



together

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St Magnus Way

We are delighted to have a week in the Blue Door charity shop in Kirkwall from 12th - 16th May. This is a great fundraising opportunity for us, but we will need good quality, clean items to stock the shop. Please could you save some things for our week in the Blue Door? We'll have more details nearer the time. Thank you!

Ecumenical Easter Worship in Westray and Papay

We will be joining with our friends from Westray Baptist Kirk for Palm Sunday and Good Friday services with Communion being shared together on Good Friday.

With the sun rising over Pierowall Bay we all join in an early morning Easter Day service in the ruined kirk of St Mary's, aptly surrounded by its ancient graveyard. After breakfast there is a joint Easter morning Kirk service.

In Papay Holy Week and Easter services are in St Ann's, except Communion on Maundy Thursday which is held in the atmospheric St Boniface Kirk.

Holy Week

KIRKWALL 2026

Monday 30 March - Friday 3 April

LUNCHTIME REFLECTIONS IN ST MAGNUS CATHEDRAL

MONDAY, TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY AT 1.10PM
15-20 minutes of reflection as we focus on Jesus' journey to the cross.

GOOD FRIDAY WALK OF WITNESS

St Olaf's (12pm), East Church (12.25pm), Peedie Kirk (12.50pm), Baptist Church (1.15pm), Catholic Church (1.40pm), The Salvation Army (2.05pm), St Magnus Cathedral (2.30pm), followed by Café Church at the Life Church (3.15pm). There will be a short service (10-15 minutes) at each church.

 KIRKWALL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

You are warmly invited to
A Holy Saturday quiet day
On Saturday 4th April, 10.00-12 noon
East Church, King Street, Kirkwall



10 am opening guided meditation

Prayer and meditation stations to be used at will

11.45 am closing service

Contact/further details Rev Julia Meason
JMeason@churchofscotland.org.uk

From a Manse

Since the united Orkney Islands parish came into being in October 2024, we have begun - really just begun - the work of uniting as much as possible. We always knew that a particular 'stress-test' of all we've done would be a time of multiple vacancies within the ministry team. We find ourselves at that point: the ongoing vacancies in Areas 4 (Cathedral, Flotta, Rousay etc), 8 (Stronsay, Eday) and in the small part-time appointment we hope to fill in the West Mainland will soon be joined by ministerial vacancies in Areas 1 and 6 (the West Mainland ministries). That would see us running at exactly 50% of our current entitlement of stipendiary ministry. That's a tough gig for everyone.

But I have three reasons to remain full of hope and confidence:

- 1 that what God asks of us in ministry comes with strength to manage it somehow,
- 2 that we are Presbyterians who believe in the priesthood of all believers; that means the 'team' is far, far bigger than just Iain, Julia, Alison and me, and includes June, our Readers and worship leaders, our elders and members, and those who support us in so many ways,
- 3 that, if they don't mind me saying so, my three colleagues are wise and experienced and none of us will be easily fazed by any of this, but will get on with it with lots of help from everyone else.

So please do ask that question, 'How can I help you?'. And please accept the challenge if the answer is not what you expected.

Marjory

Rev Dr Marjory A MacLean

Minister for South Ronaldsay and Burray Kirk, and Hoy and Walls Kirk.

God Welcomes All

An Orkney launch event with held in Firth Church last autumn for a supplement to the CH4 hymnary of 226 modern hymns and songs. We have been using this book in Kirkwall East since it was published. We now all sing one of the settings of the blessing as part of the sending each week. Having walked with this book for a while I thought I might share some thoughts about it.

God Welcomes All has songs from Fischy Music, the Gettys and Townend, alongside authors and composers from across the world, and Scotland too. There is a mix of new words set to well known hymn tunes, to brand new hymns written in traditional meters, to newly composed melodies and words in different styles. There is something for everyone, including hymns about the lesser known women in the Bible and the environment.

There are some problems with copywriting. The compilers did not have permission for a number of the songs when the book was published. Not all the songs are covered by one licensing group (eg. the CCLI). This has issues with putting words on PowerPoints or streaming services.

God Welcomes All is not the greatest thing since sliced bread, or the answer to all our worship needs. It is, however, worth a look: the variety of traditional and new styles, and the 'modern' themes might have something for you.

Dr Alan Massey
Leader of Praise

Who's Who in the Parish - Sheila Garson

Sheila Garson is on the Orkney Parish Session Clerk team. She is the Assistant Session Clerk and Clerk to the Fabric Committee. Busy, creative and fascinating, meet Sheila!

Let's start off with a bit about you and your life here in Orkney.

"I was born and brought up in Shapinsay, and have lived here all my life. I am a twin, although we were not identical. My twin sister Jan died last autumn. Twins cannot now be born in Orkney, so it is special that we were born here in Shapinsay. Jan was a graphic designer and lived in London for most of her life, working for companies like Red Lion Press and Haymarket Publishing as well as freelance. My life here was very different, but Jan and I often found we'd read the same books or bought the same CD's. My creativity isn't artistic like Jan's but I love photography, writing, craft work and Fair Isle knitting."



Sheila, you married Kenny, a Shapinsay farmer. Have you known him all your life?

"Well, yes but he is older than me! There seemed to be a bit of a rash of Kenny's on Shapinsay, including Julia Meason's husband Kenny. Of course everyone knew when we were dating! We bought the 260 acre farm of Waltness in 1981, 3 weeks before our son Scott was born. We gradually built the stock up to 50 breeding beef cows and 100 ewes, but we sold the farm in 2011."

What was your work, your career?

"I worked in the bank at first but had to stop when I married and moved back to Shapinsay. There was a civil engineer based on Shapinsay then and so I did book-keeping for him, and once Scott started school I worked as a school auxiliary and later trained as a nursery nurse. Life changed when I started doing a course in Orcadian Studies which led on to a degree in the Cultural Studies of the Highlands and Islands. By this time I was working as the Cultural Co-ordinator of Heritage and cheekily applied for the curator's job at the Orkney Museums on the strength of my grades to date and I got the job! I was one of the museum curators until I retired, looking after the collections at the Orkney Museum as well as Kirbuster, Corrigan and Scapa Flow Museums. I loved it!"

You are Orkney through and through! How important is Orkney Voices?

The group started just as I retired in 2017 and was a funded project for hard to reach groups, led by Alison Miller. There's lots of writing groups in Orkney, but not one concentrating on Orcadian dialect. You have to be an Orcadian speaker to join Orkney Voices, and it is great encouragement to write. We have published a book and put on foys as well as performed in the Folk Festival. Orcadian is easier to speak than write and I don't think it really matters so much how you write it as pronounce it. It's lovely to hear - Harvey Johnstone is of course well kent for speaking in Orcadian. Maybe we should have a parish act of worship in Orcadian? We have to value it to keep it living. I'm half Shetland and their language is officially recognised – maybe ours should be too."

Sheila, do all these strands of your life help with your work for the Kirk Session?

"I think the Assistant Session Clerk's job needs a living Wikipedia of info about times past throughout the parish - lots of things to find out and little admin jobs. There are always people to ask about things: for example, copyright laws for playing music etc which we

might have thought would be centrally administered in the parish, turns out to be about each building - everyday is still a school day. The Fabric Committee is a huge job because of the size of the portfolio - we have so many buildings, kirks and manses. Not all are modern or, in all honesty, suitable for the worshipping needs of today. However, church buildings host so much of community life and so changes to them are often unpalatable to local people. What we can do locally is limited and much is referred on to Presbytery for approval. When we do need work done to buildings we have to get two or three quotes, and everyone knows that is difficult here. That sometimes ends up as one quote and one statement of disinterest! We are, practically, quite hampered by our buildings, especially if they are listed. Everything conspires to make repairs so expensive and the Church of Scotland has to live within its means. We maybe need to rethink where we worship, to be a church for now and the needs of our community. The church is not at all narrow minded but people think it is and we need to change that perception to move on."

What's next for you Sheila?

"Well, I'd like to really retire! I'd like more time for pottering in the garden, photography, writing and Orkney Voices..."

A Tale of Three Churches

Sheila Garson gave us a peedie insight into the work of the Fabric Committee. Here's a quick look at three Orkney churches with very different stories to tell.



Stromness church, cited on the west (high) side of Graham Place, has served the town well over many years but, with its steep steps and no level access, is no longer the right building in the right place for an active, inclusive church, as laid down by the general Trustees of the Church of Scotland. The building is therefore up for sale and a new place for the living church, the worshipping community, is being sought. Such necessary change is distressing and that is recognised, but the change is necessary.

The Moncur Memorial Church in Stronsay was 'completed' in 1955, when a legacy left by Alexander Moncur to build the church in memory of his grandparents, ran out. The original plans were for something even grander. The costs of maintaining and heating the building are prohibitive for the congregation, who meet in the attached hall on most Sundays.

The three former churches on Hoy and Walls are all now community spaces. When Walls Manse was sold it released sufficient funds to build a modern bungalow in part of the grounds of the kirk in Longhope. This warm, fully-equipped modern house church is offered for clergy holidays, with Sunday preaching being part of the deal. The sitting room (with font and altar table) quickly converts into a worship space on Sunday mornings.