

**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 1<sup>st</sup> November**

You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/5WgJFV8xniM>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

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

## Opening meditation

Light a candle, light a candle for Saints and sinners, light a candle with hope.  
light a candle, light a candle for all of creation, light a candle with joy.  
light a candle, light a candle for hope and wonder, light a candle with love.

For those who lit our lives with joy for those who have touched us with tenderness  
for those whose loss fills us with longing we give thanks and glad Remembrance.

## Readings read by Mark Causer

### From Judges 4

Deborah the wife of Lappidoth was a prophet and a leader of Israel during those days. She would sit under Deborah's Palm Tree between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, where Israelites would come and ask her to settle their legal cases.

### From Luke 8

Soon after this, Jesus was going through towns and villages, telling the good news about God's kingdom. His twelve apostles were with him, and so were some women who had been healed of evil spirits and all sorts of diseases. One of the women was Mary Magdalene, who once had seven demons in her. Joanna, Susanna, and many others had also used what they owned to help Jesus and his disciples. Joanna's husband Chuza was one of Herod's officials.

### From Luke 2

Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and some other women were the ones who had gone to the tomb. When they returned, they told the eleven apostles and the others what had happened. The apostles thought it was all nonsense, and they would not believe.

But Peter ran to the tomb. And when he stooped down and looked in, he saw only the burial clothes. Then he returned, wondering what had happened.

**We celebrate our God in the stories of our tradition who engages with our souls, linking us with the mystery of the universe, the endlessness of eternity, Amen**

## Reflection

Traditional accounts of women saints — almost always written by men — have tended to emphasize 'feminine virtues' of purity, humble service, obedience, or patient endurance. Seldom have women been recognized for questioning authority; for defying restrictive codes and models of behaviour; for audacity and wit in

surmounting the obstacles placed in their paths. Even the labels attached to women saints reflect a narrow range of categories. Apart from the martyrs, women are generally remembered as 'foundresses' of religious orders, 'virgins' (a category that applies not only to the so-called 'virgin martyrs' but to all women in consecrated religious life), widows, or occasionally 'matrons.' Such labels ignore the range of functions such women may have performed, whether as theologians, prophets, healers, visionaries, or trailblazers in the spiritual life.

Of course the tendency to shape the lives of holy people to match a stereotypical image of sanctity is not confined to women. All too often the process of officially naming saints has involved measuring them against preconceived standards of holiness. The saints who emerge from this process are depicted as 'perfect people,' free of faults, rough edges, or idiosyncrasies. The resulting impression is that someone is either 'born a saint' or becomes one by suppressing his or her individual personality. Thus, living people are transformed into plaster statues.

Mother Teresa was known around the globe for her tireless missionary work. She died in 1997. After her death, a book entitled *Come Be My Light: The Private Writings of the Saint of Calcutta* appeared. The book drew a lot of attention. The main reason? Many of the letters and entries consist of Mother Teresa's descriptions of her suffering from a decades-long and disabling depression, or chronic form of emotional darkness. Depression was a thief. It took the possibility of feeling close to God away from her. She reports that when she was in prayer in a public place: "People say they are drawn closer to God – seeing my faith. Is this not deceiving people? Every time I have wanted to tell the truth – that I have no faith." Mother Theresa of Calcutta. Yes, we're aware of her work – even her Nobel Peace Prize. But who would have thought she struggled so deeply with spirituality – and depression? Actually it makes her much more human to me, in spite of being an official saint.

The truth is that perfect people — if any exist — have little to teach us. But from the real saints we have much to learn. We learn that what we call holiness was a quality expressed in the way they lived; in the choices they made; in their struggles to be faithful, even in the face of doubts and disappointments; in their everyday victories over pride and selfishness; in their daily efforts to be more truthful, loving, and brave.

There are as many types of saints as there are people. Each one offers a unique glimpse of the face of God; each enlarges our moral imagination; each offers new insights into the meaning and possibilities of human life. To the extent that women's names have been forgotten, their stories untold, their dreams, vision, and wisdom marginalized, those possibilities remain unknown and unfulfilled.

Nevertheless, the history of Christianity is marked by the stories of countless holy women who struggled hard to assert their full humanity and to follow where God was calling them, even when this challenged the prevailing options of the time. For

some, this meant claiming the freedom to remain unmarried; for others, to escape the restrictive enclosure of a convent, to engage in active work among the poor, or to travel across the world to proclaim the gospel. Some claimed the authority to write their own community rules, to interpret scripture in new ways, or simply to describe their own experience of God. Others found in Christ a mandate to oppose slavery, war, and social injustice. Later, in light of their achievements and the space they created for new models of discipleship, such women might be honoured as 'faithful daughters of the church.' But while they lived they so often endured extraordinary opposition or even persecution.

This is an important moment on All Saints Day to remember that saints are not other beings, another species, but saints are ordinary people who by their lives point to a greater reality and a deeper faith. And are people who commit to living compassionately with empathy for all people, wherever we find them.

prayer

We celebrate those who have loved us for ourselves, looking with acceptance on all that we are, and cherishing us without condition or constraint. We give thanks in glad Remembrance.

We celebrate those who have stood alongside us, holding us in the depths of elation or despair, with words of joy or rescue or silence. We give thanks in glad Remembrance.

We celebrate those who would not let us stand still, edging us gently into the open space of new understanding and delighted exploration. We give thanks in glad Remembrance.

We celebrate those who have challenged us to grow, perceiving all that we have in us to become and daring us to dream beyond our imagining. We give thanks in glad Remembrance.

We celebrate those who have travelled before us, showing us, in their persistent courage and tenderness, how to live in love, and die in faith and hope. We give thanks in glad Remembrance.

Blessing

Summoned to holiness, roused to justice, we are called to live in love.  
Granted forgiveness, blessed with mercy, we are called to live in hope.  
beckoned by Saints, encouraged by Angels, we are called to live in joy.

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