

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

www.stmagnus.org

Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

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SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Minister: Rev Fraser Macnaughton Tel: 873312

FMacnaughton@churchofscotland.org.uk

Pastoral Minister: Rev. June Freeth

Tel: 721449

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 6th December

You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

https://youtu.be/ALSrAj_PHIQ

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

Faith.

We think that on our own we won't be able to change anything, but if we have as much faith as a mustard seed we will be able to move mountains.

And when we share our plans with a small group of others who share the passion for our vision and we have as much faith as a mustard seed we will be able to move mountains. And when all those who share the vision form a movement and commit themselves to make the change happen. And we have as much faith as a mustard seed we will be able to move mountains.

Choir sing vs 2 of Christ be our light

Reading Mark 1; 1-8 read by Ian Cunningham

This is the good news about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It began just as God had said in the book written by Isaiah the prophet, "I am sending my messenger to get the way ready for you. In the desert someone is shouting, 'Get the road ready for the Lord! Make a straight path for him.'"

So John the Baptist showed up in the desert and told everyone, "Turn back to God and be baptized! Then your sins will be forgiven."

From all Judea and Jerusalem crowds of people went to John. They told how sorry they were for their sins, and he baptized them in the Jordan River.

John wore clothes made of camel's hair. He had a leather strap around his waist and ate grasshoppers and wild honey.

John also told the people, "Someone more powerful is going to come. And I am not good enough even to stoop down and untie his sandals. I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit!"

**Every time we read and listen
The Word is born in us again.**

Reflection

Today: the Feast of St. Nicholas, the ancient precursor to the modern Santa Claus, will pass without much ado. Some will try to encourage us to resurrect St. Nicholas to save us all from Santa's powers for we have gone astray.

'Tis the season for contradictions. 'Tis the season when we prepare to celebrate the incarnation of God in human form while also waiting for Santa Claus to come down our chimneys... which many of us no longer have.

Let's face it; most of the folks dashing about at the shops are more worried about the imminent arrival of Santa Claus than they are about God. One might even go so far as to say that a good number of people have unconsciously substituted Santa Claus for God. Santa Claus and the baby Jesus get into some pretty fierce competition at this time of year; and in the culture the larger loyalty belongs to Santa.

Consider this... consumerism is not the most dangerous thing about Santa. Ask yourself who it is that most children worship at this time of year, and I think you'll agree that Santa is the one we've all been trained to bow down to, and not just at Christmas.

It is difficult to deny that sometimes our view of God has been more influenced by Santa Claus than by Christ?

How many of us made that same trip to queue to get into Santa's grotto when we were little and when we finally got to Santa, he asked us the big Judgement Day question that Santa always seems to ask, "Have you been good this year?"

There's only one way to answer that question – even though we may have to reach into our depths of deviousness. For all too many people this confession begins a pattern for interactions with an image we create of the Father-God, who watches and records our offences, making a list if only for the purpose of forgiving us because an appropriate blood sacrifice has been made on our behalf.

Too harsh? Just listen to that song that pours from muzak speakers, the song that spells out a theology of Santa Claus.

"Oh, you better watch out.
You better not cry.
You better not pout.
I'm telling you why.
Santa Claus is coming to town.

He knows when you've been sleeping.
He knows when you're awake.
He knows if you've been bad or good,
so be good for goodness sake.
He's making a list, checking it twice,
gonna find out who's naughty and nice.
Santa Claus is coming to town."

The trouble with the theology of Santa Claus is that we keep applying it to God as we try to turn the Creator of all that is into a list-checking, gift-giver, whom we better watch out for, lest we be punished.

Why then are we surprised that when our Santa-god fails to deliver or bad things happen to good people, that our childish faith in the Santa-god isn't enough to sustain our trust?

Under the layers of jollity, Santa in his present incarnation is pernicious, but any attempts to resurrect St. Nicholas to replace him are doomed, for the power of Santa's materialism will always defeat the dim memories of St. Nicholas and his help for the poorest in his society especially children.

Maybe it is time to let the old Santa, so that a new Santa can be born; a Christmas resurrection if you will.

We need a new Santa capable of changing our consuming ways. If the Coca Cola Company could use the advertising industry to transform St. Nick into Santa, surely we can resurrect Santa using the modern persuasive powers of social media to redesign the old salesman extraordinaire into a mythical character with powers fit for the needs of this century.

Imagine if you will, a new and improved Santina, all decked out in Advent blue, she has the power to open young minds to the needs of our neighbours and travels the world via her magic transporter beam, to gather the hopes and dreams of the poor and oppressed into one internet feed, which she magically imprints in our hearts and minds, so that we change the world, creating peace through justice!

Oh, wait, we already have such a character. We don't need St. Nicholas or Santa Claus, nor any new-fangled Santina. We need the ONE we've always needed. The one who comes in the guise of a person. The Christ. The one who lives and breathes in, with, through, and beyond us to create peace on earth through justice and love. The one who uses our hands, our feet, our lives to change the world!

Prayer

Like the first strip of gold at sunrise
bordering the distant horizon,
the whisper comes:
'Comfort, comfort my people'

Like the night-time hum that pervades
when all the daytime noise is gone,
the rhythm comes:
'Comfort, comfort my people'

Like a single candle burning
against all the darkness of the world
the proclamation comes:
'Comfort, comfort my people'

Like the breaking of bread
amid the indulgencies of the season
the Good News comes:
'Comfort, comfort my people'

God is on the way

Blessing

Go in peace
into this Advent season.

Follow a star that's twinkling with courage,
blazing with possibility
to the space, the essence that is God.

And may the celestial brightness—source, spirit, sun—
be with you
enlighten, heal and empower you
and those you love

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