

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

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Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

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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.

You can find our Sunday worship here.
<https://www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation/>

or on YouTube here.
<https://youtu.be/JFwfTaAcxao>

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

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

The spirit of imagination is a gift to all people. The spirit of faithfulness is the gift of the earth. The spirit of love is a gift to the church in every age. We see the flame of the Spirit of God.

A familiar figure on a distant shore. A familiar action at a kitchen table. A presence in the midst of doubt. The risen Christ comes to surprise us and delight us. To open wide the door to joy. Hopeful. We worship him. Hesitant.

We adore. As the dry stane walls enfold the fields. May God spirit enfold us. As the streams encircle the houses. May the spirit of God encircle us. As the sound of the curlew and the sight of an Easter lamb calls us to prayer. May the spirit of God encompass us about.

Reading from Obadiah

THE VISION OF OBADIAH. I received a message from Sovereign Yahweh. A messenger was sent among the nations, saying, "Rise up! Let us march against them in battle!"

Thus says Yahweh concerning Edom:

"I will diminish you among the nations. You will be utterly despised. Your arrogant heart has lead you astray, you who live in mountain clefts, whose home is in the heights, you say in your heart, 'Who is able to bring me down to the ground?' Though you soared like the eagle, and built your nest among the stars, I will still fling you down again—

it is Yahweh who speaks.

All your allies will drive you back, to the borders of the land. Your fine friends will deceive and overpower you; those who ate your bread will set traps for you. They'll say, 'Where is your wisdom now?' When that day arrives— I will remove the sages from Edom, and leave no wisdom on Esau's mountain.

How could you stand at the crossroads to slay people while they were escaping? How could you betray the survivors

on the day of their anguish?. It is Yahweh God who speaks.

Reflection

There is nothing more powerful than the someone in an oppressor class speaking truth to oppressors. Many examples exist in history where a person is called from the oppressor class to serve the oppressed. Not only to serve, but to speak out against injustice and call out untruthfulness.

Paul

He is the biggest example of one who turned from power and luxury for the sake of truth. Paul participated in the persecution of early disciples of Jesus. Likely the Hellenized diaspora Jews converted to Christianity, in the area of Jerusalem, prior to his conversion. In Acts, Paul was traveling on a mission to "arrest them and bring

them back to Jerusalem". On this journey the ascended Jesus appeared to him in a great bright light. He was struck blind, but after three days his sight was restored by Ananias of Damascus. Paul began to preach that Jesus of Nazareth was the Jewish messiah and the Son of God.

Approximately half of the Book of Acts deals with Paul's life and works. Paul even refers to himself as a "Pharisee of Pharisee's". Paul, who once oppressed, liberated and fought for the oppressed. This turn of heart did not come without consequence as Paul was executed in Rome.

John Newton

An English Anglican cleric, a captain of slave ships who later became an abolitionist, and an investor of trade. He served as a sailor in the Royal Navy for a period after forced recruitment.

Newton went to sea at a young age and worked on slave ships in the slave trade for several years. In 1745, he himself became a slave of Princess Peye, a woman of the Sherbro people in what is now Sierra Leone. He was rescued, returned to sea and the trade, becoming Captain of several slave ships. After retiring from active sea-faring, he continued to invest in the slave trade. Some years after experiencing a conversion to Christianity, Newton later renounced his trade and became a prominent supporter of abolitionism. He was ordained as a Church of England cleric and served as parish priest at Olney, Buckinghamshire, for two decades. He also wrote hymns, including "Amazing Grace" and "Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken".

Newton lived to see the British Empire's abolition of the African slave trade in 1807, just months before his death.

This is a man who made his living as a slaver. Yet he was eventually him to be one of the United Kingdoms greatest abolitionists. The words of Amazing Grace speak of how God pulled him away from an oppressor and lead to his lifelong fight for the oppressed.

James Birney

Born to an affluent Irish Episcopalian slaveholder of the same name in Danville, Kentucky, He and his sister were raised by their widowed aunt, who had come over from Ireland at the request of his father to look after

the two. He was influenced by his aunt's opposition to slavery; she refused to own slaves. Growing up, he saw the issue of slavery from a variety of perspectives. Though his father fought to prevent their state of Kentucky from joining the Union as a slave state, when the effort failed, he decided that until the legislature abolished slavery from the state as a whole, a person could own slaves as long as he treated them humanely.

During the 1820s, Birney became increasingly troubled by the issue of slavery. He became a member of the American Colonization Society, which advocated for the migration of African Americans to the continent of Africa. After serving in various roles for the organization, Birney began calling for the immediate abolition of slavery.

Constance Markiewicz

Constance Georgine Gore-Booth was born at Buckingham Gate in London in 1868, the elder daughter of the Arctic explorer and adventurer Sir Henry Gore-Booth. During the famine of 1879-80, Sir Henry provided free food for the tenants on his estate at Lissadell House in the north of County Sligo in the north-west of Ireland. Their father's example inspired in Gore-Booth and her younger sister, Eva Gore-Booth, a deep concern for working people and the poor.

Even though part of the ruling Anglo Irish class, she saw the horrors being foisted on the Irish Catholic people and would eventually fight for the Irish in both combat and politics. In 1908, Markiewicz became actively involved in nationalist politics in Ireland. She joined Sinn Féin and 'Daughters of Ireland', a revolutionary women's movement.

As a member of the Irish Citizen army, Markiewicz took part in the 1916 Easter Rising. Markiewicz designed the Citizen Army uniform and composed its anthem, based on the tune of a Polish song. The British sentenced her to death for her role in the rebellion but this was reduced on the grounds of her sex. She died in 1927, spending most of her life speaking out for the oppressed in Ireland.

How will History See Us?

In the final account, where will we stand? Will we be brave like Obadiah, Paul, Newton, Birney and Markiewicz? Will those that come from oppressor classes still have the courage to rise up and speak the truth, even if it

means their death? Would we be so bold. That we would reach into the unknown of forsaking oppression for liberation, even though it may well involve sacrifice by us. If our gospel is not liberating, it is oppressing. What side will we choose to be on? And we never forget, history is always watching.

Prayer

There are so many ways to think of God; revealed by many names; revealed as different characters within the Bible: at times mighty in battle, at times angry with those who do wrong, at times a God who stands up for his own people over others.

Yet, also portrayed as the God who is all merciful, unconditional in love, the friend to everybody, the one who seeks to save all those who are lost, and not just once, but a Saviour in each one of our 'lost' moments.

The writers of stories, now part of our scriptures, wrote in a time and place of their own and sought to paint pictures of the God who they, or their ancestors, knew.

In our time and place, we lean on these stories and the revelation of the big picture of the divine nature drawn for us: telling of a God who cares for all, who seeks to save all from the injustices, unkindnesses and pains that life can inflict; a God who desires in all things that people may not be cut off from the joy and happiness of life despite their own poor choices, the influences of others or the tragedies that come out of the blue and which leave people torn apart.

Today we pray for those who feel lost— who do not know which way to turn.

We pray for those who have been left behind or cut off— who have no strength or position of influence to change their own fortunes.

We pray for those who feel bereft of faith— who cannot find the Jesus way, despite knowing there is something missing from their life.

In Jesus Christ we have the definition of love, self-sacrificing love, *agape* love. May those who seek the way find strength, comfort and encouragement in him, revealing tenderness to

those who hurt, assurance to those who doubt, and endless love for all of us.

Blessing

May the warmth of resurrection touch our hearts and
minds
as the warmth of the sun blesses our bodies.

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