



Contact:

Interim Moderator: Rev Stella McBurnie Tel: 01224 049936 SMcBurnie@churchofscotland.org.uk

Locum Minister: Very Rev Dr Susan Brown. Tel: 01856 873312 Susan.Brown@churchofscotland.org.uk

Pastoral Minister: Rev June Freeth OLM, Tel: 01856 721449 JFreeth@churchofscotland.org.uk

Website: www.stmagnus.org

www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation

Cathedral Services

Sundays 11.15am

Early Morning Communion 9.30 am on the third Sunday of every month in St Rognvald's Chapel

Pre Recorded Online Sunday services, please e-mail Rosemary if you wish to be on the mailing list

rosemarymoon@mac.com

Mid week online meditations every Wednesday at 6pm.

Everyone is welcome to join no matter where you live in the world.

Just e-mail me to receive a link. JFreeth@churchofscotland.org.uk

Christmas Services

Sunday 21st December 6.30pm Nine Lessons and Carols

Wednesday 24th 11.30pm

Christmas Day No service due to The Ba

News from the manse

A return visit to Orkney and it's like coming home! Last year, we were a bit incognito when we first arrived – which I confess, we quite enjoyed after years of goldfish bowl living as 'the ministers'! This year we've re-discovered how good it feels to walk to the shops or have lunch in the garden centre and have people stopping to say hello! It takes me back to a tv series from my student days. It was an American sitcom set in a bar in Boston. The characters frequenting the bar were all a bit larger than life, but you could see in them, the stories and lives of real people coping in their own way, with real life and all its ups and downs. The series was called 'Cheers' and what I remember most about the programme, is its theme tune. It had a song that started with these words:
*Making your way in the world today
Takes everything you've got
Taking a break from all your worries
Sure would help a lot*
But it's the chorus that struck the greatest chord for me:

*Sometimes you want to go
Where everybody knows your name
And they're always glad you came
You want to be where you can see
Our troubles are all the same
You want to be where everybody knows your name.*
I think everyone harbours within them, the desire to be where people know our names. We don't need to be known by absolutely everybody – but even just a few, makes all the difference. And that's because when we're named, we feel known and wanted and as though folk care. When we're named, we feel we have an identity and are noticed. It may even mean we are loved. It means we're understood. We're heading towards Christmas, which for me, is not just about presents and sharing food, (although I do love these things!) it's about realising that every one of us has a name that's been on God's lips since before we were born. And we are very definitely loved. How do I know? Because God sent Jesus to *show* that love. When Jesus came as a tiny, vulnerable baby, he came, he said, for us. For each of us. As well as for every person who ever was and is and ever will be. That means that whether we have a houseful of people to share Christmas with, or we're alone, the message remains the same; God loves us. By name. It means that whether we've no presents to open, or 20, the *impact* is the same; And that is that the God who knows us, longs for us to discover the good news of a fullness to life and to



living. But it's also true that God understands when celebrating is the last thing we want to do. The world Jesus was born into was every bit as real as today's. There was poverty. People suffered loss. Folk took ill – while biased systems and structures, failed those who were struggling most. Just as happens today. People hurt and fought, were abused and treated unfairly - and some endured all of these things at once. And sadly, that too, happens even yet. The names of *these* people especially, are names etched on God's heart. Each one engraved there. Every circumstance is known to God and all the tears, sighs and sorrows, God shares. And those for whom it's easier to celebrate Christmas, have a job to do. And that job is to follow God' example and to notice; the lonely, the weary, the mourning and sad and to reach out the hand of friendship – in God's name. Perhaps we need to re-write the chorus of that song from so long ago, to say:
*Sometimes we need to know
The Creator knows our name
and Jesus - the one who came,
will carry us so we can see
Our troubles are why he came
to help us meet the One who calls us by our name.*
Whatever you're circumstances, let God hold you tight this Christmas.

From Rev Dr Marjory MacLean, on behalf of the Interim Moderator

We remain hugely indebted to the locum ministers who continue to serve Area 4 as the vacancy process continues, including Very Rev Dr Susan Brown who will have served a total of six months by the time her current visit is completed at the end of January. Many other people, including Rev June Freeth and various other ministers and preachers, have helped to keep the worshipping life of the Cathedral vibrant, supported of course by all the musicians and other leaders who also give the place its energy and character.

When a vacancy continues longer than first expected, it puts stress on our ability to trust that God's will is going to be fulfilled in finding the next minister. When that day comes, and it will, we'll all feel that more easily. Advent is, I suppose, a time that teaches us about long waiting but waiting with a joyful hope; we're getting plenty of practice at that, but that is no-one's fault, and we need to practise the trust too.

Rev Dr Marjory A MacLean



Rosemary Moon, Worship Leader

I've been out and about these past months and continue to visit churches in our combined parish which are, like us, without a minister and who welcome an itinerant. On the Feast of Christ the King - which will always really be Stir Up Sunday to me - I was at East Mainland Kirk. The congregation looked somewhat bemused when I got a full mixing bowl and my spurtle out of my bag and started mixing mincemeat. Homemade mincemeat is one of the few essentials of our Christmas feasting at home, and it's worth making right up to the last minute, although a little time to mature is obviously preferable.

This is what I said on Sunday 23rd November, as I started the mixing and then passed it to the choir to finish off. Which they did with aplomb.

Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may of thee be plenteously rewarded; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thirty five years ago yesterday, I was doing my regular cookery slot, Dish of the Day, on BBC1's Daytime Live from Pebble Mill and I made this mincemeat, except I used whisky instead of rum. But as we can see J Gow's distillery from here, I thought it had to be rum this time. However, and possibly of slightly more significance, half an hour later Margaret Thatcher resigned as Prime Minister - presumably because she wanted more time at home to make things like mincemeat for Dennis. I assume she was watching me on TV but should add

that I have absolutely no proof that that is true. And I am making mincemeat today because maybe you have clootie dumpling instead of Christmas Pudding, which is really what Stir-Up Sunday is all about.

Stir Up Sunday - as a cookery writer, that's how I shall always think of today, the last Sunday before Advent. However research reveals that this is behind the times. Gathering around a pudding basin representing the manger, and taking turns to stir the mixture from right to left - the opposite way to porridge - to represent the journey of the Wise Men, the Men from the East, sounds like a great family activity. But even a decade ago two thirds of British children had never experienced stirring the pud as a family as, if they had a pudding at all, it was bought. Having worked on the early development of microwave cookers and the first cookbooks to go with them, I well remember adding grated carrot, black treacle and gravy browning to the mix to try to get an acceptable colour in a Christmas Pudding. There are always ways to make things look better, but the taste was never quite right with no slow caramelisation of the fat and sugars. In the observance of our Christian faith we can always make it look as though we are living a better, kinder and more thoughtful faith life than we actually are. But no quick last minute seasonings or top-show can replace our faith being slow-cooked into our lives, with all the resulting depth of empathy and spirituality that slow maturation brings to our witness.

Rosemary is sharing her lovely mincemeat

recipe

If you have time in the next week or so, do give it a go. I usually keep mine in the fridge.

Makes about 1.5kg

If you only have time to make one special food for your Christmas feasting, make mincemeat! There is a world of difference between this and anything you can buy in the shops. Even made just a week before Christmas the flavour will still be outstanding. If you haven't got nutmeg, cinnamon and cloves use mixed spice, but I prefer the Christmas spice triumvirate.

500g cooking apples

60ml water

1 large orange

250g sultanas

250g currants

100g walnut pieces

100g chopped peel

250g dark muscovado sugar

1 tsp each of ground cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg

200g shredded suet

5 tbsp whisky



Peel, core and slice the apples. Cook them with the water until soft, then beat them to a pulp and leave to cool completely.

Grate the zest from the orange and squeeze the juice. Add to the apple with all the remaining ingredients, adding the suet and whisky last. Stir well, cover and leave overnight.

Stir the mincemeat again and pot into clean warm jars, then cover and label. Mature for several weeks before use, if possible, but a few days will suffice. If you are going to use the mincemeat quickly it can be kept in a plastic storage box in the fridge, but do pack it down well to exclude any air gaps whether you put it into jars for long-term storage or take the quick-use option.

St Magnus Guild

The Guild is now well underway with the 25/26 session.

We have been very fortunate recently to have had three excellent speakers. In September Mark Causer told us about his involvement in the International Island Games both as an organiser and a competitor. The meeting was followed later in the month, when Orkney Guilds Together met for the Autumn Rally and Robbie Fraser spoke about his involvement in the Games from their inception, when he reported on the Games, until his current role as Chair.

In October we had Fran Flett Hollinrake speaking about her new Curatorial role in St Magnus Cathedral. She told us what the role entailed - Engagement/ Outreach, Collection/ Management, Research/ Interpretation and Facilitation. Since taking up the post, she has been very busy, and she revels in the many opportunities to develop and pass on her huge wealth of knowledge about the Cathedral.

Fraser Devine joined us this month to tell us about the Care and Repair service and once again we enjoyed an informative and jolly when he told us about how the service could benefit us.

We have one more meeting before Christmas, on Tuesday the 9th December which will be our Christmas Social.

Meetings in 2026

Tuesday 13th January Marlene Croy will be telling about the Kirkwall Flower Club and St Magnus Cathedral.

Tuesday 10th February Rev. Brenda Dowie will speak about Brenda's journey.

Tuesday 10th March TBC either the Northwest Passage with Maiwenn Beadle or Living Stones with Leslie Burgher.

The meetings are open to all and we would welcome new members or anyone who may wish to join us for the occasional meeting. We meet in St Magnus Centre at 2.00pm.

Some of our members helped to set up the beautiful display for the Harvest Festival Sunday. The collection for the Foodbank raised £355.20.

We continue to fundraise for the Guild Projects (Bibles for Bairns, Let us build a house, Build my church in Bulgaria and Release International Voice of persecuted Christians – Operation Hope Egypt) and are having another soup lunch on Sunday 7th December immediately after the Church service.

Another initiative to support - Living Stones in Livingstonia. This year they celebrate 150 years of the Church of Scotland's link with the Livingstonia Synod in Malawi. A new initiative has been launched to help equip a Maternity unit in Bandawe, one of the first places the 19th Century missionaries helped to found.

A message from Karen Gillon, our National Secretary. "This year will again be time of transition for Guilds Nationwide many of you as more Unions come into place and places we have known for most of our lives cease to be places of worship.

These changes are never easy, but change has been part of the Guild DNA for all of our existence. Remember when the Guild began, women didn't have the right to vote, there was no such thing as radio or TV never mind the internet. Change has been constant in our story."

Collections

The Remembrance Day Service collection was £453.78 and this will be passed on the Kirkwall British Legion as usual.

Outreach - Candle donations, which are collected for local, national and international charities.

This year the following charities will benefit:

Mind On (Supporting mental health in Orkney) £1000

Crossroads Care Orkney £1000

CrossReach £1000

Alzheimer's Research £1000

Disasters Emergency Committee £2000

Heather's favourite carol

I've loved the Christmas Carol "In the Bleak Midwinter" since I was a small girl.

The carol's lyrics are taken from the wonderful poem by Christina Rossetti, alongside the beautiful music of Gustav Holst.

It's such a Christmas classic.

There are two versions of the tune, the one by Holst and the other more famous in choir performances by Harold Darke.

I like the last verse in particular because it ends with a message of hope. It says although you may have nothing to give, you can give the gift of your heart.

“ What can I give Him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd
I would bring a lamb.
If I were a wiseman
I would do my part.
Yet what I can I give Him
Give my heart.”



Seasonal thoughts from Anne

The last time I wrote a piece in the Grapevine the days were long with very little darkness! Now, as I write, the days are much shorter and there is more dark than light! Most of you know that I love to go out and about with my camera, but in these shorter days I need to seize any opportunity I have, whenever the weather and commitments will allow! For many, winter is a problem, but if you take time to stand and stare, as mentioned in the WH Davies' poem, God's beauty is all around us. For me, it's the wonderful colours of the winter skies, the migratory birds, the occasional still day when reflections in the sea, harbours and lochs are a delight. Have you ever been in the Cathedral on a winter's afternoon when the sun lights up the West Window and the colours of the stained glass are projected onto the pillars and walls? There is also a beauty in the night sky when it is clear, and you can get away from streetlights. Many have already seen the Northern Lights this winter, and although I haven't seen them myself, other photographers have produced wonderful images which they have shared for us all to see. It's so important, at this very busy time of year, to pause and take in the beauty of these islands, whether it be a walk on the beach (well wrapped up against the elements!) a wander along the street (without a shopping list!), to take in the brightly lit shops, or



have a time for reflection in our beloved Cathedral. The winter months can be a joy, if you just make time to marvel at God's world around you. I leave you with W. H. Davies' poem, though I know we don't see any squirrels here, perhaps we could substitute them for seals or otters or a short-eared owl!

What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.
No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows.
No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.
No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.
No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance.
No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began.
A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.



June's Christmas Cake Recipe



This isn't a traditional dark Christmas cake recipe but it is one that we love. I've been making it for more than 40 years, all through the year. It was originally called Carnation cake as it is made with evaporated milk. It must be made with caster sugar not granulated and don't be tempted to use brown sugar.

The cake keeps well.

Ingredients

7½ fluid oz TESCO evaporated milk

10oz plain flour

Pinch of salt

1 teaspoon baking powder

1½ pounds mixed dried fruit

3oz halved glace cherries

1oz candied peel

8oz butter

8oz caster sugar

2 eggs

Method

Sift all the dry ingredients together.

Cream butter and sugar. Add eggs.

Fold in fruit and flour alternately with the milk.

Place in greased and lined 8 inch round tin.

Bake for approx. 2 and three quarter hours at 150 C / 300 F.

Some lovely hymn words to share

All Over Creation

All over creation
joy spills into light,
stars, candles ablaze this Christmas night;
where Jesus is sleeping,
peace kisses the earth,
O that we could know who Mary has brought to
birth!

This child will bring freedom,
this child will release
wellsprings of compassion, ways to peace,
this child will bring healing,
this child will inspire
love answering love, and spirit to Spirit's fire.

This child will befriend us,
this child will invite
all children to share his world's delight:
this Christ will confront us
when, children no more,
we plunder our planet, crying from want and war.

Let there be a moment
held, as in one breath,
when all the earth turns away from death,
peace nursing creation,
peace spreading her wing,
O that we could know what Christmas is meant to
bring! *(Shirley Erena Murray)*

*Wishing you all a peaceful
blessed Christmas*

June



Yes, it's snowing



**Many thanks to Anne Flint for providing
the lovely photos for The Grapevine**