



together

From a Manse | Who's Who? Rev Alison Dickie | News from the Parish

Easter Quiet Day

There will be a Quiet Day on Holy Saturday, 4th April, at the East Kirk in Kirkwall. Please save the date - more details in our next edition.

Can you read this?

We have changed our font and type size in the hope that **Together** will be clearer for everyone to read. We hope that it has helped.

Please send any news for the April edition to rosemarymoon@mac.com by 15th March.

Please pray for

- The church congregation in Stromness.
- The St Magnus Cathedral nominating committee.
- The family of Jim Wallace, and all who are bereaved.
- Rev Moira Taylor-Wintersgill.
- All involved with the Parish work to support projects in Malawi.

What Is the Presbytery?

The Presbytery is a regional group of Church of Scotland congregations working to support and encourage each other. Ministers and elders from each church meet to make decisions, offer guidance, and help congregations thrive.

Our parish is part of the Presbytery of the North East and Northern Isles, which includes Shetland, Orkney, Aberdeen, Moray, Kincardine and Deeside, Gordon, and Buchan.

What Does the Presbytery Do?

Here's a summary of the latest meeting, online 3 February:

- Celebrating local contributions: The Presbytery noted with appreciation the publication of Rev Dr Marjory MacLean's new book, *Church of Scotland Governance: The Underlying Principles*. It is a clear guide to how the Church is organised.
- Supporting new elders and ministers: To help people who are new to Presbytery life, 200 copies of the book have been purchased. Free copies will be given to newly commissioned elders, ministers in their first five years, and every congregation, so that new office-bearers have a helpful resource as they begin their roles.
- Caring for ministers: Part of the Presbytery's role is approving study leave, including my own in March, for Scotland's Mental Health First Aid course in Aberdeen.
- Encouraging shared learning: Presbytery committees also plan events and gatherings. Upcoming examples include sessions on Artificial Intelligence in June and October 2026, as well as Regional Gatherings where nearby congregations meet to share ideas and support one another.

If you'd like to know more about the Presbytery or how it works, please feel free to speak with your minister or one of our Presbytery elders.

Rev Julia Meason



From a Manse

We've arrived at another season of Lent, and hasn't it come round quickly this year?

One of the great possibilities of Lent is to take up the new year resolutions you've already failed to keep and use this as the ideal opportunity to fail at them again. Alternatively, given the depressing character to much of our news just now, both nationally and internationally, compounded by a prolonged spell of grim weather, you might just feel that Lent's a fine occasion to give up ... full stop!

Traditionally, of course, many folk use Lent as a time to give something up for a few weeks. There's nothing wrong with that. Lenten sacrifice can be a unique, meaningful and liberating way to help prepare the heart and mind for the tumultuous events of Holy Week and Easter. But self-sacrifice, without the right challenging and channeling, always runs the risk of becoming a wee exercise in self-gratification or smugness.

Give it a practical and meaningful focus to lessen the danger of tokenism.

For example:

- If you're giving up tea or coffee, why not resolve to only buy fairly traded beverages afterwards?
- If you're giving up gaming or TV watching, why not use some of that spare time you've gained for extra prayer or Bible study?
- If you're giving up chocolate, why not read about some of the trade injustice and international price fixing which is reducing many cocoa farmers to abject poverty?
- If you're giving up gossip why not commit yourself to being less judgmental and more generous in how you think of others?
- If you're giving up that nice bottle of Malbec you enjoy on a Friday night, why not donate an equivalent price to our own Malawi Partnership or wherever else your priorities lie?

In other words, if you're giving up something that's negative take on the opposite or at least the nearest practical positive alternative. Lent isn't really about giving something up. It's about making the right choices, which in turns means stewardship. Embrace it.

Rev Iain MacDonald Minister for Westray and Papa Westray.

Lent Lunches

St Margaret's Church in the Hope will be holding its very popular Lent lunches again this year, on the five Tuesdays beginning 24 February, between 12 noon and 2 pm.

This is a simple soup lunch, but with a heavenly choice each week; and there's always a buzz of conversation as the church hall (and sometimes part of the sanctuary too on really busy days!) becomes a welcoming meeting-place for our community, as winter begins to give way to Spring and the light lengthens (the meaning of 'Lent').

Everyone is welcome from across Orkney; what could be better than a walk at the Fourth Barrier, or along Eastside beach, followed by a warming bowl of lentil soup or Cullen Skink? Donations are welcome for the Orkney Food Bank and the church.

Who's Who in the Parish - Rev Alison Dickie

Alison is the newest member of the Orkney Team Ministry with responsibility for East Mainland, with Sanday and North Ronaldsay, Area 2. After just six weeks we asked her how it's all going?



Alison, you're new here and yet you are not! Tell us about that.

"That's right. I was previously minister of Orphir and Stenness, Hoy, Walls and Flotta. I moved away south to the Borders, but came back for holidays as the children and I had plenty of friends here and we loved it. When south I seemed to have an Orkney Moment almost every day - seeing a lorry from up here, hearing a tune, seeing a name. It was almost as if Orkney was haunting me and drawing me back. So I do feel like I've come home and, with lots of friends still here, it has been easy and natural picking up with them again."

Have you had other jobs or always been a minister?

"My father was a plumber and my mother a nurse, there was farming on both sides of the family and I have always been a country girl and yet I felt called to the ministry from the beginning and all it entails, including wherever it would take me. I studied for my MA in Glasgow

and then spent 18 months in Pakistan with the Church of Scotland Youth Share, doing voluntary work with a missionary. This included giving extra English tuition to girls studying for MA's and BA's in a hostel, and helping in an American Mission hospital. That was varied: sometimes secretarial work, and sometimes working in the female surgical ward, for which I was completely untrained! Then I returned to Glasgow University and studied for my Bachelor of Divinity."

You say you are a country girl - have you always had rural parishes?

"Gosh no. My first position was as a community minister in a housing scheme in Motherwell and I was there for over four years. Then I moved to another housing scheme in Kilmarnock as their parish minister. I have had incredibly remote rural parishes too. I was locum minister for over three years in the West Highlands in Kinlochleven and Onich, and I must have liked that as I then moved just a little way south west and was minister at Ballachulish with Glencoe for nine years. That was a huge parish, including Loch Etive in the south."

How did you reach everyone in such a huge area?

"I just went to where the locals go, and that's exactly what I shall do here too, so that I meet as many people as possible, people who come to church and people who don't. I have always gone to pubs and cafés, to enjoy a glass of red wine or a coffee and chat. As a minister you are there for everybody, of all faiths or none. Getting to spend time with people in Sanday and North Ronaldsay will be a similar challenge from East Mainland."

Tell us about your family - do you have children?

"I do, I have four children. Two boys, Angus and Duncan, and two girls, Niamh and Aoife. Aoife has learning difficulties and is happily settled in Stranraer and is becoming a very keen cook, which is great. We keep sharing recipe ideas and she sends me photos of what she has made. I love food but, to be honest, I'm a keener eater than cook! Niamh and Duncan both work for the Co-op and Duncan came with us and is working at the store in Kirkwall. Angus works in aquaculture and is based in Kinlochleven. I had hoped to have had my children by the age of thirty but, sadly, that didn't happen and I had several miscarriages. I didn't actually get started

successfully until I was thirty three! My mother lives in Paisley near my sister. She has been really supportive of my moving back to Orkney as she knows that it is my happy place. My husband Iain is a specialist cancer nurse and works in the MacMillan Unit at the Balfour Hospital. We also have two dogs, an eleven year old black Labrador and two year old, three legged Spanish rescue dog.”

Alison, the hope is that we will all feel very much part of the one Orkney Parish. You are used to huge parishes - have you got some tips for us on making that happen?

“Well, communication is really important, which is why each local worshipping group contributing to Together would be good. By the time this is published I will have visited Sanday and am planning an overnight stay so I can meet people at the lunch club, just as I am heading to the Brew & Blether in Deerness to meet people there. Ministers have to be seen, out and about. And I must say that ministers in rural parishes can feel out on a limb too, lonely and out of touch. It’s good to get church buildings used by all sorts of folks. In Castle Douglas we allowed the Sanctuary in the church to be used by Scotblood for blood donor sessions - I was really pleased that happened and I know Cross Kirk in Sanday is a real community centre.”

Is there anything that is really exciting you just now?

“As well as being back in Orkney?! Well, yes there is. Back in 2013 I was due to take Communion out to North Ronaldsay but couldn’t do it at the last moment. The man who asked me then is still on the island and I am determined to get out there as soon as possible to honour that commitment I made, but couldn’t keep, a decade and more ago.”

Finally Alison, you have a very smart tartan clerical collar dress that you wear - tell us about that.

“Well, that’s my clan tartan, the Hannay tartan, and we are one of the oldest clans in Scotland. I’m Chaplain to the Clan. I actually don’t wear my collar very often, and certainly not when I am out meeting people as I find it can be a barrier to starting a conversation. And starting a conversation is what it is all about.”

Safeguarding in Orkney Parish

The Parish is now split into four areas for Safeguarding with the following Co-ordinators:

Jim Lawson – West Mainland: Stromness, Firth, Orphir & Stenness, Birsay, Harray & Sandwick.
E: Jim.Lawson2936@btinternet.com

Myra Stockton – North Isles: Westray, Papa W, Stronsay & Eday, Sanday & N. Ronaldsay.
E: myra.stockton@btinternet.com

Michael Wall – South & East: East Mainland, South Ronaldsay & Burray, Hoy & Walls, Flotta.
E: michaelwall.sgc@gmail.com

Marion Watt – Kirkwall: Kirkwall, Shapinsay, Rousay, Egilsay, Wyre.
E: safeguarding@kirkwalleastchurch.org

We have brought the old registers up to date - one small island had over a hundred names registered! We have encouraged those working with children, vulnerable adults or both to have the correct level of disclosure and advised those who need Safeguarding training to do so. This has nearly been achieved. Myra Stockton, on behalf of the safeguarding team.