

## **St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall**

[www.stmagnus.org](http://www.stmagnus.org)

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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/Ss8otHw9gMw>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

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

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

**We light the candle to remember those who have died and those who have suffered in war.**

**We remember the rebuilding that comes after war.**

**We light the candle for the hope that comes in the rebuilding.**

Listen to the silence  
for in such silence  
we begin to see the forms  
of men and women  
appearing around us  
faint shifts in the pattern of the air  
that hint at vague outlines

of those who are missing

It is the depth of their silence  
that reminds us of such cost  
moves us more deeply  
for what is profound  
more than laying aside our words  
and our points of view  
silencing our politics of power  
is creating the space  
to listen to the other  
and hear only silence returned

Listen to the silence  
for in such a silence  
we find the truth  
of our humanity  
Let us make silence  
the loudest thing we do today

It is that silence we touch today  
and share between us  
in remembrance  
for that for which we have no words  
yet for that for which shapes us to become more fully human

#### Reading Zechariah 7:1-10;

The Lord spoke to Zechariah when Darius had been king for four years. It was the fourth day of the ninth month. The name of the month was Kislev. Then the people in Bethel sent Sharezer and Regem-Melech and their men to Jerusalem. They came to ask the Lord to help them. They came to the house of the Lord Almighty to speak to the priests and to the prophets. They asked, 'Should we cry and not eat our food in the fifth month? We have done this for many years.'

The Lord Almighty spoke to me. He said, 'Say this to all the people in this country and to the priests: "You lived in Babylon for many years. You ate no food and you were sad in the fifth month and in the seventh month. But you did not do this for me. You ate and you drank. But you ate and you drank for yourselves. These are the words that I, the Lord, spoke by my prophets in past years. At that time, the people in Jerusalem lived without trouble. Many rich people lived in Jerusalem. People in the Negev region in the south and in the low hills in the west also lived safely." '

The Lord spoke again to Zechariah. He said, 'The Lord Almighty has said, "Be sure that you are fair to all people. Be kind to each other. Do not cheat widows or children who have no family. Do not cheat foreigners or poor people. Do not think secretly of ways to hurt each other."

## Reflection

Some five hundred years before Christ was born there was a war between the great city state of Babylon and the new empire of Persia.

As a result of that war, which was won by the Persians, the people of Israel, who had been slaves in Babylon for seventy years, were set free and allowed to return to their country and start life all over again.

As is the case after all periods of war and suffering, it took a while for things to get back to normal. People didn't really know what to do -

Today's reading from the prophet Zechariah is set in that time of uncertainty. In that reading we heard how the people approached Zechariah and the priests and asked them a question - they asked: what shall we do?

Zechariah responds thus;

“Be sure that you are fair to all people. Be kind to each other. Do not cheat widows or children who have no family. Do not cheat foreigners or poor people. Do not think secretly of ways to hurt each other.”

This has ever been the answer.

Today, as we observe Remembrance Day here in this ancient Sanctuary that question is particularly appropriate - as is the answer.

There are many people who would suggest to us that Remembrance Day is outmoded, that it is a religious observation that should no longer be practised, that the time for remembering the sacrifices made in wars long since past is no more - and that we should instead get on with other things.

Some even suggest that Remembrance Day glorifies war and encourages people to think that it is acceptable, and that to die fighting for one's country is a good thing; and so they say - don't do this - don't remember - instead - do something else, speak about the horror of war, and proclaim that God is against all violence, against all forms of man's inhumanity against man.

This misses the point of Remembrance Day - it is misguided thinking.

Misguided because it equates the act of remembering the sacrifices made in the past by soldiers of our country with a glorification of war and suffering.

Misguided because it considers honouring the memory of those who

have died with honouring the kind of actions they found themselves having to make in the midst of a struggle that - in the end - none of them really wanted to be part of - but believed that they must be part of if others were to dwell in the freedom and in the peace that, deep down we all want.

The spirit that underlies Remembrance Day is probably best found in the poem that is most associated with it: the poem: "In Flanders Field"

In Flanders Field, the poppies blow  
between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place: and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow.  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.

Take up Our Quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch: be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields....

Remembrance Day is not just a time to fast and mourn.  
It is not just a time to remember those who died.  
Still less is it a time to say that war that is good or  
honourable.

Rather it is a time when we - as we recall those who gave themselves for us,  
- to remember just why it is they did what they did,  
- a time to in fact remember the horror of war and vow to ourselves - never again,  
- a time to take up the torch once more and to dedicate ourselves anew to living in such a way that we do not break faith with those who died to bring peace to the world,  
- a time to commit ourselves once again to the struggle against evil - the struggle against the very things to lead to war in the first place.

When Zechariah responds to the people's question  
- what shall we do? He told them to love truth and peace;

And these are the things that Remembrance Day asks to call to mind each year as we recall those who died that we may be free.

What shall we do?

Take the torch - hold it high, do not break faith with those who  
have died.

Live in the way we are meant you to live - in freedom and with  
the intention of preserving that freedom, by doing all that makes  
for perpetual freedom - and for perpetual peace; by doing  
justice, and loving mercy, and walking humbly with your God.

Then those who died in Flanders Fields will sleep as the poppies  
grow, between the crosses row on row. AMEN

### Prayer

We remember,  
those, in so many places,  
in so many times,  
who have died in war;  
and we pray  
we might honour them  
by becoming  
makers of peace to our broken world.

We remember, children who have grown up  
around us in our schools,  
in our neighbourhoods, in our churches,  
and who have now gone to war;  
and we pray for children  
throughout the world  
who are the orphans  
of violence and death.

We remember,  
the wars which rage within us,  
the aggression we feel towards others,  
our unwillingness to forgive,  
our desire to foster divisions and discord,  
our discomfort in being called  
to love our enemies;  
and even as we despair,  
we pray for new hope.  
we pray for discerning hearts,  
as we confront ancient fears,  
we pray for new love,  
and for that old, old peace  
to be born in us anew.

### Blessing

They shall grow not old,  
as we that are left grow old;  
age shall not weary them,  
nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun  
and in the morning,  
we will remember them.

*May you stay safe in the Way of Christ,*

*and may you be blessed by his Spirit this day and always.*