

## **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)



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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.

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### SUNDAY 5<sup>th</sup> July

You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/oYEK9JNGrIA>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

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

Candle meditation

The Spirit of God sings a song of silence  
to our noisy hearts,  
inviting us to still  
our fidgeting souls,  
and find our peace  
in cupped hands  
which cradle us.

Jesus Christ,  
Wanderer of the kingdom:  
was called  
to reveal God to us  
and did so in  
the tenderness of his touch,  
the gentleness of his words,  
the goodness of his heart,  
the experience of his shared humanity.

The childlike presence of the Spirit of Rest:  
opens our eyes  
to the wonders of the world.  
As we open ourselves,  
our anger, our hurt, our awareness  
may our burdens  
become our songs of joy.

Reading from Luke 17; Mark Causer

Jesus said to the disciples 'stumbling blocks will inevitably arise, but woe to those through whom stumbling blocks come! Those people would be better off thrown into the sea with millstones around their necks, than to make one of these little ones stumble. "Be on your guard. If your sisters or brothers do wrong, correct them; if they repent, forgive them. If they sin against you seven times a day, and seven times a day turn back to you saying, 'I'm sorry,' forgive them."

The Pharisees asked Jesus when the reign of God would come. Jesus replied, "The reign of God doesn't come in a visible way. You can't say, 'See, here it is!' or 'There it is!' No-look: the reign of God is already in your midst." Jesus said to the disciples, "The time will come when you'll long to see one of the days of the Promised One, but you won't see it. People will say, 'You can find the Promised One over here,' or 'Look over there!' But don't leave, and don't follow them. No, it will be like the lightning that flashes from one end of the sky to the other, on the day of the Promised One.

For the Word that was in the beginning,  
for the Word that invites and inspires,  
for the Word embodied in us:  
We give thanks.

### Reflection

In the 1960s Ralph Morton wrote a book called "God's frozen people" I vividly remember it on my Dad's bookshelf. The title explains the situation of the church which has become minister centred. Most church traditions share the idea of 1st class Christians, the clergy, and 2nd class Christians the laity obscuring the fact that clergy and laity alike are the people of God. 'The minister has become the prima Donna' as Leslie Newbigin puts it. Their relationship to the members is like that of the relationship of a manager to the workers in some inefficient industrial concern. Inefficiency is self-defeating in the minister centre church because there is a strict limit to the personal supervision which anyone person can exercise. This also conditions the activities of the church to the personal interest of the minister. The proper role of the minister should correspond to the leader of an orchestra rather than to the prima Donna.

Contrast that with author Ann Lamott, who also describes her Presbyterian denomination as "the frozen people." She offers some wonderfully human perspectives on faith and religion. She recounts the time her son, Sam, said to her, "I think the reason they call God 'God' is because when you see something really, really beautiful, you go, 'God, that's beautiful!'" As Ann said, "OK, that works for me."

Consider the possibility that every time you see a sunset, every time you smell a fresh baked scone, every time you feel the touch of loving acceptance when you didn't think you were worthy, and your only response is "wow", then you have just named God. This is the God who is beyond religious pontification, beyond creeds and beyond names. Just WOW!

This experience of "wow" is completely personal and subjective. No one else can give it you, and no one else will have the exact same experience. This is partly where religion goes wrong. "Wow" can't be institutionalized. You can't put "wow" in a neat box of ancient beliefs. You can't prescribe "wow" for another person or for whole groups of people.

As the philosopher and comedian George Carlin once said-  
"Religion is sort of like a support insole in your shoes.  
If it makes you feel better, fine. Just don't ask me to  
wear your shoes."

There is an ancient story from India about the God  
Brahma, who got sick of being alone. So he created the  
goddess, Maya. Just for fun, Brahma and Maya created a  
whole world of illusion; sun, stars, planets, oceans,  
animals. Then they said, "Lets create an animal that is  
so intelligent and aware that it can appreciate this  
wondrous creation." So they created humans.

Then the game began. Maya cut Brahma up into millions of  
little pieces and placed a piece of Brahma in every human  
being. Maya said to the human beings, 'I am going to make  
you forget who you are, then you can try and find  
yourself. You will spend a lifetime searching for your  
true essence."

Every now and again, a little spark of the divine wakes  
up in each of us. It comes at odd moments, sometimes with  
thoughts, but often in more spontaneous moments or  
reflections. As more and more people have more and more  
moments of waking up to their true essence of God the  
world becomes a more peaceful place.

Religion is one place that this awakening happens, but  
it's not the only place. For many people, it doesn't  
happen in religion because religion has over identified  
with its ideas about God and confused the idea with the  
reality.

Imagine a religion where all people were encouraged to  
think and explore ideas for themselves, where all people  
were encouraged to wake up to the spark of divinity  
within, and see the spark of "wow" in others. Imagine a  
religion where treating people right was more important  
than being right. Imagine a religion where compassion was  
more important than creeds and rituals.

We are spiritual beings, seeking an expansive worldview  
that excludes nothing and honours all people and all  
things. When I see the wonder of your spiritual essence,  
my only response is "wow"!

#### Prayer

So often we feel the world is too big for us, the  
degree of human suffering too great for us, the tangle

of cause and effect too complex for us. Prayerfully we call to mind a tiny segment of humanity, that the Spirit's presence may bless them well.

We think of congregations of faith:

May they trust that the most essential spiritual imperative they hold is to nurture health; may they remember that they need not be inside their buildings for them to pray, connect, sing, dance, rejoice, and do basically everything they need to do. While they keep their physical spaces closed so may they continue to keep their spiritual lives open and thriving.

We call to mind those businesses thinking of re-opening. May they be enveloped in safety, and when they know in their heart that their leaders and fellow citizens aren't aiding in that, may they have the strength and means to envelop themselves in safety, finding ways to steer clear of crowds, to model mask-wearing, and to spread wisdom in a country that can't seem to wrap its collective brain around the simple facts that lives are always more important than money and that boredom should never be the basis of any decision.

We think of those who are protesting:

May their cries dig painfully into each of our hearts until we are all dragged out of our own quiet, and may their act of doing something generative with their rage compel us all to do something generative with our rage, while always listening most deeply to those most suffocated by violent, systematized oppression, and showing up in every way possible, through amplification, education, association, and donations.

We affirm the intimate web of which we are part and all that differentiates and unifies us in beauty, commonality and diversity. We celebrate all that unites us in common causes of this interconnected human family as we walk together in Jesus way.

Blessing

May we be connected to our hearts and each other.

May we see the good in ourselves and each other.

May we serve the spirit of goodness in all we meet.

May we restore love upon this earth.

May all be fed. May all be healed. May all be loved.

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

