX RELIEF COULD SWELL KIRK COFFERS

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

TAX-PAYING churchgoers are being urged to sign Gift Aid declarations to increase the value of their offerings to the Kirk.



## Gift Aid declarations increase the value of offerings

The Stewardship and Finance Committee says the declaration allows donations to be increased by 28 per cent because of tax relief recovered on money gifted to UK charities. In 2008 over £10 million was received from the tax man.

Parishioners are also being encouraged by the committee to give their offering by standing order to ensure a steadier cashflow into church accounts.

These were two key benefits following a successful

pilot of the national stewardship initiative in the Presbyteries of Ardrossan and Falkirk.

Preliminary results, published in the committee's 2009 report to the General Assembly, show that where congregations addressed the Christian giving of money with the support of the Church's Stewardship Consultants, offering levels increased.

Support was given to churches through planning and training meetings, which the report said would normally only have been provided through a paid consultancy.

"Gifts for God" is a stewardship programme which includes a series of seven meetings with a Stewardship Consultant for planning, training and assessment purposes. This is now being offered free of charge to all Church of Scotland congregations, and is expected to be hugely popular.

The committee hopes the scheme will significantly boost future income, and conquer the Church's unwillingness to speak about the Christian giving of money.

## MATCH OF THE DEITY - EDINBURGH CHURCH HOSTS FOOTBALL NIGHT

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

AN EDINBURGH church hopes to score with fans from both sides of the Capital as it gears up for a football-themed evening, featuring former players, TV pundits and referees.

Following the success of last year's inaugural Football Night, organisers at St James Parish Church in Portobello have lined up two teams to battle it out in a "Question of Sport" quiz, based on the popular television series.

In the maroon corner is former Jambo and Livingston manager Allan Preston, whilst ex-Hibee Steve Cowan represents the men from Leith.

Other confirmed guests include FIFA listed referee Dougie McDonald and former Chelsea and Scotland international turned TV pundit Pat Nevin. The event is being hosted by St James' Paul Mitchell, who is also a prominent commentator for BBC Sport Scotland.

The main quiz will be followed by a question and answer session in the football forum, and members of the audience will be invited to ask their own questions to the panel.

Kick-off is 7.30pm on Friday 22nd May, with tickets priced £5 for adults and £1 for children. More details will be available at [www.stjamesparishchurch.org.uk](http://www.stjamesparishchurch.org.uk) nearer the event.

## SENIOR MINISTER HITS BACK AT NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY CLAIMS

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

A SENIOR Church of Scotland minister has hit back at claims from the National Secular Society (NSS), after they alleged NHS money spent on healthcare chaplaincy was being wasted.

Reverend Graham Finch, convener of the Church of Scotland's Ministries Council, believed the image of Healthcare Chaplaincy portrayed by the NSS was both inaccurate and misleading.

He said: "Spiritual care, as delivered by Chaplains, is not necessarily religious.

"Chaplains seek to help people in their time of need and strive to maintain hope and purpose when lives are affected by illness or injury. This help is available to all, regardless of religious persuasion.

"It is quite misleading to suggest that spiritual care is exclusively provided for people of faith. Chaplains do not proselytize and, on the contrary, would seek to protect patients from unwanted visits by representatives of faith and belief groups."

Mr Finch also claimed that they spend more time with non-believers: "Chaplains spend most time with those who have no declared religious faith, an increasing time giving staff support and in training staff in issues

such as bereavement care.

"A high number of the requests to see a chaplain come from patients and visitors who have no connection to a church or religion yet, in a time of crisis, are looking for spiritual support."

He continued: "Health Boards aim to care for people as whole persons, which includes their religious and spiritual needs. The provision of a chaplaincy service which is accessible to everyone, regardless of belief or faith, helps to ensure that care is holistic.

"Visits to church members by local clergy are very much a part of the pastoral care which our church offers but this is quite distinct from the broader spiritual care which chaplains offer to all patients and which Health Boards have found to be a valuable element of the holistic care which they seek to provide."

All Healthcare Chaplains are experienced in giving spiritual care and abide by the principles and procedures of the NHS in Scotland.

Guidance issued by The Scottish Government on Spiritual Care and Chaplaincy was prepared by representatives of a number of faith communities and also the Humanist Society of Scotland.

## KIRK CALLS FOR FULLER POWERS TO PREVENT FORCED MARRIAGE

TWO powerful Kirk groups have condemned the practice of forced marriage in a Scottish Government consultation response.

The Church and Society Council and the Guild of the Church of Scotland said forced marriage was completely unacceptable, and called for Holyrood's proposed legislation to be brought forward at the earliest opportunity.

### GETTING GOOD NEWS TO YOUR CONGREGATION

I'M NICK Jury, senior media relations officer for the Church of Scotland and editor of Good News.

Our patch covers 49 Presbyteries from here in Edinburgh to Shetland and beyond.

I want to hear from anyone who thinks they may have a story, even if they are unsure of how newsworthy it is.

So send your news, views and photos for what's happening in your parish and play your part in creating your Good News, by contacting myself at njury@cofscotland.org.uk or phone 0131 240 2268.

# From The Pulpit – A thing called love...

IN A SPECIAL From the Pulpit, the Right Reverend David Lunan, reflects on love in this month's Good News.

From time to time when preaching during this last year I have used a quotation from Mahatma Gandhi which has struck a chord with congregations, and for the sake of a wider audience I quote it here. We are familiar with the conventional seven deadly sins, but here he describes seven deadly social sins which undermine the fabric of our society.

They are:

politics without principle,  
wealth without work,  
commerce without morality,  
pleasure without conscience,  
education without character,  
science without humanity,  
religion without sacrifice.

There is a timelessness to these insights which make them very relevant today. Every area of life has to have underlying values, without which it's everyone for themselves, and the relationships which are necessary to healthy living are lost, whether in the family, the community, the church, the nation, or the world. It's always about relationships. The Kingdom of God is about relationships.



Mahatma Gandhi also wrote: 'Jesus lived and died in vain if he did not teach us to regulate the whole of life by the eternal law of love.' The Christian life is about learning how to love: how to forgive, be thoughtful, and considerate, and understanding, and courageous: how to trust, and defer, and serve, and give, and receive, and help, encourage and support. Jean Vanier of L'Arche Community says to love someone is to let them know they're beautiful.

When we are loved we become the person God created and redeemed us to be: we become more alive, more full of life, full of laughter and sometimes tears, more truly human; as Jesus was human. This also begins to happen when we learn to love. We don't have to win, or impress, or stand on our dignity. Money will matter less, and sacrifices will not seem like sacrifices. Loving may get us hurt – as it did for our Lord – but it brings joy like nothing else. It may mean we're taken advantage of from time to time, but ultimately we do not lose out. It may cost us, but we find we are not impoverished, indeed we are enriched.

Life becomes an adventure. I have a friend whose morning prayer always includes a variation of the sentence: 'Lord, who do you want to love through me today?' Christianity is not so much about doing the right thing, as doing the loving thing; and it brings its own integrity. It's not so much about being respectable, as being respectful, but it brings respect nevertheless. Respect engenders respect, as love generates love.

Christianity is not even about being religious, it's more about becoming a loving human being, reflecting the One in whose image we are created. And faith will open us up to that grace and truth, that generosity and love.

From beginning to end, it's about love, because God is love: if you've God in your heart, says St John, you've love in your heart. And if you've love in your heart, you've God in your heart.

Love covers a multitude of sins. It's not primarily about preaching, or being holy, or understanding the mystery of the gospel, or giving our money to the poor, or even being a martyr – if they're done without love, we've missed the point. *(Continued on page 6)*

*(Continued from page 5)* This is the exciting new life God calls us to: ‘Love one another, as I have loved you,’ said Jesus. ‘I’m giving you a new commandment, that you love one another, so that the world will know you are my disciples.’

Most of April Maggie and I were in Malawi and Zambia, and the reason was that it is one hundred and fifty years since David Livingstone reached that part of Africa. During our visit to Hamilton Presbytery we were taken round the David Livingstone Memorial in Blantyre, and at the end of the tour, we stood in the little memorial chapel, and remembered this most famous of Scottish missionaries, who wrote in his diary, ‘People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called a sacrifice which is simply paid back as a small part of a great debt owing to our God which we can never repay.... I never made a sacrifice.’

On the wall of the chapel are two texts: one from St Paul, ‘The love of Christ constraineth us’ and one from Livingstone, ‘The love of Christ compelled me.’ Love came down at Christmas; and love rises again at Easter. Love shall be our token, love be yours and love be mine, love to God and all people, love for plea, and gift, and sign.

Always the task for the church is to speak the word ‘God’ into any situation, and to demonstrate his love – in politics, commerce, science, education and religion. Love is the word by which God chooses to make himself known, and it is the way by which alone we make Christ known. Without love we are nothing. Love is the first word and it is the last word. St John writes: ‘Dear friends, if this is how God loved us, then we should love one another. No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another, God lives in union with us and his love is made perfect in us.’

## **PILGRIM’S PROGRESS MARKS PALM SUNDAY IN LARKHALL**

By Nick Jury ([njury@cofscotland.org.uk](mailto:njury@cofscotland.org.uk))

IT HAS a reputation as the most sectarian town in Scotland, but more than 300 residents took to the streets to prove that image wrong.



On Palm Sunday an unprecedented interfaith procession through Larkhall brought together representatives from nine different local churches, both Protestant and Roman Catholic.

In what was described by Reverend Lindsay Schluter of Trinity Parish Church and one of the organisers as a “unique ecumenical event,” parishioners of all ages walked the one-and-a-half mile route from Chalmers

Parish Church to St Mary’s Catholic Church, stopping off at the Larkhall Baptist Church and St Machan’s.

Miss Schluter said: ““Larkhall ecumenical relations are good and this, what we hope will be the first of many pilgrimages, will reflect that Larkhall is a well integrated and mixed community in which people can get on with each other. We want to show that Larkhall isn’t just about sectarianism and this proved that that completely.”

Organised by Larkhall council of churches as a celebration of Palm Sunday, the marchers followed a six-foot wooden cross carried by Rev Schluter and Father John Iron, parish priest at St Mary’s.

Although those who attended the event said interfaith relations between the different churches and faiths had been “wonderful” for almost 25-years, the public display of unity was the first of its kind in the town, sadly tarnished by the image of sectarianism, vandalism and separation.

For many of the residents, Larkhall has suffered for decades because of the negative opinions of people, not least the tabloid press. Stories of how all things green are targeted and a predilection for Protestantism abound. *(Continued on page 7)*

(Continued from page 6) Ms Schluter said: “This isn’t the true reflection of life for most people who live here. For 25-years, the churches have worked together providing many ecumenical events for people to become involved with.

“One of the things we agonised over was avoiding calling it a march or walk. People are very conscious of sectarianism, and they don’t like it. Palm Sunday was about cementing and developing the good relations we’ve built up.”

## **FORMER BBC BROADCASTER BECOMES KIRK LECTURER**

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

THE former head of religious programming for BBC Scotland has been named as the incoming Chalmers Lecturer for the Church of Scotland.

The Chalmers Lectureship Trust report to the General Assembly reveals that Reverend Dr Johnston McKay will give lectures on the social engagement of the Church in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Mr McKay, Presbytery Clerk of Ardrossan, will deliver the lectures in the Universities of Edinburgh and St Andrews during the academic session 2011-12, and will then publish them in book form.

He takes over from the Kirk’s Depute Clerk Reverend Dr Marjory MacLean.

The trust’s report also notes it has commissioned an additional series of three lectures, from experts in the field of Scottish doctrine and worship, to commemorate the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Scottish Reformation next year.

Reverend Dr Doug Gay will deliver a lecture relating to his recent work on the history of Scottish worship, Reverend Douglas Galbraith will speak about contemporary issues in worship, and Reverend Dr Ian Hazlett will discuss the Scots confession.

The Lectureship Trust is named after Reverend Thomas Chalmers, who led the 1843 Disruption when the Church split and the Free Church was formed.

## **A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH OF THE MIND:**

### **FINDING WAYS TO CONNECT WITH DEMENTIA SUFFERERS**

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

AN ECUMENICAL group set up to provide support for the growing number of elderly churchgoers and their families recently held a one-day workshop focusing on dementia sufferers.

The workshop organised by the Faith in Older People Project explored the subject of communication with people affected by dementia, with particular emphasis on its role in underpinning the personhood and wellbeing of all concerned, as well as the provision of care.

Participants considered many aspects of communication including language and non-verbal means of communicating with the help of dementia experts.

Faith in Older People aims to celebrate the lives of older people, supporting the spiritual care of them and their families using a network provided by faith communities throughout Scotland.

The workshop was held at the Albert Halls in Stirling, on April 21.

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*For further information please contact Faith in Older People on 0131 346 7981 or email [info@fiop.org.uk](mailto:info@fiop.org.uk)*  
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**Next issue: June 2009**

**Deadline for stories – Monday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2009**