

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

www.stmagnus.org

Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation



The first snowdrop.

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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.

SUNDAY 17th January

You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/QD4qV-KRBZU>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here. stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Opening meditation

May every morning be a reminder of God's creation for us of the turning from dark to light the coming together of all longing into the birth of life. May we find in this turning moment the opportunity for growth and the hope of tomorrow
May every word set free God's life in us that both affirms and challenges our soul to dance more, live more. May we find in this turning moment the opportunity for rebirth and the reshaping of tomorrow

Reading Luke 4 16-21 Mark Causer

Jesus went back to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and as usual he went to the meeting place on the Sabbath. When he stood up to read from the Scriptures, he was given the book of Isaiah the prophet. He opened it and read,

"The Lord's Spirit
has come to me,
because he has chosen me
to tell the good news
to the poor.
The Lord has sent me
to announce freedom
for prisoners,
to give sight to the blind,
to free everyone
who suffers,
and to say, 'This is the year
the Lord has chosen.'"

Jesus closed the book, then handed it back to the man in charge and sat down. Everyone in the meeting place looked straight at Jesus. Then Jesus said to them, "What you have just heard me read has come true today." All the people started talking about Jesus and were amazed at the wonderful things he said. They kept on asking, "Isn't he Joseph's son?"

Jesus answered "You will certainly want to tell me this saying, "Doctor, first make yourself well." You will tell me to do the same things here in my own hometown that you heard I did in Capernaum. But you can be sure that no prophets are liked by the people of their own hometown."

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

"Do you believe in God?"

People have asked me that question for my entire life.

The answer used to be simple and quick, almost involuntary. I had a tidy little collection of the platitudes and Bible verses I'd stockpiled, committed to memory, and carried around should I be asked. That's what good Christians did, I'd learned. It's especially what good Christian ministers did.

My job was to *sell* God—and I believed I could do it quite well.

But little by little, I gradually grew less comfortable with those easy answers and I had less and less peace within myself with what they implied. I began looking around at many of the Christians whose God I was expected to fully share and defend—and I realized that I couldn't.

I listened to the celebrity evangelists and the partisan politicians and the fire and brimstone preachers, and knew that we were not speaking about the same thing. We couldn't be.

As I read the Bible and prayed and studied; as I reflected on the world I'd experienced and the people I'd encountered; as I watched what Christians were doing and saying in the name of God, I came to the conclusion that I had to make a distinction between theirs and mine—because the two were simply incompatible.

I *do* believe in God, but there is a God I no longer believe in:

I no longer believe in a God who is male and white. I think I ditched that on quite early on. I hope I always take great care not to use masculine pronouns.

I have never believed in a God who created women as *less-than*; who assigns certain tasks to them, who ascribes different value to them, who reserves church and home leadership solely for men.

I no longer believe in a God who doles out blessings like a cosmic Santa Claus; adding up our naughty and nice stuff, giving us good things if the scales tip in our favour and withholding them if we don't measure up.

I no longer believe in a God who answers prayers based on volume; who will move to bring healing and help—only if enough appeals are made to Him, [and it's always a Him] when a critical mass is reached.

I no longer believe in a God who is capable of permanently writing off folk for their mistakes, their rebelliousness, their unbelief; who would craft a place of eternal torment and suffering and separation—and then send them there for good.

I no longer believe in an all-powerful God, who would allow a devil dominion anywhere—let alone in the place where supposedly treasured children spend their days, as hurting, vulnerable, and scared as they all are.

I no longer believe in a God who supposedly commands me to forgive others unrelentingly—and then holds a grudge against me should I fail one too many times; a God who is as petty, judgmental, and thin-skinned as I am.

I no longer believe in a God who spoke to a handful of people a few thousands years ago through divine dictation—and who is now silent.

I no longer believe in an all-knowing God, who would create men and women with a specific identity and natural inclination to love—only to find them repulsive as they lived into those deepest truths.

I no longer believe in a God who would choose sides in any war; who would revel in violence, who would rejoice in death, who would celebrate genocide.

I no longer believe in a God who blesses America—or any other nation.

I realize that to many Christians, this means that I am no longer a proper Christian; that my faith is illegitimate, my religion heretical, my testimony nullified. I'm okay with that. I know that any bitterness or condemnation that they respond to these words with, is the voice in their head of the God *they* believe—and I understand. They are, just as I am, just as we *all* are: trying to figure out what God is and what that God's character is—and how we should live accordingly.

For me, the best summing up comes from Bishop Jack Spong.

'Live fully, love wastefully, and have the courage to be all you can be'

All any of us can do, is to be as honest as we can at any given moment, about where all our searching and studying and praying and living has led us. This is where I am. I can't be anywhere else.

Today when people ask me, "Do you believe in God?", especially when other Christians ask me—my reply isn't quick or simple or nearly as tidy.
Now my response is, "How much time do you have?"

Prayer

Manifesto:
as political as they come;
as challenging as they come; as life changing as they come.

Such was Jesus' manifesto
written long ago,
brought to life in the Son of God, harnessing the power of the Spirit.

Not popular in some quarters, radicals never are, but when the cynical saw
all those grand old words being lived out,
after centuries of gathering dust, they couldn't help but get upset.

They were confronted
with a way of living
that they could easily embrace
if they could shake off the apathy,
built up over the years and tamped down into a solid seemingly unmovable mass.

It was no rocket science,
not even political science,
but just simple undiluted love:
the kind that is buried deep within,
waiting to be kindled and coaxed into flame, so that the poor hear good news,
captives are released,
the blind can see
and the oppressed go free.

That's some Manifesto. Amen

Blessing

May you be blessed with boldness
To encounter life in all its extremes and not to shrink back,
So that you may live out your sacred intention.

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