

CHRISTMAS 2020

The Grapevine



*The Newsletter of St Magnus Cathedral Congregation
Scottish Charity SC005322*

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A decorative border of green Christmas trees surrounds the text in this section.

Kirkwall Council of Churches are having Advent services each week here.

<https://www.facebook.com/KirkwallCouncilOfChurches>

There will be a Christmas Radio church on the 23rd December at 1800 on BBC Radio Orkney

From the Manse

At this time of writing, I am not going to idly speculate as to what Christmas is going to look like for us all this year. Suffice to say it will be different from what we have known... and not just because there is no Ba'! Nevertheless, as with any other birthday, Christmas is still the day we celebrate the birth of Christ. Nothing can change that. There is still plenty that we can do that ensures that this tradition continues. It might well be that we actually have a little more time to spend pondering the nativity story, looking a little deeper into the characters in the story, and understanding what the original writers were trying to get across in their message. All of which is easy to lose amidst the frenzy of turkey and tinsel, and baubles and blowouts. As many of those aspects of Christmas are curtailed, maybe a chill-out season may come to the fore and a reflective Yuletide be more appealing.



However we are going to spend our Christmas this year, may I wish you a peaceful one.

Fraser

Introducing

The new Chair of the Society of Friends of St Magnus Cathedral, Elaine Grieve



As you can imagine, my predecessor, Bill Spence, made sure to inform me that one of my tasks as Lord-Lieutenant was to be, ex-officio, the Chair of the Society of the Friends of St Magnus Cathedral. Growing up in Kirkwall, the Cathedral was at the centre of our lives, literally. I remember vividly that Saturdays would almost always include a visit to the Cathedral. My friends and I would wander up the aisles, marvelling at the stained glass and the gravestones whose inscriptions from many years ago we tried to decipher. We would search for the plaque which marked the resting place of the relics of St Magnus and, finally, climb the tower to marvel at the glorious views.

I was looking forward to assuming my duties when lockdown happened. Everything stopped. However, I learned about Zoom and Microsoft Teams and slowly, but steadily, I began to work from home. I am very grateful to Fraser, David Oddie and Bruce Gorie for their time and patient tuition of the newcomer and, thanks to technology, I have chaired my first meeting of the Trustees and

before Christmas we will have concluded the AGM.

And so, onwards we all go. I can only hope, as I'm sure we all do, that next year brings some peace and harmony to our lives that have been so altered by the pandemic. Amidst it all stands the Cathedral, which has weathered many a storm over the years, and I look forward to playing my part in supporting this wonderful building, loved by so many at home and further afield.

This is Christmas

The Rev Dr Margaret Forrester considers the message of Christmas from the perspective of the innkeeper's wife.

THE gospels devote up to a third on the last week of Jesus' life. Mark doesn't mention the birth. John gives a theological statement. From the puzzling narratives of Matthew and Luke we have built a strange fantasy that we call Christmas.

All the gospels imply that the birth narratives are only important if they point to the cross and resurrection.

We have decorated our nativity with cattle and donkeys, holly and ivy, trees and Yule logs, snow and candles, tinsel and glitter. We have imagined so much, let us imagine one thing more: an innkeeper's wife - a weary and grumpy innkeeper's wife.

A MEMORY

I mind that night. My legs may have gone, but not my brain. I can remember all right. It was twelve days before the census. They turned up here without any warning. Joseph was a remote relative, so we had to put him up. I'd heard on the grapevine about the scandal. Forty if he was a day, and fell in love with a young girl. No fool like an old fool. Anyway, the betrothal took place, then she announced she was in the family way... I'm not one to point the finger. Young blood is hot blood when all's said and done. But Joseph ... Joseph!

She ran away to visit a cousin, so the story goes. It's my belief she was thinking to put an end to it, but she came back all serene and they were married. Besotted fool he must have been. He could have had it annulled. Why should he bring up someone else's bairn?

Anyway, it was just days before the census when they turned up here. Every inch of space in the house was taken up, even the front verandah and the back yard. Why should I put myself out? I sent word by the maid Rachel that they could bed down in the lean-to with the animals and count themselves lucky. Then Rachel came back to say that the girl's waters had broken and she was well on. ... that was all I needed. I went out myself to see this trollop that Joseph had married.

We got her as comfortable as we could. I set Joseph to cleaning out the feeding bay and filling it with straw and rags. It would take his mind off things.

She'd been on the go most of the day. Plucky little thing, I'll say that for her. I held her hand and wiped the sweat off her face. We women are sisters, when all's said and done.

Soon after midnight the baby arrived. We wrapped it in the cloths she had been carrying since Nazareth. It was a nice enough wee thing. But for her and Joseph it was like a miracle. The way she looked at it – talk about worship! And the way Joseph looked at her.

I made her comfy and went back into the kitchen. I sent out half a loaf, a cup of cold water and some wine. The town settled for the night. I was ready for my bed.

But that wasn't the end. A gang of filthy shepherds – well, you know what they're like – came off the fields while it was still dark, leaving the beasts (what do we pay them for, I ask?), and said they wanted to see the baby. So they came and they went. I just pulled the blanket over my head and turned over. I wanted a bit of shut-eye before cockcrow.

This woman, her man and the child, they asked to stay on for a bit. He got a job as a joiner and was that handy in the house, mending things and such. And she was a good cook and help. The bairn was no bother. I got used to them. Just as I thought things might work out well for us all, a funny thing happened.

Word came that there was a procession coming from Jerusalem. Everyone trooped out to watch. Seven of them there were, uncircumcised foreigners, Parsees from Persia, Magi – couldn't speak a word of our language. They stopped right outside our door, came off the horses and camels and came in. Their interpreter said they were looking for a prince. That's a laugh. Then the bairn toddled in and they were on their knees!

They unpacked their bags and gave him presents. Then they were off again. I know about the presents, because the next day the whole family up sticks and off down south. Joseph pressed some coins into my hand. "For your trouble," he said. "You've been good to us."

Gold. Gold. No one ever gave me gold before. I've never had a penny in my hand I hadn't worked my fingers bare for. I kept one and gave the rest back. "Keep it for the bairn."

It was lonely after they left, and the neighbours were that nosy. So that was that. And then those Roman demons came looking for blood. I'll remember those screams for the rest of my life. They searched the house and took away my one gold coin. Thirty years ago it was, but I've always had a good memory. Mary was her name. A nice lass. Oh, did I not say? It was a boy they had. Jesus they called him.

Christmas messages from the congregation

GREEEEETINGS!!!

I wish everyone a Good New Year! Jennifer Thomson

Wishing you all Peace, Love, Joy, Health and Happiness.

From Dave and Elspeth Linklater

"Here's hoping everyone has a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year, with love from Chris and Moira Irvine."

"Wishing you all a peaceful and joy-filled Christmas! For those of us who are feeling lonely and missing friends and family, then just a reminder that we are all constantly held and wrapped in God's love. Stay safe until we can all meet again." June Freeth.

"With every good wish that everyone will have a happy, healthy and safe Christmas." Ian and Helen Cunningham



A merry Christmas to all my friends at the Cathedral. Love Isla.

"Blessings to all Guild members for a peaceful Christmas full of joy and hope for the future when we can all meet up once again in fellowship and praise."

Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a happy and safe New Year. From: Sheena and Robert Grieve

The Pop up team would like to send their warm wishes for a Peaceful Christmas and Hopeful New Year, when we can enjoy a cuppa and a chat again.

St Magnus Centre update

Due to COVID19 restrictions, the St Magnus Centre has effectively been closed since March. The Centre Manager came back off furlough in August to prepare the Centre for any bookings that might be allowed under somewhat more relaxed COVID guidelines. This involved rigorous cleaning of all the rooms and all furniture therein. Sanitiser supplies had to be bought in for cleaning contact surfaces and hand gel for all persons entering and leaving the Centre. New posters were also prepared to provide guidance for all users. Before we could open the Centre, we also had to carry out full risk assessments (RAs) for the safety of our staff, in the first instance, and then all members of the public entering the Centre. Finally, these RAs had to be approved by the local Presbytery of the Church of Scotland to allow us to open: this approval was granted on 29th September.

Meanwhile, additional terms and conditions were formulated for hire of the facilities to ensure that all User Groups were committed to the COVID-19 guidelines. All User Groups must complete their own RAs and provide track-and-trace information for all persons attending each event.

Currently, the Centre shop is open for 'stocking fillers' on weekday mornings, Mon – Fri (09:00- 1200), until 18th December. Come the New Year, the Centre will only be open for essential maintenance and any on-going bookings. Hopefully, by April onwards we will be living with lessened COVID-19 restrictions and can again welcome visitors to the Centre and, therefore, seek help from our Volunteers, as and when required.

In May, we are scheduled to have the AGM of the Management Committee and will require new members to re-energise the Committee into the 2020's.

Greetings to all for a Peaceful Christmas and a Healthy New Year!

Shoebox Appeal

Despite lockdown, and all the different restrictions put upon us in the last few months, the dedicated team who for many years have organised, collected and put together the Blythwood shoeboxes have not been daunted with continuing with this year's appeal.

Fortunately, some items had already been gathered in before lockdown, but the group really came up trumps, rallying round and managing to compile no less than an amazing 60 shoeboxes. This has been supplemented by the substantial total of £470, which will be sent forward to help with transport costs. A tremendous effort, given the trying circumstances, which will be of great benefit to those less fortunate than ourselves and who will, in many cases, be more severely affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

This is also going to be the swansong for our Blythwood Shoebox Appeal group, ably led by Freda Burgher, which has, after 25 years of dedicated service, decided to call it a day. The group have been a shining example of Christian action, working quietly and unobtrusively over the years to help alleviate poverty and supported, year on year, by the congregation and all the donations they have made. We thank them for all their efforts and wish them a peaceful retirement.

Malawi News

The borehole which June Freeth has been stoically raising funds for across the county and over a couple of years is amongst those now completed. This is at Kasologodo in Chitsime Parish, and follows the first borehole that June raised funds for two years ago in Thabwa.

Jim Wallace

Next May, the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland will be someone well known in Orkney, and especially to the Kirk Session and the congregation of St Magnus Cathedral. The Rt Hon Lord Wallace of Tankerness QC (Jim Wallace) has been our MP and our MSP, but he is also an Elder and a member of the Cathedral Choir. We would like to congratulate Jim on his recent appointment and to wish him well.

A view from offshore

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to your magazine. Many words spring to mind when one is invited to describe the work of the St Magnus team in the time of pandemic, but two we want to focus on are "inclusion" and "craft".

Inclusion has been the watchword of the minister and congregation from the very outset, and those of us who live furth of Orkney's shores have been made most welcome regardless of our location or denomination. It is an exceptional set of people who fling wide their doors at times of fear, anxiety and change. The opportunity to share in services that touch the heart is very special, especially for those of us who do not have anything similar near us.

Good crafting requires talent, skill, care and attention to detail. It has been a delight to watch the St Magnus team build on their individual abilities and bring them together in such beautiful, seamless, varied and highly professional worship services. We eagerly anticipate each one, and often discuss them with others over the following days (not just the sermon content, but also the beautiful music and carefully chosen scenes and sounds of Orkney).

All of this is supplemented by the informal, meditative and thought-provoking mid-week meetings made possible by "Zoom" (a technology that was new to many of us). These have allowed us to put faces to names and feel part of your community.

We relish and cherish every minute of the St Magnus output. Thank you, not only to the very talented team, but to the whole congregation for including us so warmly.

With our thanks and kindest wishes,
Rowena, Terry, Wendy and Kate

Christian Aid

Raising money for those less fortunate does not cease because of Covid. The Kirkwall Christian Aid group has not been idle after their initial Smarties tube fundraiser was sabotaged by coronavirus. Nothing daunted, they have beavered away and raised the magnificent total of £2,076.14 from the Smarties tubes, soup lunches, Gift Aid and donations. Given the circumstances, this is still a significant sum. Thanks to everyone who donated and helped gather in money, with a special thanks to those who counted their money and bagged it too. Who knows what next year will bring, but well done for this one!



COVID UPDATE

New nativity this year, because the Three Wise Men may face a travel ban, the shepherds have been furloughed, the innkeeper has shut under Tier 3 regulations and had a slump in bookings, and Santa won't be working as he would break the rule of 6 with Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Donner and Blitzen. As for Rudolph, with that Red Nose, he should be isolating and taking a test!

SPICY NUTS!

100g cashew nuts	120g pecan nuts
100g macadamia nuts	60g whole almonds skin on
80g pumpkin seeds	1 tbsp sunflower seeds
2 tbsp nigella seeds	1 tsp fine salt
3 tbsp sunflower oil	2 tbsp honey
2 sprigs rosemary, leaves picked	
*2 tsp coarsely ground black pepper	*2 tsp Cayenne

Recipe from Yotam Ottolenghi

Preheat oven to 170C/325F/gas mark 3.

Scatter all ingredients, bar black pepper and Cayenne, in a roasting tray.

Roast for 15-17 mins until the nuts turn dark brown (This really depends on how cooked you like your nuts! I would say this is a minimum time. I like them darker, so roast for longer.)

Remove from oven, take off tray immediately (they stick to tray otherwise. I put them in a large plastic bowl) and stir in pepper and Cayenne to taste*.

Leave to cool, breaking up from time to time.

Once cold, transfer to jars and **KEEP IN FRIDGE**

2020 - a year in pictures by Anne Flint



Winter: Scapa



Spring: the Willows



Summer: the Big Tree



Autumn: Earl's Palace

Parish Register

Funerals

Below is a list of Cathedral funerals which, in normal circumstances, may or may not have taken place in the Cathedral but which were conducted by the Cathedral clergy.

18 November	Benny Logan	11a Royal Oak Rd, Kirkwall
1 December	Ken Watson	Murrayfield, Old Finstown Rd, Finstown
7 December	Cyril Sutherland	8 Papdale Crescent, Kirkwall

The Gate of the Year

And I said to the man who stood the gate of the year. "Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."

And he replied:

"Go into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be better than light and safer than a known way."

M L Haskins



Celtic blessing

Deep peace of the running wave to you
Deep peace of the flowing air to you
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you
Deep peace of the shining stars to you
Deep peace of the gentle night to you
Moon and stars pour their healing light on you
Deep peace of Christ the light of the world to you
Deep peace of Christ to you