

The Grapevine

The Magazine of Saint Magnus Cathedral Congregation

ST MAGNUS CATHEDRAL SERVICES ADVENT and CHRISTMAS

- SUN 30th NOV** 11.15 ADVENT SUNDAY
- SUN 7th DEC** 11.15 THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT
Lighting of The Grimstad Christmas Tree
- SUN 14th DEC** 11.15 THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT
- TUE 16th DEC** 7.30 pm KGS Carol service
- FRI 19th DEC** 10.00 am Papdale primary School Christmas Service
- SUN 21st DEC** 11.15 THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT
The Sunday Club Nativity Presentation
6.00pm FESTIVAL OF LESSONS AND CAROLS
- The Cathedral Choir
- CHRISTMAS EVE - WED 24th DEC** - with the East Church
10.30pm Cathedral Music Group
11.00 pm Community Carol singing
11.30 pm WATCHNIGHT SERVICE
- CHRISTMAS DAY - 25th DEC**
11.15am JOINT FAMILY COMMUNION SERVICE
- with Kirkwall East Church in the King St Halls
- SUN 28th DEC** 11.15 THE FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS
1.30 pm Reflective service with Kirkwall East in
the St Rognvald Chapel

Services are held in St Magnus Cathedral every Sunday at 11.15 am

GRAPEVINE

The magazine of St Magnus Cathedral
Christmas Edition 2008

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EDITORIAL

As I write this, Remembrance Sunday is only a week away. As I connect Remembrance Sunday and the approach of Christmas, my thoughts turn to childhood memories of Christmas in the 1940s.

I had grown up in Hastings, which anticipated invasion in 1940. At Christmas 1946, 18 months after the end of the war, we had a very special “invasion” in our home. It remains the one Christmas I shall never forget. That year, my parents invited a group of young men from the nearby German Prisoner of War camp to share our Christmas. Most of them had been interred in the camp for four or more years. All were desperately homesick and missed their families. In our home, they found comfort, homely food, noisy children and total acceptance. Somehow; after much consulting of dictionaries we made ourselves understood. We even played the normal Christmas games, including our complex version of charades. It involved improvised miniature plays in costume (from the fancy dress box, the wardrobes and even including sheets from the beds). Our young friends entered into the spirit of our lively family festivity. It seemed that the pressures and worries of years of war evaporated that day. The friendships forged lasted until the death of the last of those young men in 1997.

*Material for the Easter Grapevine should reach the editor by
February 22nd 2009.*



FROM THE MANSE

It is true to say that Christmas brings out the best and worst in people. And some church people, including ministers, can fit into both categories. Let me explain. You can bet your Christmas socks that many parishes and ministers will, in the next couple of weeks, start their annual ritual: condemn the Christmas season as pagan, materialistic, commercial, and full of over indulgence. Well... I am guilty of a serious crime, so claim some of my colleagues. The crime of being a minister who is "into Christmas." History shows us that Christmas is an invented celebration. And it has had a chequered history. Since its inception it has been debated, ignored, celebrated, banned, and reshaped. And pious slogans such as 'put Christ back into Christmas' do nothing. The symbol of this festival today is the American invention called Santa Claus. A jolly fat man with a beard and red and white 'Coca Cola' costume... but I stray from my task. While the Christian religious 'infancy stories' around the birth of Jesus of Nazareth may have provided the fundamental rationale for the festival within the institutional church, for the most part and for most people, they no longer function as determinative. For many people today Christmas is just that... Christmas! An accepted part of the annual cycle of events and; something to be entered into and enjoyed. I think we do need to reclaim a stake in Christmas. But I also think we will only be able to do that if we accept the suggestion that Christmas is not and never has been, just a religious event. It's a mix of faith, tradition and popular culture,

woven into a global festival in its own right. We don't have to see these various traditions as rivals and eliminate some until only the simple birth of Jesus remains. The purpose of the customs, colours, and legends of Christmas is to make available its essential Spirit. So my appeal is for a more generous approach to Christmas, its traditions and celebrations. Despite everything you or I might say, people are in a generous mood at Christmas, sharing the occasion by doing something for others and reaching out to renew human contacts. Whatever excesses must be conceded, goodwill and joy and love are there. So this year, celebrate the birth and the tinsel. For both make available the essential Spirit of Christmas.

Have a blessed and peaceful Christmas,

Fraser

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Thanks to John Michael Sullivan (See Luke 2:1-16)

12-23-2005

**AT LEAST WE CAN SAY THAT HE WAS BROUGHT
UP IN A STABLE HOME**

HAVE **YOU** EVER BEEN MISTAKEN FOR AN ANGEL?

As a junior trainee nurse, I was speaking to the husband of a very ill elderly lady. He had spent all day sitting with his wife and was waiting for a neighbour to take him home. The neighbour arrived and told him he looked so very tired and weary he really should stay for a shorter time the next day. He said he would be with her while she needed him.

It was Christmas Eve and I went off duty to go and freshen up before joining the choir of nurses who were going to go round the wards singing Christmas Carols through the hospital. We arrived at the old lady's ward. I stopped at the brightly lit Christmas tree, which was directly opposite her bed. When the carol finished, I went over to her and said, "Merry Christmas, Mrs. Brown!" She stretched out her little hand and said, "Merry Christmas to you! Thank you for speaking!" and gave me a beautiful smile.

Next day, I went on duty and she excitedly called me over to her. She said, "Nursie, I'm so glad you're here today, I want you to know I'm ready to go! I've been hanging on for the sake of my husband, because he's going to be so lost without me, but an angel came to me last night and she was so beautiful! She took my hand and wished me a Merry Christmas; she knew my name! I suddenly knew she'd been sent by God to tell me my time had come!" She looked so happy. I opened my mouth to tell her it was only me, and then unexpectedly felt that this was God speaking through me to her, so I took her hand and said, "I'm so happy for you, Mrs. Brown."

I had an afternoon off and spoke to her husband as I went. He said, "She's suddenly so happy, I feel happy for her too Thank you for being so good to her!" When I came back on duty, she was gone.

Editor: One of our members has given me this account of her experience one Christmas.

THE MESSAGE



The night so dark
The wind so keen;
And a manger bed –
So poor, so mean.

But one shining star
Cast a luminous glow
As a baby was born
In the stable below.

And the child whose fingers
Round Mary's were curled
Brought the love of God
To a waiting world.

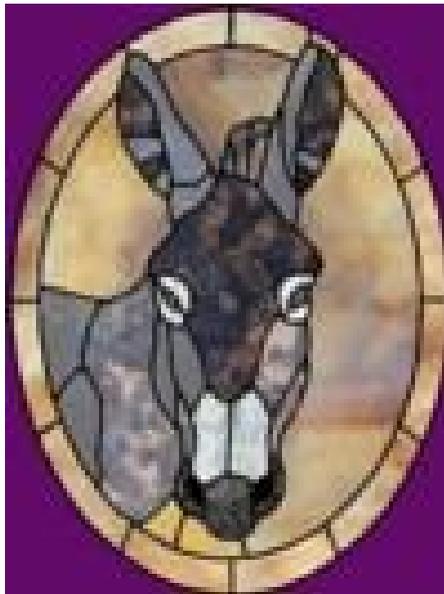
A message of peace,
Of joy, of hope
Was wrapped in the folds
Of a mother's cloak.

WHAT THE DONKEY SAW

No room at the inn, of course,
And not that much in the stable,
What with the shepherds, magi, Mary,
Joseph, the heavenly host –
Not to mention the baby
Using our manger as a cot.
You couldn't have squeezed another cherub in
For love nor money.

Still, in spite of the overcrowding,
I did my best to make them feel wanted.
I could see the baby and I
Would be going places together.

U.A Fanthorpe

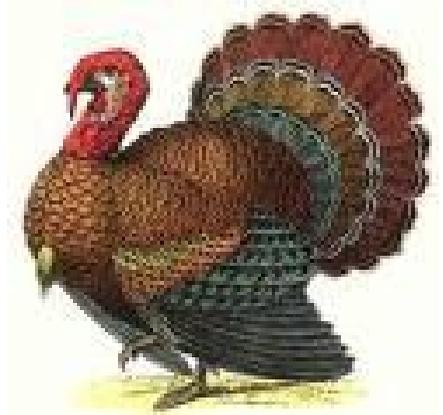


THE TWELVE DAYS OF TURKEY

On the first day of Christmas my true
love said to me
"I'm glad we bought fresh turkey and a
proper Christmas tree".

On the second day of Christmas my
daughter could be heard
As we tucked into our turkey, a most
delicious bird.

On the third day we entertained the
people next door
And the turkey tasted just as good as it
did the day before.



Day four, relations came to stay; the kids were good as gold,
We finished up the Christmas pud and ate the turkey – cold.

On the fifth day of Christmas outside the snowflake flurried
But we were nice and warm inside and ate our turkey, curried.

Day six, I must admit the Christmas spirit died
The children fought and bickered and we had turkey rissole - fried

On the seventh day of Christmas my true love saw me wince
As we sat down at the table and were offered turkey mince.

On the eighth day of Christmas the dog, he ran for shelter,
As we downed our turkey pancakes with a glass of alka-seltzer.

Day nine, the cat left home and by lunchtime dad was blotto,
He said he had to have a drink to face turkey risotto.

Day ten and the booze had gone, except our home made brew,
And if that wasn't bad enough we suffered turkey stew.

On the eleventh day of Christmas, the Christmas tree was moulting
The mince pies were hard as rocks and the turkey was revolting.

On the twelfth day of Christmas we smiled and licked our lips,
The guests were gone, the turkey too, and we had good old fish and chips.

CHRISTINE FARRINGTON'S ORKNEY REFLECTIONS

The time has passed very quickly since I arrived here fourteen months ago. I will need a few weeks down South before I can begin to digest all the experiences I have had in Orkney. One thing of which I am sure, is how important this time has been - my 'geriatric gap year'.

Most Sundays have seen me catching a ferry across to the four inner isles to help lead worship. I have quickly adjusted to putting together and taking Church of Scotland worship services, which I have found refreshingly uncluttered; it has been good to be freed from the structures of a formal Prayer Book. It has been fun choosing hymns, hopefully ones known to Orkney congregations. The island peoples have been unfailingly friendly and hospitable; I have much enjoyed my mid-week visits, particularly to Hoy, where I have been able to get to know folk in a more informal way.

Probably at least once a month I have assisted at services in the Cathedral. The building itself is quite awesome, containing within it so much history and resonant with the prayers of past generations. Often the angels are flying quite low! I have so appreciated the choir and music; I could only wish more of the congregation sang a little more wholeheartedly! It has been an enormous privilege to help lead worship, take funerals and an occasional baptism, assist with the prayers and sometimes to preach.

I have greatly valued the small Bible Study group that has taken place in my home. Soon after I arrived I led a successful 'Learning to Listen' course and just before I leave, a 'Quiet Morning' is planned. Such opportunities for spiritual encouragement lie close to my heart and I hope they will continue.

It has been good to get to know a range of people and to make some new friends, not least from my taking over ownership of the Art shop at The Strond - a community project in St Mary's, Holm, which is really beginning to go places.

I have never before lived in a place with such big seas and skies and ancient roots and I have come to appreciate so much the wide variety of

Neolithic and later remains. All of this I am going to miss greatly, and especially, of course, the people of Orkney. From time to time I will be back, but meanwhile, thank you for having me!

Christine Farrington

We all extend our thanks to Christine for her ministry and friendship during the past year. Our good wishes go with you, Christine, and we look forward to your return visits.

SOUP LUNCHESES



During the winter months soup lunches are held in the St Magnus Centre after the morning service. The September and October soup lunches were very much enjoyed by all who attended them.

Our next soup lunch will take place after the morning service on Sunday 7th December and it will have a Christmas 'flavour'. Everyone is warmly invited to come along and enjoy a plate of homemade soup followed by a cup of tea and Christmas home baking.

As well as raising money for church funds (there is no set charge, but a minimum donation of £2 per person is suggested), those who attend enjoy the delicious homemade soup and the opportunity to chat with other members of the congregation. Please come along and join us!

FUTURE SOUP LUNCH DATES:

Sunday 7th December 2008
Sunday 25th January 2009
Sunday 22nd February 2009
Sunday 29th March 2009

VOLUNTEERING AT ST MAGNUS CENTRE

The Management committee at St Magnus Centre would like to thank all the volunteers who have helped to welcome visitors and Centre users over the years. It is the warm welcome that volunteers give and the friendly atmosphere that keeps visitors coming and clients returning.

We have a band of over 120 volunteers at the moment but there is always a need to recruit new people as some who have been involved decide that they want to come off the roster. Two volunteers share a two and a half hour shift roughly once every month during the summer season (April to September). It is a satisfying job to welcome visitors, start the film "The Saga of St Magnus" for them or direct them to the coffee machine or gift shop. Volunteers also direct clients to their designated meeting rooms.

Being a volunteer is not restricted to those who attend St Magnus Cathedral. You can become a volunteer whether you are a member of St Magnus Cathedral Congregation or not. We also ensure that new volunteers are not paired with another raw recruit.

If you are new to volunteering at St Magnus Centre you will always be paired with an experienced member. One of the advantages of volunteering is getting to know a wider circle of people. Volunteers often tell me how they have enjoyed their partner's company. Some enduring friendships have evolved from this.

We have an informal get-together in spring each year, prior to the summer season starting, to thank existing volunteers and to welcome new ones. This is a popular event with wine and nibbles, which allows the management committee to let the volunteers know of any changes or updates to their duties and allows the volunteers to offer their suggestions to the management committee.

If you want to become a volunteer at St Magnus Centre get in touch with our rota organiser, **Heather Tait - phone number 873973.**

If you are already a volunteer please show this article to any friend or relation who you think may be interested.



Eddie Cooper and Johnston Smyth enjoy the wine, refreshments and repartee.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I have been approached by several members of the congregation with concerns about the loss of our traditional version of the Lord's Prayer.

As children we learned those comforting words at school and Sunday School. The familiar words can be called to mind whenever we need to use them. It will be sad if our children grow up without learning the prayer that has given solace to generations of churchgoers and indeed non-attenders down through the ages.

How do other Grapevine readers feel?

Yours sincerely,

Marlene Croy

THE GUILD PROJECTS

In 1997, as a development of its support for project work, the Church of Scotland Guild started the Project Partnership Scheme - supporting 6 projects every 3 years. By April 2007, members of the Guilds had raised over £2 million - yes, two million pounds!

The St Magnus Cathedral Guild participates and for the years 2006-2008 inclusive, is supporting:

Cross Reach (Social Care Council) Beyond the Blues Bluebell Project;

Leprosy Mission Scotland - Walking in the Light - Nigeria;

Scottish Love in Action - Touching the Untouchable - India.

Cross Reach is run under the Social Work arm of the church, specifically to counsel women with post-natal depression. Since starting their telephone helpline 5 months ago, they have received over 150 calls, 50% of which came from the Central Belt of Scotland and half of these are from areas where as yet there is no Cross Reach provision.

On the Leprosy "**Walking in the Light**" project, the Reimer family, who have been in Nigeria as missionary workers, are returning home. However, Andrew Reimer has instilled such good training of the staff at the orthopaedic centre that they hope to be able to continue without external support.

Scottish Love in Action was registered as a Scottish charity in 2000 to help the street children in India. They feed, clothe, house, educate and provide medical care for over 400 children. These children are either orphans or any have no living relative able to support them. Quoting from their "Gift of Hope" booklet of poems, *"The children in our home-cum-school in Tuni have so little in the way of possessions. A burst balloon is quickly gathered up and squirreled away as it is precious for it is bright of colour."* The founder of the charity, Gillie Davidson, addressed the Presbyterial Council rally in June this year and brought home to us the real value of our donations.

Back here in Orkney, our Guild has already given £400 to each of these needy projects and it is hoped that in December 2008 we will be able to send another £600, giving a total for the 3 years of £1,800. Who knows, with your help, we may even manage to round it up!!

The members and supporters of the Guild must be congratulated, bearing in mind how much they also donate to various other church and local groups.

Gladys Leslie

The Guild meets on the second Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm in the St Magnus Centre. Visitors and new members are always welcome.

FRIENDSHIP CLUB



CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT

Sunday, 7th December, at 7pm
in the St Magnus Centre.

The Friendship Club offers a warm welcome to all to their Carols by Candlelight:

Shortbread and mince pies will be served.



There will be a collection at the door.



INNOCENCE

One Sunday morning, the pastor noticed little Alex standing in the foyer of the church staring up at a large plaque. It was covered with names and small American flags mounted on either side of it.

The six-year old had been staring at the plaque for some time, so the pastor walked up, stood beside the little boy. He said quietly, "Good morning Alex"

"Good morning Pastor" he replied, still focused on the plaque. "Pastor, what is this?"

The pastor said, "Well son, it's a memorial to all the young men and women who died in the service."

Soberly, they just stood together, staring at the large plaque. Finally, little Alex's voice, barely audible and trembling with fear asked, "Which service, the 8:30 or the 10:30? "

PARISH REGISTER

Thank you to so many people for your contributions to this Grapevine. However, it means there is too little space and the Parish Register is being held over for the next Edition.

My apologies: *The Editor*



Only one star?
I would have lit a thousand lamps
To greet the king.
I would have set the sky ablaze
To welcome Him.

I would have climbed the highest hill
On Christmas morn
To shout the news to all the world
That Christ was born.

If only He had smiled at me
That wondrous boy.
I think my heart would then have burst
With pride and joy.

Only one heart?
And yet enough. There need not be
A shower of gifts beneath a tree.
Christ only asks that I should give
Myself to Him – and live.