

17th April 2020

Launched

**“Oak was round his breast, and triple bronze,
who first launched his frail boat on the rough sea.”**

Horace, Odes Book 1

Having reflected yesterday on the beauty of my local harbour, I turn today to a boat familiar to our fishing village. *Boatie Blest* is a Fair Isle Skiff built and crewed by local people. With its sister craft, *Boatie Rows*, she takes part in regattas and competitions throughout Scotland as part of the Scottish Coastal Rowing Project, encouraging the sharing of traditional skills, focussing on healthy exercise, making use of the wonderful coastline we live beside and bringing communities together.

Taking photographs at a recent Port Seton Regatta, I was struck by how many parallels there were between *Boatie Blest* and the purposes and ethos of our local church, Chalmers Memorial. The little boat was being launched on a beautifully calm day. But what if the seas outside the safety of the harbour walls had been rough? How would the crew cope then? Would the Cox be able to steer them safely? Would the rowers be strong enough to fight the tide and the winds?

Not surprisingly, I was drawn to the account in Mark's Gospel of Jesus stilling the storm to find metaphors of the blessedness we look for in the little boat that is our own church. We, too, wait by the shoreline; launch our boat; trust the people who've build her; take our place at our oar or rudder; recognise the fearfulness that our boat is so small compared to the size of the ocean; believe in our own strength, and the peace that comes from outwith ourselves. The metaphors are all there.

Boatie Blest does its job. We trust this little craft, its purpose and people. Our boat will sail well. We'll make sure it rides out the storm, and we'll do it with more blessings and peace than we shall ever know.

A prayer for today

Dear Lord, be good to me today.

The sea is so wide and my boat is so small. Amen.

An Irish Fisherman's Prayer

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

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