

## **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 30<sup>th</sup> August

You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

[https://youtu.be/ucpq5b\\_rsdU](https://youtu.be/ucpq5b_rsdU)

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

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

### Candle meditation

We celebrate that where people  
are gathered together in love  
God is present and good things happen and life is full.

We celebrate that we are immersed in mystery that our  
lives are more than they seem  
that we belong to each other  
and to a universe of great creative energies, whose  
source and destiny is God.

We celebrate that the spirit of God beat in the heart of  
Jesus of Nazareth and God's good news was heard by the  
broken and wounded.

We are glad that the spirit of peace  
is present with us, the church,  
as we gather to celebrate our common existence, and the  
fidelity of God.

Reading from John 15 read by Chris Howard

Jesus said 'I am the true vine, Live on in me, as I do in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit of itself apart from the vine, neither can you bear fruit apart from me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who live in me and I in them will bear abundant fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If you live on in me, and my words

live on in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you. My Abba will be glorified if you bear much fruit and thus prove to be my disciples. As my Abba has loved me, so have I loved you. Live on in my love. I tell you all this that my joy may be yours, and your joy may be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you.

This is the Gospel of Christ. May we hear wisdom, for every time we read and listen, the Word is born in us again.

### Reflection

#### Remembering our connections

Two men are having a conversation in a bar. This is what the bartender overhears,  
The first man asks: "Where are you from?" "I'm from Ireland," replies the second man. The first guy responds: "You don't say, I'm from Ireland too!"  
Curious, he then asks: "Where in Ireland are you from?" "Dublin," comes the reply. "I can't believe it," says the first man. "I'm from Dublin too!"  
Getting even more animated, he asks: "What school did you go to?" "Saint Mary's," replies the second man. "I left in '72." "That is unbelievable! What a small world!" the first man says. "I went to Saint Mary's and I left in '72, too!" They both start laughing and slapping each other on the back. About that time, another regular comes in, and sits down at the bar. "What's new?" he asks the bartender. "Nothing much," replies the bartender, "but the O'Malley twins are drunk again!"  
They had forgotten how connected they are.

Unfortunately, there is a tragic edge to the joke. Alcohol is one of the ways we self medicate to dull the pain of our imagined isolation. We have other, more subtle, ways too! We bolster our protective walls against intimacy with sarcasm and aloofness or many other cunning ploys, to ensure that we don't get hurt again. If we do this for long enough, it's no wonder we forget our connections. There is a little piece of the O'Malley twins in each of us.

It doesn't have to be this way. There are too many opportunities for the joy of connection to sleep through life in a cocoon of self imposed isolation. Connections are powerful.

Sometimes we have to search out the people we need at different points in our life. Close friends, who know and

understand us, can challenge us and give honest feedback. They truly care for our well being, as we care for theirs.

However, make time for new friends as well, and acquaintances who can push and expand our perspective. They help us to see life in new ways.

Think about ice cubes as a metaphor for new connections. Why do ice cubes float in water? Science was never my strong suit, so my answer to these sorts of questions usually involves the word "Google." We discovered that an ice cube floats because it is lighter, or less dense, than liquid water. It's the weak bonding of the hydrogen molecules that creates the floating ice cube.

New connections are all about weak bonding. Our acquaintances are like the weak hydrogen connections that form ice cubes. It's often the weak connections in life that are so important, in terms of growth and networking.

The weak connections create the lattice effect that connects us with a much wider group of people. We may know say 6 people very well. They are our go-to people with familiarity and a long history.

But it's our weak connection to the person on the fringe of our group, who in turn is tight with a different cluster of close friends, who opens new doors for us.

Maybe this is part of what the author of the Tao te Ching was pointing to with the saying,

'In this world there is nothing more supple and weak than water; and yet no one, however strong and powerful he may be, can resist its action; and no being can do without it.'

If you looked at the molecules of water in a microscope, you would see a lattice shaped crystal substance.

We often think of a vine as a symbol of connection. An image brilliantly used by Jesus in John's gospel. But we grow vines on lattice. Lattice is an great symbol for a network.

Before the vine grows, the lattice holds the potential for the vine to grow and spread. It is transparent and patient, offering the structure and support for the vine to flourish.

The system of networks on which we all depend; families, extended families, friends, friends of friends, colleagues, social networks etc are like different strands of lattice. Some of them are strong connections, like close family and

friends. Some of them are so called weak connections like acquaintances.

Ultimately, it is a personal and spiritual issue. For once again we are reminded of the mysterious connectedness of life, that fills our days with meaning.

Because we are surrounded on every side by connections and possibilities, let's take to heart the words of Rumi, the medieval mystic.

"Our task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within ourself that we have built against it."

### Prayer

Most deeply we believe that in our struggle to love, we incarnate God in the world.

A prayer for those who feel the weight of the world on their shoulders:

May they remember that the idea of pulling oneself up by one's bootstraps has always been a myth, that no one in the history of this planet has ever done anything completely on their own, and that this continuing heavy lifting is something they should not, and actually cannot, do by themselves, and may this knowledge fill them with strange comfort and a desire to reach out to those who exercise right by their side, balancing this interdependent carrying with them, even when they fear they're on their own.

for those who feel restrictions are being lifted too slowly;

May they appreciate this cautious approach, even with its continued inconveniences, even with its economic uncertainty, even with its frustrations and fears, and may they spend a moment today offering gratitude for this kind of slowness we are getting to know, this kind of slowness that protects and calms and pays attention, which is quite different from the power hoarding hang-ups that truly delay justice, the kind of slowness this country often knows too well.

for those who are fearing redundancy;

May they see how many are sitting in the same boat, hoping that this stress and debt don't engulf us, may they gain some small comfort in knowing that the collective cry of a people cannot be ignored forever, and may our demands for dignity dig into the hearts of the powerful, reminding them that this need is never simply about economic stabilization, but always about human stabilization, that this fight is never simply about saving money, but always about saving lives.

And so aware of mystery and wonder, caught in friendship and laughter, we become speechless before the joy in our hearts as we celebrate the sacredness of life.

### **Blessing**

As Jesus walked and talked and shared his life so may the unexpected turns of our lives be the places where we live and learn and grow in our knowledge of him and God's love.

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