

## **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)

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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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You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/cjOcJTe-XYo>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

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

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

**This is the season of Lent**

**When we prepare ourselves for the great events of Easter**

**It is when we look honestly and critically at our lives**

**We identify where we fail and get things wrong**

**And we look forward to the gift of a new start, a new life**

**In our hearts we follow the way that Jesus took.**

We invite the Spirit into this moment in which our feelings are overwhelming us. Our breath is shallow, Our muscles tensed. We can't foresee what will happen, but we know that there are many possibilities, both good and bad. If we're honest, we tend to dwell on the bad.

May the Spirit help us to exist in this moment without judgement of ourselves or of the unknown future. Help us to observe quietly and allow our feelings to pass over us without taking hold.

We take this opportunity to discipline ourselves to remember: Gods' great goodness,  
Christ's great love, the peace we find in the presence of the Spirit.  
To remember that nothing can separate us from the love of God.  
Our feelings are worth considering, but not definitive.  
Our perspective is but a small fragment of the whole.  
Our reality is but a shadow of the Jesus Way.  
Our experience is meant to grow us.  
May we be re-orientated away from imagined distance  
Toward present union with Christ.  
Re-orientated away from fear  
toward Love.

### Reading John 20 13-23

No sooner had Mary said this than she turned around and caught sight of Jesus standing there, but she didn't know it was Jesus. He asked her, "Why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?" She supposed it was the gardener, so she said, "Please, if you're the one who carried Jesus away, tell me where you've laid the body and I will take it away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned to him and said, "Rabboni!"—which means "Teacher". Jesus then said, "Don't hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to Abba God. Rather, go to the sisters and brothers and tell them, 'I'm ascending to my Abba and to your Abba, my God and your God!'" Mary of Magdala went to the disciples. "I have seen the Teacher!" she announced. Then she reported what the saviour had said to her.

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were locked in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Temple authorities. Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Having said this, the saviour showed them the marks of crucifixion. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw Jesus, who said to them again, "Peace be with you. As Abba God sent me, so I'm sending you." After saying this, Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you retain anyone's sins, they are retained."

### Reflection

Together, we are feeling such dismay over this newest war, and finding ourselves provoked to worry, fear, anxiety; aware of the very real threat of global consequences. We pray for an end to the conflict, the safety of the Ukrainian people, and peace on the European continent.

But. Regardless of what happens, if we are to be of any influence and help to the world, we Christians must be and become people of deep peace and profound reflection. We must situate ourselves so firmly in the Spirit that we are unshakably peaceful. This begins in our inner terrain, with our practice, our discipline, and our identity. We have had two years of pandemic in which to practice peace amidst chaos the likes of which most of us have never experienced. If we have not begun a spiritual practice of

cultivating inner peace and anchoring it into the world, it's not too late to begin. Now is the moment to begin again. We are the ones responsible for our inner resources, our connectedness to the Centre, our awareness of our true self.

Think about the story we heard from St John's gospel: Mary Magdalene approaches Jesus' tomb and discovers it is empty, followed by Peter who then goes away with some other disciples. Mary remains, weeping. There Mary is the first to whom Christ reveals himself. That evening the disciples have locked themselves into a room, terrified of the Temple authorities.

Suddenly, despite their security precautions, Jesus appears in their midst! And then he does/says three baffling and profound things:

His first words to them in the midst of their terror and caution are "Peace be with you." He says this twice!

He breathes on them! And with the breath he conveys God's spirit upon them with the words, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

He shares with them the spiritual power of forgiveness! "If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you retain anyone's sins, they are retained."

This is a very powerful moment. Jesus is teaching us how to live here, how to navigate the most stressful of times, how to be God-reflections inside of earth's chaos. Here Jesus wakes the disciples, and us, up to the power we hold and can wield in the world if we discipline ourselves to do it.

With every breath, we remember the Spirit of God within us, our inherent divinity and access to the centre of Peace. We are commissioned by Christ to speak and be peace in the world, anchoring the Peace of Christ wherever we are. And we are empowered with the ultimate de-escalation tactic, the weapon to end all weapons, the antidote to every offence, the medicine for every world ailment: forgiveness.

Forgiveness doesn't mean we immediately try to change people or circumstances, although that is often the result when forgiveness is applied. Nor does it mean we're apathetic and do nothing. It means we accept people and circumstances as they are and love them anyway. It means we stop resisting what's happening and instead face it head on, speaking peace to it, ceasing to resent it for being what it is, deflating our urge to punish it. We do all this even as we take reasonable measures to prevent harm, retribution, and violence.

Forgiveness is Love's most powerful tool, but it takes considerable strength to wield. It's only accessible to us once we've come past our ego to tap into a deeper power, the power of Spirit. And, poignantly for us today, forgiveness is the only path to following Christ's mandate to love our enemies.

But these skills don't always come easily. Most of us have layers of trauma to muddle through, bad thought habits, ego hangups, and fear for these temporal bodies of ours. So we have to practice going deep within, past the body into the soul, into the centre where God dwells. We have to practice peace. We have to train ourselves to become peaceful. We have to constantly place reminders before ourselves of who we are and what our work is in this world.

So, even when the world is burning, we too are burning as beacons of peace, constantly refuelling our inner flame by way of our connection to the Spirit.. Even when chaos, greed and division are launching bombs and rhetoric, passing unjust laws, and targeting our vulnerable siblings; we can sow seeds of peace. Because we if we can forgive everything for happening, we encourage it to transform from death to life.

No one can do it for us. No one can make us peaceful. We have to embrace Christ's words ourselves and turn them into action, into daily practice.

The good news is the peace, spiritual power, and forgiveness resources are there for us all. To turn inward, breathe in, and take hold of.

This war, this climate emergency, this pandemic, this personal crisis, this health scare – whatever it is, it is the contemplative's time to shine with brilliant inner light. Teilhard de Chardin reminded us that we are spiritual beings having a human experience, and that means that this whole thing is our training ground for being who we truly are. Cultivating inner peace... so that it has a chance to reverberate throughout the world by way of our thoughts, words, actions, and influence. This whole life is our prayer, if we let it be.

### Prayer

May we recognise that we are part of the tension and injustice of the world. May our human selfishness be forgiven to which we contribute. May the resentment between people - of which we are a part - be healed. May that healing come into the world's conflicts, in which we share by being human. May the Spirit take our unworthiness and sorrow and use them in the great work of healing and redeeming humanity.

We wait with the Giver of Life, to bear hope to earth's darkest places: we wait at the places where darkness is deeper than the deepest pain:

where love is denied:

let love break through.

Where justice is destroyed:

let righteousness rule.

Where hope is crucified:

let faith persist.

Where peace is no more:

let passion live on.

Where truth is denied:

let the struggle continue.

Where laughter has dried up:

let music play on.

Where fear paralyses:  
let forgiveness break through.

### Blessing

May the love that gives to life its beauty,  
the reverence that gives to life its sacredness,  
and the purposes that give to life its deep significance,  
be strong within each of us and lead us into ever deepening relationships with all of life.

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