

## **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/K5Yko-gI0rI>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

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

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

This flame is warm as the companionship of friends is warm.

Let us celebrate the richness and diversity of life  
in the presence of God.

We come with open hearts to hear the voice of the holy, singing through our songs,  
breathing the word into our silences,  
challenging us in our speaking and listening

and calling to the people down the ages.  
Let us celebrate life in touch with the depths of being.

The real world where loss is painful, grief hurts, fear dictates, may the Spirit quell our need to judge.

The world is heavy laden with anxiety building, confusion growing, borders closing,.. may the inclusive Spirit, slow our impulsiveness.

The world is mysterious with faith rooting, hope sparking, love blooming,... may we hear the call of love.

### Reading

#### John 14 12-20

Jesus said to his followers 'The truth of the matter is, anyone who has faith in me will do the works I do— and greater works besides. Why? Because I go to Abba God, and whatever you ask in my name I will do, so that God may be glorified in me. Anything you ask in my name I will do. If you love me and obey the command I give you, I will ask the One who sent me to give you another Paraclete, another Helper to be with you always— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept since the world neither sees her nor recognizes her; but you can recognize the Spirit because she remains with you and will be within you. I won't leave you orphaned; I will come back to you. A little while now and the world will see me no more; but you'll see me;

because I live, and you will live as well. On that day you'll know that I am in God, and you are in me, and I am in you.

### Reflection

GROWTH, GROWTH, GROWTH.... Now where have I heard that recently?

The essence of living the Christian life is about loving the world and everything in it. The Christian way inevitably leads to an understanding of salvation as deification, becoming like Christ. We are to grow into that reality by doing what Christ does: love the world.

In this understanding we can identify sin as meaning living a selfish life. Christian discipleship involves doing everything humanly possible to help others and the planet flourish. This brand of love is not easy or fashionable. In the words of Latin American liberation theologian Gustavo Gutierrez, "When one is concerned about one's own stomach, it's materialism, but when one is concerned about other people's stomachs it is spirituality."

Has the time not come for us to grow up properly? Part of that growth we need to do is to shift our glance on the matter of evil from God to ourselves. The great issue before us should be *our admission of our involvement* in almost every kind of evil presently occurring on our planet. Whether we consider poverty and starvation, genocide, ethnic hatred and warfare, racial and sexual discrimination, greed and hoarding, species decline, deforestation, air and water pollution, land degradation, global warming, and even floods, droughts and tornadoes human beings now are responsible, directly or indirectly, to a lesser or greater degree — and some more than others — for all of the above.

We should stop fretting about what is called 'theodicy' — how and why God is responsible for evil — and consider the increasing and appalling extent to which we are. This would be a salutary task for the religions, and especially Christianity, to take on: to help us see ourselves clearly as the oppressors that we are. Rather than Christianity focusing its concern with evil on God, let us place the blame where, in our time, it primarily belongs: on the privileged middle and upper classes of the world whose greedy consumerist lifestyle is causing greater

evil to millions of impoverished people and to millions of dying species, as well as to the very health of our planet, than any so-called 'act of God' ever has. We are bringing about this evil continuously, silently, and insidiously simply by living the way we do.

So how can we not despair? What possible prospects are there for any significant changes occurring? We can go back to the mists of the early church where we find an early bishop Irenaeus, exclaim 'The glory of God is every creature fully alive' and the other from bishop Serapin of the fourth century, 'We beg you, God, make us fully alive.'

The first statement is the prophetic one, the description of life as it should be and as we, co-creators, should make it be. But the second statement is the sacramental one, the trust that this is able to be brought about, through our willingness and work.

In other words, *we are not alone*. What was it again John's gospel had Jesus say 'I will ask the One who sent me to give you another Paraclete, another Helper to be with you always— the Spirit of truth'. The prophetic witness of Christ tells us what we must do; the paraclete, the helper the Spirit of truth surrounds us with an empowering presence as we attempt to do it. The first and last words — the words of creation and resurrection — are Yes, not No. The No is enclosed within the Yes: we only discover what sin and evil are as we realize the joy of love, the love of others, and the love that is the world.

That is the reality. It is not what we must do or can do, but what the Spirit can and does do through us. We are instruments of divine love and reflections of divine glory. We were created in God's image, in the image of love, and our goal is to grow more fully into that image by loving each other and the world in concrete, practical, daily ways; in other words, in just and sustainable ways. But we are not left on our own to do this: the Spirit of Jesus is with us, all of us, every second of every day. Our task is to become aware of that presence. As we do so we will both see the world differently and be empowered to act differently in and toward it. We are called to see differently — and then to live differently, as differently as we can with the Spirit's help.

In place of the reigning economic worldview or corporate model that leads to the destruction of the environment and the widening gap between the haves and the have-nots, the community or organic model provides a context for the health and well-being of all. We must all abide surely, by three rules as members of the planetary household: take only our own share, clean up after ourselves, and keep the place in good repair for future generations. Jesus as a pioneering householder demonstrated a different way of being in the world with his inclusiveness and egalitarianism.

Jesus said remember, of this Paraclete, one 'whom the world cannot accept since the world neither sees her nor recognizes her. Christian churches and communities who are not beholden to the establishment have a grand mission — to demonstrate a cross shaped living, an alternative notion of the abundant life which will involve a philosophy of sufficiency, enough, meaning limitations on energy use, and sacrifice for the sake of others. Right now, in this time and place believers have the unique opportunity to be justice for the sake of the planet and all its beings.

### Prayer

May we give up on words that are used to argue, score a point, defeat with some clever rhetoric, do down another.

May we give up on words and instead find that place  
where we can say nothing, hurt no one, silence everything,  
and find there all the stories ever told and held in silence  
that gives us the music and blends our poetry with eternity.

May we give up on words that are bitter, full of prejudice and fear that are only used in anger  
and to undo reason, and instead make a deeper place, a silence where new words are born,  
that unfold love  
and reveal grace and invite life once more.

May we hold together all the stories that shape this day: the words and silence, the music and  
the moments.

May we hold together the longing for the future with the reality of the day and find within  
the best of our humanity.

May we hold together the pain of some and the patriotism of others  
and find between them the peace that the world does not yet understand.

May we hold together our faith and our belief that we might find the words to give the world  
and reshape it in hope that it may fully unfold its promise. In our prayer for the world may we  
find ourselves singing songs of life, painting the world bright and inviting all  
to the possibilities now because of what others did then.

### **Blessing**

let us go with words and silence that are eternal,  
that speak of things beyond our ken and invite us to live into the promise of peace  
; that gathers all those who have given everything  
for the sake of that promise.

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