During wartime being 'mentioned in dispatches' used to be considered an honour, but for many today being mentioned in the newspapers gives rise to a groan. I know that has been the case for many in connection with the cause célèbre in the General Assembly about homosexuality, and I want to say a brief bit about that so that all are clear on my own attitude. I say this because of the amount of bad publicity constantly put about by the 'other side' about the attitudes and character of those of us who want to maintain that homosexual practice is not good or Godly.

Yes, that's what I believe. There are other arguments that would speak about the injurious nature of certain sexual practices from a health point of view, but others must argue those points. From the standpoint of Christian profession shared down the years, sexual practice outside of marriage has always been considered wrong.

What does that mean and what does it not mean? Does it mean that all who have deviated from this in some way or other are despicable and horrendous creatures? No. It simply means that we acknowledge if we indulged in such behaviour that it was not for the best, and an admittance of such is always the best policy.

But should loving, caring relationships between people who are prepared to deeply commit to each other, although they share the same gender, not be allowed expression in a sexual way? Note the way the question is put; but the answer is that love and sex do not go together like a horse and carriage. Sadly it is one of the great tragedies of our time that true love, affection and bonding between people of the same sex has had the heavy hand of eroticism push it from the back and compel that the erotic must be part of love.

Let's make it clear that people who find themselves drawn to members of the same sex are in no way to be ostracised or viewed as morally depraved or corrupt - to do such would be to sin against the Holy Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose grace towards people was clearly seen. In my own experience over many years those in the conservative evangelical wing of the Church that I have had experience of have been more than loving, caring and helpful to those thrown into homosexual pain: for such it is to those who have wrestled with their inner feelings and desires.

On the other hand I have certainly been made aware of the cruel and insensitive things that have been both said and implied against us who seek to hold to what the orthodox teaching of the Church has been, and internationally and cross-denominationally still is. We have been called homophobic, cruel, insensitive, callous, without compassion, terrorists (the Chaplain to Grampian Police) and even worse. We are compared to the cruellest and most bigotted of homosexual haters.

Of course people will practise what sexual actions they will. What we want to say is only that this is not the best way, not the right way, not the God-honouring way, and will only end in the shipwreck of lives and societies. The vehemence of the attack upon this straightforward expression is quite something to behold.

Of course it may be that this particular determination will act against them if we do not reply in kind, but continue to try to bring out the truth about homosexual relations whilst showing every grace and love to those caught in the trap of a sad deception. It can only mean that we act and speak the truth and pray for clear sight as we continue to hold the truth. At the end of the day that is what we are contending for.

With Every Blessing,
Leslie Steele.
Death

11th May 2009: **Norman Neilson**, 39 Douglas Street, Galashiels

*We extend our sincere sympathy and prayers to the bereaved family.*

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**Carlo Curley Concert**

We will be welcoming Carlo Curley, “The Pavarotti of the Organ” to Old Parish & St. Paul’s on Friday 19th June at 7.30 pm.

This concert, arranged by the Borders Guild of Organists, will be a rare opportunity to hear our refurbished organ played to its maximum potential. There will also be a camera link to the church screen so that everyone can watch Mr. Curley as he plays. Refreshments will be served during the interval, when there will be an opportunity to speak with the organist and purchase his recordings.

Ticket prices are: £10 for Adults, £15 for Families (2 adults with children), and £5 for Students. For tickets and information, please contact Colin Hanley on 01896-759402 or Tom Ratter on 01890-830286.

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**Wish List Update**

Church Lighting, Heating, Seating, Electric Piano, Minibus, Library and improving the BB Chapel – these are some of the things suggested by members of the Congregation for our Wish List at St. Paul’s.

Whilst the List will be ongoing in the future, and open to further suggestions, the Board would be grateful if - for now - any other suggestions could be given to us by the end of July. This will enable us to consolidate the information gathered, and help us prioritise when we resume our monthly meetings after the summer break.

Lynn Beswick

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**UGC Fundraiser**

On Saturday 23rd May the UGC (Under Ground Church) and the Focus Scripture Union held a successful bacon/sausage roll stall outside the Church. They also sold tea, coffee and juice as well as cake and candy, and managed to raise £250.

Thanks to everyone who supported this event.

Most of the money will go to Christian Aid, and a small amount is being used to subsidise some members of the two Groups attending a big Christian music festival called Frenzy.
Christian Aid Week

I would like to thank everyone who collected for or donated to Christian Aid last month. The coffee morning at Trinity raised £306.31, while our can collection in Asda brought in £100.63. £990.53 was collected by the folks who went round the doors with envelopes, and the Sunday School managed to collect £214 from their sponsored walk. We also had £20 in donations, which means that St. Paul’s have raised a total of £1325.16. At the time of going to press, the total raised from this area was £5966.21. Thank you all so much.

Angela Miller

Vote of Thanks

Services during the Minister’s vacation have been taken by Alex McLellan of “Reason Why” and Rev. Tom Hogg, formerly minister of Tranent Parish Church, who is featured on the back page of this Newsletter. Alex presided over a literally “moving” experience for the congregation on his first Sunday in the hot seat, and Tom presented a colourful and passionate overview of the Bible story for the Sunday School. His sermons for the grown-ups proved as equally inspired! Thanks also to Rev. Jane Howitt for providing pastoral cover.

Conflicts Christians

The experience of Christians facing persecution in Pakistan and Iraq.

Giving the Poor a Voice

This month’s profile subject is Paul Chapman, veteran of the US Civil Rights movement and driving force behind Glasgow’s Poverty Truth Commission.

General Assembly 2009

Further reports to the General Assembly.

A Highland Welcome

High-profile US evangelist Luis Palau is visiting the Highlands this month during the region’s most significant outreach programme since the Lewis Revival.

Beyond the Walls

As he steps down as Church Without Walls Convener, The Rev. Albert Bogle looks back on what has been achieved and his plans for the future.

Soft Cushion in a Hard Seat

Padre Rory MacLeod discusses the nature of Army Chaplaincy with Jackie Macadam.

An Optimistic Reminder

John R Hume examines the phenomenon of the ‘New Town’ church on a visit to St Columba’s in Glenrothes, Fife.

A Radio Ministry

A project by an Aberdeen church which works across the airwaves.

Come All Ye Doubters

The Very Rev. Dr. James Simpson looks at the place of doubt in religious experience.

Plus – Presbytery of Duns

If you would like to subscribe to “Life and Work”, please contact Colin Hanley on 01896-759402.

Cake and Candy Stall - 14th June

The Under Ground Church will be holding a “cake and candy” stall in the Church Hall after the service on June 14th. This is to help raise funds for a trip to Malawi by young people in July. Our very own Anne Bain is one of the leaders of this expedition. Please come along and support the young people. If you are able to donate cake and candy please bring it to the Hall before the service.
Rev. Tom Hogg

It is 29 years since Tom Hogg enrolled at the New College at the University of Edinburgh, and he was a familiar face in Tranent, where he took responsibility for the town's parishioners 23 years ago.

The 65-year-old graduated in 1984 and, following a probationary year as an assistant minister in Earlston, he was invited by the Church of Scotland to become the minister of Tranent Parish Church.

Born in Galashiels in 1942, Tom was educated at the Borough Primary School and then Galashiels Academy.

The church has played a major part in Tom's life since his late teens, but after leaving school he embarked not on a religious career, but what was to become a 20-year career as a quantity surveyor.

It was through the church that he met his future wife, schoolteacher Kathleen, at a children's mission gathering in Bridge of Weir.

They married in Broughty Ferry, Kathleen's home town, in 1971, and the couple have two daughters, Sheena and Louise.

Tom has always had an interest in local history. As a quantity surveyor, he learned about the history of Scottish buildings and, at New College, in addition to his religious studies, he took extra courses on Scottish, British and European history.

In what was a special project, Tom gathered information from local history books and also parishioners, to produce a historical map of Tranent, sold to raise funds for Tranent Parish Church.

Speaking as he prepared to move out of the manse that had been his and Kathleen's home for 21 years, Tom said:

"I feel like I'm on holiday, and it doesn't feel quite real at the moment.

My time here has had its ups and downs, but I know I'll miss folk immensely.

I'll miss the Church - there were some characters there. People I've known for all these years have been exceedingly kind and very supportive. They were very welcoming when we first arrived.

As a farewell, we had a Songs of Praise evening - it was very low key, something I thoroughly approve of.

Friends and congregation were there and it was very enjoyable".

Adapted from an article published in the Edinburgh Evening News on 8th November, 2007, on the occasion of Tom’s retirement. Tom is enjoying retired life back “home” in the Borders, and worships at St. John’s Church, Galashiels.

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Treasurer’s Report - April 2009

The figures for January to March are summarised below:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Targeted Budget Income (January - April)</td>
<td>£24905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual Income (January - April)</td>
<td>£67845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>£42940 surplus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Our figures show a surplus for this month mainly due to a very kind bequest of £40000 from the estate of the late Dr. Borthwick and the £5000 bequest received earlier from the estate of Mrs. Mary Scott.

Marjorie McKendrick, Treasurer