

**,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 10<sup>th</sup> January**

You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/nRXUgbVYN0U>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here. [stmagnuszoom@gmail.com](mailto:stmagnuszoom@gmail.com)

### Opening meditation

When the stars of the universe  
and the inner light of our spirit combine,  
enlightenment grows.

When the dance of the universe  
and the dance of our spirit interweave,  
oneness unfolds.

When the song of the universe  
and the song of our spirit resonate together,  
celebration flourishes.

The epiphany of laughter can lead to the epiphany of wonder.  
The place to which we want to travel is already within us.

### Reading Matthew 11; 7-15 read by Anne Flint

As John's followers were going away, Jesus spoke to the crowds about John: What sort of person did you go out into the desert to see? Was he like tall grass blown about by the wind? What kind of man did you go out to see? Was he someone dressed in fine clothes? People who dress like that live in the king's palace. What did you really go out to see? Was he a prophet? He certainly was. I tell you that he was more than a prophet. In the Scriptures God says about him, "I am sending my messenger ahead of you to get things ready for you." I tell you that no one ever born on this earth is greater than John the Baptist. But whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John.

From the time of John the Baptist until now, violent people have been trying to take over the kingdom of heaven by force. All the Books of the Prophets and the Law of Moses<sup>[1]</sup> told what was going to happen up to the time of John. And if you believe them, John is Elijah, the prophet you are waiting for. If you have ears, pay attention!

**For the words of God that challenge us,  
for the words of God we wrestle with or reject,  
for the word of God strong within us,  
We give thanks**

### Reflection

In this season of the coming of light into the dark time of the year, a central theme of

the Christmas story, it seems appropriate to reflect on the darkness of our culture and ways out of the darkness. The daily news delivers lots of the darkness. But we hear less, for example, about education—and some who are bringing light into the darkness. This is education in it's widest sense although that of young people is in the forefront of our minds just now.

One reason education—and the rest of culture with it—is in such crisis today is that we are between stories (and myths) of the world we live in, that is the old, modern cosmology upon which we built so many of our cultural institutions from education to religion to law and the rest.

A new story and cosmology is emerging but just because scientists come up with a new story of the universe does not guarantee that our cultures (including our religions) hear it, digest it, or explore how to apply it to our values and decision-making and everyday lives.

It follows that often those with the loudest megaphones and with the largest radio and television and social media access fill in the void with their noise.

Often too it is the richest who have access to such megaphones. And the noise is just as likely to be barking values of illusion, fake news and negativity as values that are positive and sustainable.

The Christmas season is about birthing light in a dark time of the year. We often hear talk of how we are living between two worlds, the modern and the post-modern. And how we are on the cusp of a shift between the two.

As in all birth, there are plenty of struggles and labour pains involved in this transition.

It is manifesting itself in the pain of the political systems we constructed in the modern era that are now failing to fully respond to today's needs.

It also manifests in religious upheavals today where some respond to changes by wanting to build thicker walls, deeper moats, and the more rarified orthodoxies we call fundamentalism.

It is everywhere.

It may be useful to look at some of the "values" that distinguish post-modern from modern thinking to understand better where we find ourselves today.

Values such as

— **Beauty.** No doubt we can argue about the reason for the universe and we can argue about the meaning of the universe but we cannot argue about the *beauty* of the universe. We all share beauty. Writer Annie Dillard comments that 'unless all ages and races have been deluded by the same mass hypnotist, there seems to be such a thing as beauty, a grace wholly gratuitous.'

Values such as

— **Community.** Things live and thrive in communities. Ecosystems are communities. Chloroplasts and mitochondria produce oxygen for all living things and theirs is a cooperative relationship. There is something intrinsically good-natured about all symbiotic relations necessarily, but this one, which is probably the most ancient and most firmly established of all, seem especially equable." Things try to "get along, whenever possible, - this is the way of the world."

Perhaps then a post-modern consciousness has more in common with a pre-modern consciousness than with a modern consciousness. Beauty and Community and many others. These values are important to pre-modern peoples. Much less so in the modern era.

This awareness might assist us in recognizing why there is so much anger and division in our world at this time. And also in understanding better the mindset our children and grandchildren carry.

As younger generations grow and mature, they birth a new worldview with it's post modern influences which are not by any means exhaustive.

So while the modern worldview is Individualistic, in the post modern view, Community counts.

While the modern worldview Focuses on the part rather than the whole, the post modern view, focuses on the whole.

While the modern worldview functions on a tribal model, the post modern view, functions on a larger community model.

And in our own sphere of interest while the modern view operates religiously from a denominational identity, and embraces structured religion, the post modern view operates from a deep ecumenism or interfaith identity and a search for common wisdom and joint action and embraces Spirituality.

For the modern mind obedience is the prime virtue (fitting into a universe that is already done and is static).

While in the post modern view creativity is the prime virtue (fitting into a universe that has been creative from the start and is still birthing and expanding).

A time then of a birthing of new light? None of us know how things are going to pan out. But as we advance into 2021 we would do well to follow the advice of Jesus to the crowds when he said about John the Baptist and his message..... if you have ears, pay attention!

## Prayer

In these days of social distancing  
when, in love, we give one another space  
When donning a mask signals care  
for friend and stranger  
When staying home reduces pressure on our NHS and other key services  
May we find new ways to connect  
New ways to reach out to one another  
New ways to feed the hungry  
to clothe the naked  
to shelter the homeless  
New ways to witness and to worship  
that deepen our faith  
and bear witness to the hope that is within us and to the light that came into the  
world  
that has never been extinguished  
  
May we find new ways to be close  
to the beating heart of God in the world  
that compels us to care for all God's children

## Blessing

The light is rising, the star guiding,  
the year opening, the way lengthening, epiphany revealing, God moving,  
  
Jesus journeying, Spirit disturbing,  
the time welcoming. Go and live  
  
fully, completely, in God's time.

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