

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

www.stmagnus.org

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/EEu6yTPmqRs>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation
In lighting this candle we declare our intention to live
as if the greatest gift in the world
were about to be placed into our hands
and as if the giver has understood
our deepest needs, our most heartfelt prayers.

Gathering meditation and a time of Silence

Celebration

As we find ourselves wrapped in the season of wonder and light, the astonishment that is life ignites our spirits, and we feel, if merely for a moment, that we are as we were meant to be.

May we hold fast to this sliver of mystery, this truth upon which we set the whole of

who we are. May we call ourselves back to it time and again, until we are filled with the wonder that is our life– its hope, its peace, its joy, its love. Infused, then, with all that we are, may our energies be given to the transformation of this world–from despair into hope; from darkness into light; from fear into love. May we be bold .May we be daring. May we be love.

Love lights the world this Christmas.

Reading

Stable Story

An all-age, non-literal, informal retelling of the stable story for the Sunday after Christmas.

The stable was a bit crowded... but it was warm... Three donkeys and two oxen plus a goat and a few chickens filled the space normally... Now there was a new family squeezing it's way in amongst the animals... a human family... mum, dad and child...

Mum was nearly asleep... child was sound... and dad... Well dad was lying on his stomach with head resting in his hands... staring into the manger... which had been used as the newborns bed... And there was a permanent smile on Joseph's face... for the moment... That would soon all change... babies have the knack of being able to do that...

Joseph's eyes were beginning to get very heavy... Mary had already fallen asleep and the baby was still sound... but then there was a deep in-drawing of breath and Jesus eyes narrowed and he let out an almighty bawl...

Joseph fell over in fright... Mary sat upright... Joseph's eyes great large with fear, not knowing what to do... and Mary started to reach out to Jesus... when the stable door creaked open... and in poured half a dozen shepherds... who nervously edged towards Mary and Joseph... who in turn nervously edged away from them... Mary now holding Jesus...

'Eh, we've come to see the one who is the Prince of Peace.' said one shepherd...

Mary and Joseph looked at each other.

'We think his name is Jesus.' went on the shepherd.

May and Joseph looked at each other again with a look that said, 'Is this what it is going to be like from now on?'

Just then the door swung open again and a couple of travellers from way beyond this land came in saying the same thing. They looked fabulous though a bit dusty, travellers that had seen many things on their journey, but clearly this thing they saw now, was even greater, even greater, and they were silent as silent only as awe can be

Just as they knelt before Jesus, the door creaked open once more and in slid, or floated, or glided, danced or... well who knows how an angel moves, but there were quite a lot of them, and the stable was suddenly very full indeed. Not just with people but with light too. Not just with light, but silence also. Not just silence but glory.

And that glory has been slipping into the world ever since.

Reflection

A Shepherd's Story

"Don't be ridiculous! Stars don't sing, they don't dance and they certainly don't talk to you." I can just hear myself saying it, shouting at our youngest shepherd who had been keeping watch over the midnight hour while the rest of us cooed in round the fire about to have something to eat.

"But they do!" he said "or something strange is going on."

Something strange, I thought, is going on in your head. "Go back. You just fell asleep."

He turned and went away and I was just about to put my teeth into a chicken leg when he was back.

"Look, you'd better come. I think the sky has just exploded!"

"Don't be ridiculous! Look, have some milk, wash your face...and go back on duty. Skies don't explode. I've been on these hills since before your parents were born. It is not a very exciting place. Nothing happens. Ever. Now go back to your duties. My stomach thinks my throat has been cut. Let me have something to eat then we'll come and look."

I rolled my eyes and he turned and left once more.

I opened my mouth ready to take a bite when he was back again "They're talking to me!"

"Why does that not surprise me" I thought. "Who's talking to you?" I asked.

"The stars"

"The stars... and what are the stars saying?"

"Stuff about peace and goodwill to all people"

"Stars don't talk. They never have and they never will." I turned back to my chicken leg.

"But they are tonight!"

This was getting a little frustrating. It was his first week on the job so I laid down my untouched food, got up, and went to see what it was he so clearly wanted me to see. We had been sheltering in a cleft in the rock and as I followed him round the edge into the open field the whole hillside glowed in honey syrup with long butterscotch shadows among the trees. I knew my jaw was open and I was probably mouthing something but I couldn't hear a word.

I don't know what the sheep were doing but the sky had burst open and was rippling with gold streamers like great wings flapping. An aurora sliding across the heavens in great waves in rhythm to the ethereal beat of alleluias.

"Told you!" he said.

"You told me nothing of the sort. You told me the stars were singing and dancing. I thought you were talking about some dream you were having. You didn't tell me the whole heavenly philharmonic had arrived, that shards of gold were falling from the sky, that my old eyes who thought they had seen everything there was to see were now witnessing the whole universe arriving on our hillside and where every photon of light has come together to shape an angel that whispered in gold,

"Alleluia!"

"Well I didn't think you'd believe me if I had said all that."

I just stared.

"Should we go?"

"Go where?"

"To Bethlehem!"

"Bethlehem?"

"Where the Prince of Peace is born."

I was about to say I didn't believe him, but knew better. We called the others and set off telling them the story on the way. When we arrived there was the same golden light in the stable. We sat down by the manger and stared. I'd done a lot of staring that night.

We must have been very quiet because the father asked if we would like something to eat. I remembered I had a chicken leg lying by the fire still, but I wasn't hungry any more. I had eaten enough words tonight to last me a lifetime.

Prayer

In the moon time of the winter. When the sun redly rises. In the moon Time of the winter. When the trees starkly stretch. Then oh Christ, you come. Softly as a gently falling snowflake. With the lusty energy of a newborn boy. The blood and pain of your coming, staining the distant horizon.

In the frost of the Starlight when the sun gives way to moon. In the frost of the Starlight when the earth is turned to stone, then oh Christ, you come.

Slowly as the rhythm of the seasons, quickly as the rush of cradling waters. Worshipped by the wise, adored by the humble. The ecstatic joy of your coming, heralding songs of peace.

Into the world of refugee and soldier, the soles of your feet have touched the ground. Into the world of banker and beggar, the soles of your feet have touched the ground. Into the world of Jew and Arab, the soles of your feet have touched the ground.

Walk with us, saviour of the poor, be a light on our way. Travel beside the weary. Fill the broken hearted with hope and heal the nations that all may walk in the light of the glory of God.

Blessing

May your brussel sprouts be cooked, your table be open, our crackers be decent.
your patience be generous, your hopes be fulfilled and your love be shared.
but of all that happens today may we find God among us,
Jesus between us and the Spirit within us, now and forever.

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