

## **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)

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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/8P5v2X2bci8>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

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

### **Candle Lighting and opening meditation**

As we light our flame this morning:  
we celebrate by its warmth  
the depth and breadth of our congregation.  
And we celebrate by its light  
the faith we share.

Deep within us, creeping past the facts  
that stand before us, is hope:  
We walk towards the barriers to change,  
believing they will fall to the power of love:

We gather up the remnants of our energy  
and wait for the extra we pray will come:

In the moments of our lowness,  
in the doubts which rise among us,  
in the depths of weakness and failing,  
Christ's hand is discovered beneath our wavering,  
and we are called again to hope.  
For the Spirit of God, is the breath of life within us.  
We are called to be one with her.  
She breathes among us in all of creation.  
And so may we have the strength and courage to live in love.

### Reading

#### Isaiah 5; 18-24

Woe to you who drag corruption along like a sheep on a tether and a bridle on a heifer! Woe  
to you who say, "Hurry up, God, work fast,  
let's see these plans of yours, Holy One of Israel!  
Fulfil your designs quickly if you want us to pay attention to you!" Woe to you who call evil  
good and good evil, who exchange darkness for light and light for darkness, bitter for sweet  
and sweet for bitter! Woe to you who are wise in your own sight and believe in your own  
shrewdness. Woe to you heroes—at drinking wine!  
You champions—at mixing strong drinks! You who will acquit the guilty for a bribe and deny  
the innocent of their rights! As tongues of fire lick the stubble and chaff withers in the fire, so  
your roots will rot  
and your blossoms will crumble into dust; for you rejected the Instruction of Yahweh  
Omnipotent, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel!

### Reflection

A man in a boat began to bore a hole underneath his seat. When his fellow passengers asked him what he was doing, he answered, 'What do you care? Am I not boring under my own seat?' A tale that challenges us look at how our actions are affecting the lives of others.

There is a tendency in life to think that if we resist doing something, then we have not really 'done anything.' But conversely, ask the person in recovery who gets through a day without taking a drink whether or not that is an accomplishment. The truth is, way more than half the commandments are 'Thou shalt nots.' In other words, the Jewish tradition of the Old Testament understands that the urge to do negative things, to take advantage of and harm others, in both big and small ways, is real, existing inside each and every one of us. In fact, if it were not real, there would be no need to create these rules. We would never have had to say to our eldest child 'Frankie, stop annoying your brother,' if Frankie did not do that as part of her daily regimen in life as all eldest children do!

The human capacity to do evil, even in people who are basically good, is ever-present, as psychological experiments and history have taught us. To resist this urge is also a spiritual act. While it may not add to the goodness in the world, it diminishes the evil; on balance, then, goodness is enhanced. So the next time we want to share some juicy gossip but stop, because

we realize the person really doesn't need to hear it, and acknowledge and know that we have made the world a better place.

It takes a lot of goodness just to maintain the status quo. One act of violence or evil can undermine so much goodness. Sometimes it feels like all the good deeds we do are just fingers and toes in the dyke, stopping the leaks from becoming a flood threatening to overcome and wipe us all out. Despite our best efforts, it seems we make no progress on making the world the better place it is supposed to be. But without each of those fingers and toes, the world would be even worse. Every time we resist the urge to hurt another human being, or an animal, or, our planet, we have patched another hole. And that is good.

The Hebrew scriptures offer much wisdom that can be applied to ethically charged situations. For example: "In the Torah [the books of the Law, we find this amazing passage that asks the question 'What do you do if you find a murdered body in a field, away from any town or settlement?' Well, after taking care of the corpse, the elders of the nearby towns measure the distance to the closest village. Everyone there must contribute to the burial of the body. After that, they must bring a communal guilt and sin offering for allowing such an act to take place and not doing enough to prevent it. Compare that to the nightly parade of victims in our own city streets, about which we merely shrug our shoulders and add up the body count. The notion that we all bear a collective, communal responsibility and may be punished for the wrongdoings of others is found throughout the Jewish tradition.

What an astonishing passage! It speaks volumes about the difference between a spiritual approach to a problem and that of a thoroughly secular one, where everyone just watches out for him- or herself and a small circle of friends. A bit like the guy in the boat boring a hole.

One of the active exercises, which we could easily call a 'spiritual exercise is this. Take a blank calendar or a diary and fill in your typical week. As we begin to analyse our daily activities, write down the letter O next to any action taken on behalf of another. You might want to try this yourself. Each O represents a spiritual act. Anytime we do something in which another person benefits, we are walking the Way of Jesus, becoming an agent of the Body of Christ. Every time we work to make the world a better place in which to live, we are being truly 'religious' people . . . Christ's silent partners completing the task of creation each and every day. We all need help seeing how each of our deeds has significance in the grand scheme of things, and such an exercise can enable us to become more intentional in our service of others.

As one sage said 'Holiness should be built on a foundation of the everyday and the mundane.' A challenge to us to practice spirituality in all that we do, say, or think. Furthermore it is salutary to realise how people from different religious traditions can all share in spiritual practices that bind us together as one. When we share with others, their joy becomes ours.

### Prayer

May we be open to the Spirit of Christ but let it be the empty seat beside the anxious  
the lonely chair next to the confused  
the vacant space next to the hungry and the cold.

May the Spirit of Christ in us be a mockery to the world  
but good news to those who seek out truth and may we join them in the search  
finding her walking the streets or breaking bread or sitting by bedsides.

May we find her in border areas on the edge of things  
crossing over with the foreigner. May we find her among children learning to finger  
paint, as teachers to those who long to enjoy life again. May we find her with the  
worried, silenced with nothing to say and space enough to keep it.

May we find her on the wrong side of the tracks going where we should not and  
finding a place to lay her head among the lost.

May we find her singing our songs of justice and peace and removing our pretensions  
in doing so. May we find her with a word that lives in the hopes of the afraid and a  
comforting peace for those who are broken.

May we find her laughing at the powerful, unnerving what folk think so secure while  
welcoming those who have nothing into new life

May we find the faith to stand with Christ permeating through the world with his  
upside-down kingdom, sovereign of life  
and servant of all

### **Blessing**

Into the great pathway of faith, we go,  
with all those who have ever travelled along it.  
In their echo we meet and continue  
the ongoing story of faith and love and promise.

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