

## **St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall**

[www.stmagnus.org](http://www.stmagnus.org)

Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

[www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation](https://www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation)



Minister: Rev Fraser Macnaughton

Tel: 873312

[FMacnaughton@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:FMacnaughton@churchofscotland.org.uk)

Pastoral Minister: Rev. June Freeth

Tel: 721449

[JFreeth@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:JFreeth@churchofscotland.org.uk)

---

Welcome to St Magnus Cathedral this morning. It was founded in 1137 by St Rognvald, in honour of Magnus, his uncle. The Cathedral belongs to the people of Orkney and its doors are open to all. If you are a visitor, we hope this order of service will help you feel part of our worship together.

---

**SUNDAY 19<sup>th</sup> July**

You can find our Sunday worship here.

<https://www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation/>

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/l6bQULbR0To>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

[stmagnuszoom@gmail.com](mailto:stmagnuszoom@gmail.com)

### Candle meditation

There are places where the clay under your feet  
feels more holy than heavy -  
a light touch  
where you recognise not all is earthly bound.  
There are places where grace rises to the surface  
and lightens the weight of earth -  
where you can see further than before  
and your spirit finds its home in wonder.  
Places where water flows  
and its sound is a doorway into possibility -  
where people gather  
and expectation changes the curve of the universe -  
where words hold dreams  
and heaven dances with the earth  
and promises are exchanged  
on the stairways of heaven.  
There are places like that -  
where love runs generously  
and makes all things possible -  
holy ground -  
sacred space -  
God

Reading read by Rosie Wallace

Matthew 7; 15-27

"Be on your guard against false prophets who come to you disguised as sheep, but underneath are ravenous wolves. You will be able to tell them by their fruit. Can people pick grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? In the same way, a sound tree produces good fruit and a rotten tree produces bad fruit. A sound tree cannot produce rotten fruit, and a rotten tree cannot produce good fruit. Any tree that does not produce good fruit is cut down and thrown in the fire. I repeat, you'll be able to tell them by their fruit. "It isn't those who cry out, 'My Saviour! My Saviour!' who will enter the kingdom of heaven; rather, it is those who do the will of Abba God in heaven. "Anyone who hears my words and puts them into practice is like the sage who built a house on rock. When the rainy season set in, the torrents came and the winds blew and buffeted the house. It didn't collapse because it had been set solidly on rock. Anyone who hears my words but does not put them into practice is like the fool who built a house on sandy ground. The rains fell; the torrents came; the winds blew and lashed against the house. And it collapsed and was completely ruined."

Even as we seek understanding, our minds  
too often shelter us from the realities we might uncover.  
May we have the courage to hear and hold truths found  
within these words

## Reflection

Matthew 7.16-17 reads ... Can people pick grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? In the same way, a sound tree produces good fruit and a rotten tree produces bad fruit.

There is a natural tendency for all living things to take the path of least resistance. Why spend the effort if there is an easier way? Human beings sometimes prefer the hard way - but generally it's easy live and quiet die.

Christians are no exception. From early times many have looked for an easy way to heaven. And so the Church has devised passports to get them there. Though it may prove uncomfortable, take a look at what the Church demands of its members before they can get the required documents.

First, they must be "born again" - by which is meant a mental and emotional about-turn towards Jesus of Nazareth. But an official baptism ceremony will do the trick just as well.

Second, they must "go to church" to worship God. For the majority of Christians, mandatory worship consists primarily of attendance at the Communion, at which in the church of Scotland in many places you are still clocked in and out and your card marked. And then prayer and Bible reading are highly desirable optional extras.

Third, their morals must conform to certain standards. If they are divorced, or heretical, or sexually deviant, their passports may be withdrawn until their behaviour once again conforms.

There have been times in the Church's history when other passports have been on offer. For many centuries a man or woman who chose the religious life of a monk or nun was thought to have a *carte blanche* for heaven. Only a few hundred or so years ago, a passport to heaven could be bought in the form of indulgences. Even today, some churches teach that confession to a priest will revalidate a passport to get a person through the control point to heaven.

But there is a problem. Nothing in the known words or actions of Jesus backs up this sort of teaching. Just the opposite is the case. The issuing of passports is up to God, not us.

Indeed, Jesus warns against those who tout passports to heaven: "Be on your guard against false prophets who come to you disguised as sheep, but underneath are ravenous wolves." From where, of course, we get the expression 'a wolf in sheep's clothing'.

A passport to heaven may look genuine - but what about the person offering it? Is a crook likely to give you a valid passport? Just as a tree or plant can yield only its own kind of fruit, says Jesus, so also with people. A thistle does not yield grapes.

In today's language, Jesus is pointing out that a prerequisite for trustworthiness is congruence between words and behaviour. If what we say doesn't match what we do, then what we say is of little or no account. We must first evaluate those who ask for our trust. Question before you take up a quick-fix, easy-come-easy-go passport to heaven.

Check that the minister who preaches the love of others treats people with great respect. Does the dedicated proliferator kill doctors who give abortions? Does the bishop who upholds God's forgiveness also persecute a fellow-priest for heresy? Is the Church's baptism a token of change or a barrier to fellowship? Do worshipping Christians live out the prayers they pray?

The author of Matthew's Gospel sums it up. Perhaps echoing a sermon he once heard, he writes what he imagines Jesus might have said: "It isn't those who cry out, 'My Saviour! My Saviour!' who will enter the kingdom of heaven;"

#### prayer

Deafened as we are by different noises and voices, surrounded by different trends and fashions, tempted by different modes or expressions, seduced by easy promises, we become cautious when we pray for the world.

A prayer for those who are feeling more tired than usual..

May they remember that their body is completely confused, with their limbs often less active during waking hours

and their brain working overtime, with all parts anxiously keeping a score of fears, disappointments, stress, even when unconscious. May they be gentle with themselves, and with one another, as right now, we're also all parts of one big confused tired collective body.

For those who refuse to wear a mask...  
May they be engulfed in wisdom and empathy, surprising themselves with how freeing it feels to connect their own life to the lives of those around them. May they admit to themselves that a little individual discomfort, a little extra individual effort is really nothing compared to the enormity of both continued danger and potential safety for all.

For those who are graduating remotely...  
May they feel the same rush they would were they traveling triumphantly across a stage, diploma in hand, an effervescent mix of accomplishment, fear, and dreamy vision beating loudly in their heart, and may they be honest about the fact that the absence of pomp and tradition is a true downer. But may they still know that they have achieved something remarkable today, that they have overcome remarkable obstacles to get here, and that, even via the virtual, we all await, in vibrantly real life, the remarkable ways that their vision will change a world sorely in need of them.

May we be a help, not a hindrance, to our neighbours and enemies alike.. May our quiet faith steady the wavering, our sturdy hope encourage the faint-hearted, and our sincere compassion soften those who appear heartless. Through Jesus Christ

### **Blessing**

May you find moments of laughter and bliss  
In the midst of suffering and distress  
May you cherish those times and may they sustain you

May you stay safe in the Way of Christ, and may you be  
blessed by his Spirit this day and always.