

The Grapevine

The Magazine of Saint Magnus Cathedral Congregation

St Magnus Cathedral Services

Worship at the Cathedral this summer

SUMMER SERVICES		
SUN 20th JUNE	11.15am	St Magnus Festival Service: music by the Cathedral choir and members of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra.
SUN 15th AUG	11.15am	Celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Communion to celebrate the Kirkwall Flower Arrangement Club's Annual Flower Festival.
SUN 5th SEP	11.15am	Science Festival Service and Celebration of Holy Communion.

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

GRAPEVINE

The magazine of St Magnus Cathedral Summer Edition 2010

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EDITORIAL

We are living in a world in debt. The Church of Scotland has an “unsustainable 5.7 million pound deficit” and in a few years its resources will be exhausted. What then? It is our local fellowships – the ordinary people – who will be more crucial than ever in keeping the Christian faith alive in these islands.

This issue of Grapevine reminds us of our Christian heritage with its Pictish and Norse origins - a living faith here in Orkney long before the struggles between Catholic traditions and the new Protestant reforming zeal of John Knox. We are reminded, too, of the link to our pre-Christian past, as we celebrate the Summer Solstice during the St Magnus Festival.

We see notices today of “Redundant Church for Sale”. Some are turned into attractive homes or art galleries, but we see ruins, also, many with associations with the Orkneyinga Saga and the martyrdom of St Magnus. These ruins are evidence of “redundant churches” long before the term was used, but the Christian faith did not die. We, too, must move into an age where Christianity retains a vibrancy than can never become redundant.

**Material for the Autumn Grapevine should reach the editor by
August 15th 2010**

SUMMER NOTES FROM THE MANSE



‘Write down in sand all the bad news and write down in granite all your good news.’ - Old Saying

We probably have grown used to hearing bad news before we hear good news. It’s not that there isn’t enough good news, it’s just that bad news seems to have quicker legs and always gets to be heard first. Your good news should always be appreciated. Hopefully, as you look back on your day, you will be able to write something good down on granite, something that went well for you, something that you were happy about, something that made today stand out. Whatever was not so good can be written down in sand. Just as a tide washes every sand shore clean, God also wants us to leave anything bad, or our mistakes, made behind us. God willingly wants to wipe them away but never wants to wipe away what’s written in granite.

***‘Yesterday is a cancelled cheque.
Tomorrow is a promissory note.***

Today is the only cash you have, so spend it wisely.’ - Kay Lyons

Each day is a small fragment of a lifetime. We can’t return to the past except within our memories. We don’t know what the future holds for any of us. The only time we can spend is today and the only time we can touch is right now. It might seem an oversimplification, but so many are either stuck in the past or immersed in what the future might bring. It would seem that today is sometimes forgotten! The best starting point is to see today as God’s gift to us. We are invited to use all that’s been given to us to enrich our lives, physically, emotionally and spiritually. If we can give all three of these an honest go, then we are indeed living life to its fullest. We are also doing what God wants each of us to do.

Yours *Fraser*



Fraser Macnaughton & Roderick MacLeod, first visitors to Violet Couper on her 100th birthday.



An Irish Friendship Wish

**May there always be work for your hands to do;
May your purse always hold a coin or two;
May the sun always shine on your windowpane;
May a rainbow be certain to follow each rain;
May the hand of a friend always be near you;
May God fill your heart with gladness to cheer you.**

**And may you be in heaven a half hour before the
devil knows you're dead!**

STEERING THE STONE SHIPS

by Jocelyn Rendall, published in 2009

This amazing new book about Orkney's Churches over the centuries is a treasure store of information, human stories and deep understanding of the growth of Christianity in these islands.

The following passage may serve to whet your appetite to read or buy the book yourself as it reminds us as we visit the Cathedral, the Museum and ruined Viking churches of Christianity's Pictish and Norse origins.

'When Orkney men and women did "embrace the faith", what did that mean to them? The Christ, who stares out at us from the pages of early Irish gospel books, or from Scandinavian metalwork, is disconcertingly unfamiliar. Centuries of Christian art have accustomed us to a repertoire of easily recognised images, but these figures are alien, created by minds inhabiting a totally different thought-world from our own, and wrought by hands that seem more used to beating intricate patterns out of metal than representing the human form.

The Christ that the Norse encountered in the gospel stories had not yet been frozen into the rigidity of Byzantine icons, had never been cradled by serene Renaissance Madonnas in immaculately clean stables, nor sanitised by sentimental Victorian portrayals of "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild".

They would have seen the coarse handed carpenter, the miracle worker and healer, only through the lens of their own fierce past. They probably understood the agricultural parables much more vividly than we do and resonated to the disciples' fear as they lost control of their fishing boat in a sudden storm. They would have recognised the familiar figure of the man stripped and beaten by thieves, even if perplexed by the rescuing Good Samaritan. When we stand in the ruins of Norse Churches, we have to make a leap of the imagination to connect with the people who built them and, first, we need to release our preconceptions of Christianity from its cultural packaging.'

*The extract above is printed by kind permission of St Andrew Press, Edinburgh. The publishers of this book are offering copies of "**Steering the Stone Ships**" at the reduced price of £9.99 to anyone who orders online through www.standrewpress.com. To receive the discount go to the Shopping Basket and enter the code 'Grapevine'.*

From Voices of St Magnus Cathedral

A number of years ago, when I was visiting in the Norwegian countryside, I found that my host had placed on my bed-table a book called *I Vesterveg*. I skimmed through it and came on a poem entitled Kirkwall. These verses speak of St Magnus Cathedral.

*I walk alone in evening clear
On dear familiar ground
And voices from the past I hear:
The sound is a living sound....
You men of Agder, from your graves
That Church like glory springs;
Its tower a sign, above the waves,
To the steadfast heavenly things.*

*The notes die sweetly on the air
Of the bells that mark each hour;
Though dreamy now is the tale they bear,
That Church was an urgent power!
Mighty it was on sea and land, though all forget the past,
It will speak of race and motherland
While its glorious walls shall last.*

The poet, Hans Reynold, did not look on the Cathedral as a mass of stone, but as something magnificently alive. I feel that, too, every time I go into it - that the Cathedral is filled with a tremendous atmosphere or spirit. In addition, it has, and has had its voices intoning

Glory to God in the Highest . . .

One of the things that keeps it alive and vibrant, and that would have delighted Earl Rognvald its founder, who invited poets and musicians to his Court in Kirkwall, is that, in our own day, new modes of expression have been welcomed in the Cathedral – singers, orchestras, dancers. Now fresh voices are to celebrate, in the very newest music, the man and the event out of which the Cathedral took its being. And surely this continuing celebration of Magnus - from the mediaeval hymns to the modern music of Peter Maxwell Davies - is a wonderful thing.

This extract is taken from a talk given on Orkney radio by Ernest Marwick, a few days before the first St Magnus Festival, and a few weeks before his death in 1977. It is reprinted with permission of The Orcadian, from "In from the Cuithes", an Orkney Anthology edited by Howie Firth.

The House with the High, High Spire

St Magnus Cathedral



from the keepsake book of the late Bertha Findlay

There's a house in our town with a high, high spire.
Just a house where you go when your heart is on fire.
You don't have to knock, you just walk right in.
When you leave you feel you are free from sin.

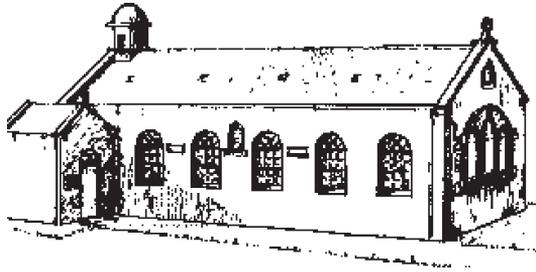
In the house with the spire you will always find
Someone there by your side, giving peace of mind.
If you live in fear
You are welcome here.

In the house with the high, high spire,
In your heart you will feel
It's been all worthwhile.
Everyone is your friend
And you feel no guile.

You walk through that house with your head held high.
And you hear not a sound just a happy sigh.

In the house with the spire you will walk in alone.
You will then hear the sound of an organ's tone.
If your heart is there it will play for you
In the house with the high, high spire.

St Magnus Kirk, Birsay



When the St Magnus Church Birsay Trust (Scottish Charity SCO26084) was set up in 1997, it produced a leaflet, "*The Other St Magnus*", drawing attention to the fact that as well as St Magnus Cathedral, there was a St Magnus Church worth visiting.

But historically it is really St Magnus Cathedral that is the "other St Magnus," because the church in Birsay is built - at least partly - on the site of the original Christkirk, built by Earl Thorfinn in about 1064, and in which St Magnus would have worshipped as a boy. Local people still referred to the church as Christkirk, or as St Magnus Kirk, until at least the beginning of the 20th century.

It was to Christkirk that the body of Magnus was brought back after his murder on Egilsay in about 1117. Then miracles began to happen, and this is when the church would have acquired its alternative name of St Magnus Kirk. With the seat of power moving from Birsay to Kirkwall, Magnus's bones were removed from St Magnus Kirk, washed with water from Manswell (near the Barony Mills) and taken to Kirkwall, to St Olaf's, from where they were later transferred to St Magnus Cathedral.

It is surprising how many people from other parts of Orkney still have not visited St Magnus Kirk. All year round a key is available at Palace Stores, and during the main tourist season the church is usually open all day.

The upper part of the walls of the present building dates from the middle of the 19th century. Although you cannot now see the lower part of the walls - some dating back to the original building - there are other older features still to be seen, including the 17th century belfry. Inside there are two gravestones, dating from the 16th and 17th centuries. There is also a beautiful stained glass window, designed by Loveday McPherson,

the artist wife of the Minister of St Magnus Kirk from 1900-1906. It was made by Alex Strachan, whose more famous brother, Douglas, designed the window showing David in St Magnus Cathedral. There is also a little gallery with a number of paintings, line drawings and photographs; these include some watercolours by Loveday McPherson.

One of the most common comments in the Visitors' Book refers to the special atmosphere of peace they experience in the church.

When Gilbert Markus - at that time Chaplain to the University of Strathclyde - gave the address at the St Magnus Day Service on April 16th 1999, he said, "Birsay is **the** place to be on St Magnus Day. Being in Birsay for St Magnus Day is a bit like being in Bethlehem for Christmas."

You, bright Magnus Erlendsson
Had no quarrel with the innocent;
You psalm-singer in the arrow storm,
Firm-footed in the hour of blood,
Whose strength was mercy like the mercy of God,
Your justice gave joy to the poor.

You who forgave, like your Master,
Those who brought you to your death,
Pray for us
That we may have no quarrel with the innocent.
Where violence is done,
Teach us to stand firm,
Teach us to stand clear and cry your cry;
"I have no quarrel with anyone here."
Show us your path of peace.
Bright Magnus, pray for us.

Bertie Harvey (Secretary of the St Magnus Church Birsay Trust)

The poem above by Gilbert Markus is printed with the author's permission

The Magnus Tapestries - gifted to the St Magnus Church Birsay Trust by the artist Sheila Scott - will be on display at the Hundland Gallery during its normal opening hours, in August. Details will appear nearer the time in The Orcadian and The Orkney Advertiser.

Midsummer Myths

by George Mackay Brown

*For many years, George Mackay Brown wrote a regular column for the newspaper, "The Orcadian", called 'Under Brinkie's Brae'. A selection of these articles has been published, and the following one is taken from the book '**Rockpools and Daffodils - an Orcadian Diary - 1979-1991**'. The article was first published on July 2nd 1987.*

Midsummer in Orkney – and a few very daring people (or foolhardy people) went to Brodgar on the Solstice midnight and drank some Highland Park in the centre of the stone ring. I told one of them the next day how very lucky she was to be there talking to me; for they had all been flirting with a supernatural danger.

The trows: the trows are abroad in their thousands on midsummer nights. People have been dragged or lured or cajoled to the trows' abodes inside the hills, and been lost to human ken.

But not, of course, for ever. Sooner or later, after half a century, maybe – the trows get tired of their guests and invite them to leave. The midsummer revellers, in the past, thought they had been gone for half an hour or so – or maybe it had all been a dream, a piece of midsummer madness – but when they emerge into the midsummer light again, they find that they are strangers in a familiar land.

All their generation has vanished or grown so old as to be unrecognisable. Only they, the enchanted ones, are not a day older than when they entered the trows' castle.

I suppose you are fairly safe if you aren't children (especially very beautiful children) or musicians. For some reason, the trows are especially delighted with innocence and beauty, and music and dancing.... so when we drove home with a certain world-famous composer the other evening after *The Consort of Musick* in St Magnus, I told him he ought to go right indoors when we got to Stromness and not come out again that night....

I'm please to say he is still with us . . .

A little boy in New York, nearly two centuries ago, heard his father telling him this story – at bedtime, no doubt. Being a glutton for narrative, the boy made it a part of himself. And when he grew up, he wrote a very famous story called *Rip Van Winkle*. The theme is immediately recognisable. The child's name was Washington Irving, and his father was a Shapinsay man.

This extract is printed by kind permission of the estate of George MacKay Brown.

**The Will of God never takes you to where the
Grace of God will not protect you.**

BE HEARD

says Louis Kerr

There used to be a notice seen in retail premises all over the country which encouraged its customers:

**“If satisfied - Tell others . . .
If not - Tell us”**

Well, in St Magnus some six months or so ago we introduced a system that enables you to do both in one easy step. The whole thing arose from a Kirk Session discussion on “conflict resolution” prompted by the General Assembly. It was decided at the outset that what was essential was a means by which the many people who come in contact with the Cathedral, as members of the congregation and its organisations or as visitors, could express an opinion and be heard and, importantly, be responded to if necessary.

Certain important characteristics of such a system were agreed and these were that it should be:

- ***Confidential***
- ***Independent***
- ***Influential***
- ***All encompassing***

In the end it was agreed that a Response Panel should be set up consisting of three elders and three members of the congregation. The purpose of this panel is to consider whatever comments, suggestions and such like are made by means of an - **IDEAS AND SUGGESTION BOX**.

Current Panel members are Liz Austin, Aly Bruce, Helen Cunningham, Louis Kerr, Neil McCartney and Lesley Poulton. The Panel is expected to follow up such comments by giving an initial response if contact details have been given, looking into any matters raised, gathering information if required, then reporting the results of its deliberations to the Kirk Session, making any recommendations it considers necessary. Where appropriate, the Panel will inform the original contributor of the outcome.

All those with something to say are encouraged to use the system and can be assured that, if contact details are given, they will remain confidential to the Response Panel and will not be disclosed unless such a wish is specifically expressed.

The Ideas and Suggestion Box has now been in existence for some six months or so, and is situated at the right-hand side of the Cathedral main door and is available whenever the church is open. There are paper slips beside it on which to write your comments. The box is kept locked but is checked every Sunday. It is intended that another box will be available in the St Magnus Centre in the near future.

HAS YOUR EXPERIENCE OF ST MAGNUS CATHEDRAL GIVEN YOU:

A good idea for improvement?

A concern that you feel needs addressing?

A wish to compliment or thank?

**THE IDEAS AND SUGGESTION BOX IS MEANT FOR YOU!
USE IT!**

FLOWER FESTIVAL AUGUST 4TH- 8TH 2010



Flower arrangement from the 2009 Festival, representing the founding of the St Magnus Festival

KIRKWALL FLOWER ARRANGEMENT CLUB: will present our annual flower festival in St Magnus Cathedral from Wednesday 4th August to Sunday 8th August inclusive.



This year we have chosen for our theme “Fairy Tales”. We hope to include some old favourites and some more obscure tales, all told with the magical power of flowers.

Jan Moar (President)

Some people are kind, polite, and sweet-spirited until you try to sit in their pews.



We offer this Building

By Pat Bennett

We acknowledge permission to use this poem from “Fire and Bread” (2006) edited by Ruth Burgess and published by Wild Goose Publications.

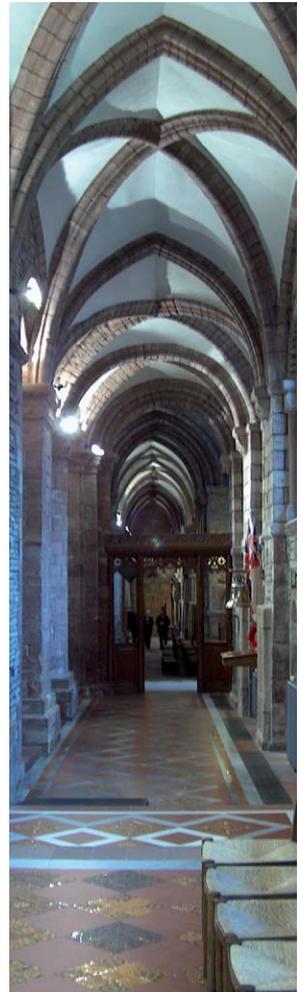
Lord of majesty – we offer this building:
Consecrate it to be a place of worship
Where your name is exalted
Your presence experienced
Your power released.

Lord of encounter – we offer this building:
Consecrate it to be a place of prayer
Where your face is sought
Your touch felt
Your will revealed.

Lord of the gospel – we offer this building:
Consecrate it to be a place of revelation
Where the good news is proclaimed
Your word preached
Your love shown.

Lord of the Cross – we offer this building:
Consecrate it to be a place of reconciliation
Where the Body of Christ is restored
Barriers are broken down
Prodigals return.

Lord of compassion – we offer this building:
Consecrate it to be a place of acceptance
Where all are welcomed and valued
The rejected find a home
Love is poured out.





Lord of the broken – we offer this building:
Consecrate it to be a place of healing
Where those who mourn are comforted
Wounds are tended
Lives made whole.

Lord of the oppressed – we offer this building:
Consecrate it to be a place of liberation
Where the yoke of the past is broken
Chains are struck off
People set free.

Lord of the weak - we offer this building:
Consecrate it to be a place of empowering
Where hearts and minds are strengthened
Courage and faith rekindled
The gifts of your spirit bestowed.

Lord of the Redeemed – we offer this building:
Consecrate it to be a place of celebration
Where bread and wine are freely shared
Joy and praise overflow
Abundant life is realised.

Lord of life – we offer this building
And with it our community of faith:
Consecrate them to be a place
Where the desert blossoms
And your kingdom comes!

