



together

Balancing the Books | Who's Who in the Parish | Worship Resources

New Members Class

Are you thinking about becoming a member of the Church of Scotland, or simply curious about what membership means?

A new members' class will be taking place for the Orkney Islands Church of Scotland this July. These sessions are a relaxed and informal opportunity to explore what it means to belong to the church, ask questions, and reflect on your own journey of faith at your own pace. Whether you are new to church life or have been attending for some time, you will be very welcome. There is no pressure—just an open invitation to come, listen, and share. If you would like to find out more or express an interest, please speak to your minister or an elder.

Session Clerk

If you are organised, efficient and good at admin. If you want to help make the united parish work, you might be the person we are seeking to become Session Clerk.

Please get in touch for a chat if you'd like to know more: JMeason@churchofscotland.org.uk

From a Manse

By the time you are reading this, Julia, Alison and I will have been to this year's General Assembly, that annual reminder of the larger Church that protects and nourishes our Orkney Islands parish. The Assembly does lots of serious business, but reminds us too that it's OK to stop for a minute (or a few days!) and celebrate the privilege of belonging to the same Church that cared for those who lived in our corner of the map centuries ago, and the same Church that cares for people in every corner of Scotland.

Even in our controversies, even in our disagreements, we're reminded of that greater belonging. Whether it is the future of the Church's hotel in Israel, the choice of academic provider to train future ministers, or the right attitude to the historic scar on the conscience that is our forebears' part in the slave trade—all hot issues debated this year—we have the honour of joining with thoughtful people from hugely different communities to figure out the right path to take.

And as we do that, we are reminded of the even greater community to which we all belong, that unimaginable multitude of all those who have ever chosen the way of following Jesus Christ, and done it in Orkney, in Scotland, and around the world through the generations.

Marjory

Marjory MacLean, Team Minister,
South Ronaldsay and Burray Kirk, Hoy and Walls Kirk.

Please pray for

- Rev Julia Meason as she takes up her new role as Moderator of the Orkney Islands Kirk Session.
- The Thyolo Presbytery in Malawi, with which Orkney is twinned.
- Peace and social justice in our world - that people may not live in fear and all may have a warm, dry shelter and enough to eat.

Trying to Balance the Books - from the Parish Finance Team

The Finance team, which I have led since the Union on 1 October 2024, has taken on heavy responsibilities in handling the finances of 18 different churches scattered across Orkney. The purpose of the union of course was to relieve the administrative burden on the smaller, struggling churches – and I am confident that we are doing that, although this is still work in progress and will improve with time. We need to express huge thanks to the people (former treasurers of individual churches) who have helped us set up our new systems and continue to supply us with details of bankings of collections and supplier payments and in many cases still make the payments.

To indicate the scale of the task, we have thirty six bank accounts (leaving out those of the Guilds), twenty seven deposits with Investors Trust and eighteen investments with Investors Trust. And we have taken payroll in-house, saving significant professional fees. We have made the task harder by maintaining separate income and expenditure accounts for each congregation – but believe this is essential so each congregation can see their own financial position. Income and expenditure accounts are available to each congregation on request to the Finance Team and consolidated positions are reported periodically to the kirk session. We aim to write up the books for each congregation approximately two months after each month end.

The Finance team submit gift aid claims quarterly for the combined Parish and periodically allocate these to the relevant congregations, net of insurance and travel expenditure paid centrally to Church of Scotland. The team also handle payments for Giving to Grow (our largest item of expenditure), Presbytery dues and wages and salaries for all locally employed personnel (beadles, church officers, cleaners, organists and choir masters) as well as recording all items of income and expenditure in our Liberty accounting system and preparing annual accounts for audit. Due to our size, we have had to have a full statutory audit carried out for both the year ended 31 December 2024 and the year ended 31 December 2025. The latter is still in progress but should be completed in June, in good time for our filing deadline of 30 September 2025. From 2026, we will no longer require an audit, but instead an independent examination, which will be considerably less expensive, as turnover thresholds have changed.

Please feel free to contact any of our team as follows:

Caroline Butterfield, Finance convenor, covering payroll, gift aid claims and other central matters, together with the North Isles, Shapinsay and Stromness

Alison Hawkins, Deputy Finance convenor, covering Consolidated Fabric Fund claims and investment policy, together with the Cathedral, Rousay and Flotta

Ruth Glover, covering North Ronaldsay, Sanday, Hoy and Walls, East Mainland and South Ronaldsay

Colin Gunn, covering Kirkwall East (including King Street Halls)

Steven Sinclair, covering Milestone and Orphir and Stenness

The St Magnus Centre, Guilds and other church organisations such as Mums and Toddlers continue to maintain their own accounting records but provide these periodically to the Finance Team for inclusion in the overall Parish accounts.

We are grateful to everyone who is supporting the union through maintaining their regular giving – this is fundamental to its sustainability. **Caroline Butterfield.**

Who's Who in the Parish - Rev Julia Meason

Julia became the new Moderator of the Orkney Islands Kirk Session on 13th May, combining the role with her ministry to Kirkwall East, Shapinsay and Flotta, as well as her work with Kirkwall Council of Churches. Luckily we found time before she became Moderator to catch up for a chat.

Julia, you are from Poland, a Catholic country. How did you end up here in Orkney as a minister in the Church of Scotland?!

"You are right - it does sound rather unlikely! I was born in 1983 in Lodz in Central Poland. It had been a big industrial centre and, when I was growing up there, it was Poland's third largest city. I'm a city girl - which makes it even stranger that I am now in Orkney, married to a retired farmer! My parents were both brought up Roman Catholics. My Mum, however, rebelled and joined the Presbyterians. She loved the smaller family feel of the church and when she met my dad, she asked him to go along with her, which he did. I was raised Presbyterian and, however odd it sounds, I felt called to ministry at the age of six. However, that calling couldn't happen in Poland, even though our minister was pro ordination of women. I was, however, able to study theology in Warsaw and did the five-year course in four years. The final year was spent in Edinburgh at New College."



How did you cope with all that learning in English, a foreign language?

That first year when I was at New College, I was absolutely exhausted from thinking in English! I made friends with a couple of Germans and we were all good at being quiet together. We also holidayed together and got as far north as John o'Groats. I clearly remember looking across at Orkney and thinking 'Who would want to live there?' Little did I know then! By the way, I'm still Polish and I still count in Polish, but home is definitely Orkney and I read the Bible in English!"

I believe you have connections with the Church of Scotland in Amsterdam - how did that come about?

I had a cousin studying in Amsterdam who is now a minister in the United States, and he found the Church of Scotland in the city and told me about it. I managed to get a summer placement there while still at Uni in Poland, and that went well. The church in Amsterdam funded my training at New College, and I stayed in Amsterdam for two years afterwards. I came to Orkney as a locum before I was ordained, then had to do my probation year in Aberdeen. I also have a Master's degree in Practical Theology from Aberdeen, possibly my most useful degree, which is all about practical ministry skills. I came back to Orkney and was ordained here at the age of thirty. My ordination date was 11.12.13 – easy to remember!"

How did your parents feel about you becoming ordained? And about marrying an Orcadian farmer?

"Well, they had rather hoped that I wouldn't go through with ordination but, of course, I did. My mother made the trip from Poland, which was very special. By then I had fallen in love both with Orkney and with Kenny. I met Kenny on my fourth evening here on a funeral leading course, a change from the modern norm of on-line dating! I was a city girl from a pork-eating country marrying a beef farmer on an island who introduced me to crabs, lobsters and white fish - up until then I had only known mackerel, which was mainly smoked. It was all a huge change."

Looking back over your fifteen years here, what are your big take-aways?

“Well, there have been lots of changes - and there may well be more. There are still more people at church Sunday by Sunday than in my early days going to church in Poland and I am proud of that - I do believe that people really want to be in church, to worship together. Sunday mornings, however, do not work for everyone and so we need to rethink that, as well as leaving the building and going to where people are. At the moment it will be tricky to balance three churches and help cover the four vacancies. Luckily, we have an ordained local minister and worship leaders to help, so I can get to Shapinsay every third Sunday and I try to get to Flotta once a month too. Being involved in each community is very important.

Do you have any time for hobbies?

“Yes - they are so important! I love reading and learning languages - I’m learning Spanish at the moment. I also manage to do five or six fitness classes or activities a week, including the parkrun. I love travelling and holidays always give me a much-needed reboot. Ministry is a great privilege but the need to get away with periods of no responsibility is very high.”

Resources for leading worship

In this time of ministerial change within our Parish, many in Orkney are stepping up to lead worship on a Sunday morning. Ordained Local Ministers, readers, retired ministers, worship leaders and willing lay folk are all contributing their time and support, with some people in training at the moment, for various roles. I don’t doubt that each person has a way of putting a service together and pulling in help with music or reading or prayers, each according to local support. There are great skills, dedication and heart out there doing the work.

Through this article we hope to provide tips, ideas and resources – and potentially eventually to form a library of sorts – to support worship, its leaders and to widen scope. The Lectionary only goes so far, and I have been offered Bible Gateway and Sanctuary First as other sources of inspiration. Thanks go to Rev Andy Braunston for his URC services, with the Church of Scotland website also dedicating space to supporting worship.

Other useful websites include <http://textweek.com/> (with commentaries, sermons, hymn suggestions and children’s addresses for many Scripture passages) and <https://day1.org/> (with sermons from a Protestant perspective in the States).

‘As a worship leader in training, I have been startled by words like exegesis, homiletics and hermeneutics. However, as the process of organising worship and writing sermons is deconstructed over 12 lessons and then put back together in a comprehensible form, it is still nice to turn to people, places and sources that reassure me, expand my ideas and support my thoughts. We all benefit from the energy of multiple minds. Is yours one of them? Do you have your favourite go-to place for ideas? Which Bible commentaries do you use? How do you choose hymns? Where do prayers come from? Would you welcome being part of a mailing list/group of folk willing to share resources and ideas across the parish? If so, please get in touch with me: sallbart@gmail.com.

Let’s support one another and continue the conversation about worship!

Sally Bartkowiak