

## **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)

Minister: Rev Fraser Macnaughton Tel: 873312

[\*\*FMacnaughton@churchofscotland.org.uk\*\*](mailto:FMacnaughton@churchofscotland.org.uk)

Pastoral Minister: Rev. June Freeth

Tel: 721449

[JFreeth@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto: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.

---

You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/Ey-VtrsCIY8>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

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

**Candle Lighting and opening meditation**

We light this candle for all God's prophets, confronting justice and restoring the dream of a world of freedom and peace.

As we wait for the divine promise to give us light, to give us hope a candle burns, the second marker of our Advent journey.

As we continue, may we travel faithfully.

As we continue, may we know that the God within speaks to us

A candle burns, the second marker of our Advent journey.

We need light.

The days are terrifyingly short. The chill in the air catches our breath. The ground is barren and the landscape bleak.

We need light.

Solstice fires, yule logs, o' tannenbaum, midnight candlelight... all testaments to our felt need.

We need light.

Demeter and Persephone, Mary and the Baby, a rising star to follow... stories bearing witness to our yearning.

We need light.

A light shines in the darkness...  
and the darkness did not, will not, has not, cannot overcome  
or even comprehend  
light.

Reading Luke 3; 1-6

The report about John, the son of Zechariah, began while Tiberius Caesar was ruling the Roman world. He had ruled for almost 15 years. Pontius Pilate was ruling the country called Judea. And Herod was ruling the land called Galilee. Philip was the brother of Herod. He was ruling the countries called Iturea and Tracoonitis. Lysanias was ruling Abilene. While these men were ruling, the most important priests were Annas and Caiaphas. At that time John, the son of Zechariah, was living in the desert.

He heard God speak to him.

John travelled to many places near to the river Jordan. 'You are doing many bad things', he taught everybody. 'Stop doing them. You should be sorry for what you have done. If you are, I will baptise you with water. God will then forgive you.' John was teaching as Isaiah had spoken a long time before. God gave him messages. Someone wrote down these messages in a book. Isaiah told people what would happen. He said:

'People will hear someone who is shouting in the desert:

"The Lord is coming. Make the road ready for him.

Make it straight.

Fill in every valley and make every mountain and hill flat.

Take away every curve so that the road is straight.

Take away all the rocks so that the road is flat.

Then you will see how God will save you." '

Reflection

As I've been preparing for the service this week, and all its messages about and from prophets I've been wondering about the origin of the phrase "wise guy" and I don't think it started with the Three Stooges. Its an underground crime term apparently the world of gangsters, wise guys. Al Pacino in Donny Brasco said,

'A wise guy's always right; even when he's wrong, he's right.'

This got me thinking. We all have an inner wise guy, a mischievous voice that pushes us out of the comfort zone, with its biting humour, disarming questions, slap to the forehead street wisdom, and trickster pranks. The inner wise guy is right even when its wrong, even when its inconvenient, unpopular, non conformist.

It's like the two fish swimming together who meet another fish heading the other way. The fish nods at them and says "Morning, boys. How's the water?" The two fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and says, "What the heck is water?"

Most of the time we're like the fish; swimming in an ocean of awareness, but its too close for us to see it for what it is.

A well timed question can make all the difference, stop us in our tracks, make us rethink our purpose, our motivation, our lingering baggage. That's what awareness does so well; ask questions

Why is one of awareness's favourite questions because the inner wise guy wants to get to the heart of things. Whys make us aware of who we are, what we value. Whys make us aware, and awareness in turn makes us wise.

Young children understand this well- why, but why, but why, but why..... children understand something that we easily forget as adults. The power of why.

The why question is so important. It creates a frame for all our whats, whens, wheres, whos and hows. Think about the power of why. If our why is clear, we WILL find a way. If our why excites us, we WILL find a how. If our why is clear AND excites us, we will solve any what, trust every when, meet all the right whos, find all the right wheres, and overcome any challenging how.

But there are two types of Why questions. The why that looks for pity, like "why me?" and the why that looks for clarity, like "why this, why now?" The first type of why question is fine for a while, as long as we keep asking the why question of our why questions. Why am I asking Why me? Awareness is more interested in the second type of why question because it leads to the big WHO question. Who am I, and who is it who keeps asking these questions, thinking these thoughts and feeling these feelings.

Awareness is all about space, inner spaciousness, zooming in like the Hubble Telescope to explore motivation and identity's landscape. We zoom in and see the incredible capacity to watch ourselves, and it helps us see things that are right in front of our noses. Awareness is seeing life from a depth of 30,000 feet, where vision and purpose are so much clearer.

Without awareness, we flounder and drift through life like the fish who don't even know they're in water. With awareness, we learn to see the potential and beauty in each moment. Like the fish, we recognize who and where are now, and explore new edges of this reality. There is always more us to discover and become just as fish never swim in the same water twice.

Awareness takes us on a deep dive into oneness. We are one with the One who is aware, and sees through our eyes and thinks our thoughts. As Islamic scholar Rumi said, We aren't a drop in the ocean. We are the entire ocean in a drop, at this time and place. So really be there.

Is this not exactly what John the Baptist was seeking to do when exhorting his listeners as he emerged from the desert. "wake up and smell the coffee' he might have explained if he had come over Widford Hill. Reminding us fish that we have to keep reminding ourselves over and over:

"This is water." "This is water."

It is unimaginably hard to do this, to stay conscious and alive in the adult world day in and day out.

Its hard, but not impossible. We can start by pausing to feel this very moment, become aware of who we are and who we are becoming. Wake up. This is it. Life is right here and now. Let's make sure we are living it fully.

As writer Eckhart Tolle said,  
"Awareness is the greatest agent for change.

#### Prayer

When the world is given time to wait and it doesn't. When God's people are offered space to hope and they don't.

When the nations are given reason to move towards peace and they won't. May the holy One in flesh come to us, in human form and human kind and live among us and meet us on the way

When the world is given a promise to hear and it doesn't.

When God's people are offered words of transformation  
and they don't.

When the nations are given the chance of re-creation  
and they won't.

May the holy One, in word, come among us in prophecy and promise and  
unstop our ears and be the Word revealed.

When the world is given a light to live by and it doesn't.

When God's People are offered a message to proclaim  
and they don't.

When the nations are given a moment to change and they won't.

May the holy One in justice come among us, in flesh and in pain and hold the  
suffering of the world making all things new.

When the world doesn't hear and God's People do not understand and the  
nations turn their back..

May the holy One come to us, be born in us, in forgiveness and grace, heaven's  
Incarnation, the revelation of truth  
among us

### Blessing

May God the starmaker cradle and circle us.  
May God the storyteller beckon and encourage us.  
May God the life changer challenge us and cherish us.  
AMay we walk in the light of God's love and laughter  
all the moments of our nights and days.

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