

## **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/U9Edy5moEdo>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

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

### Candle Lighting and opening meditation

We light this candle to remind ourselves that our faith is not in our words but in our lives, not in what we say but in who we are. May we pass on God's love like an infectious laugh: shining like the sun, like a starry night, like a lamp on a stand, light for life, a light for our lives.

Winter is a sacred opportunity. A magnificent time of stillness, emptiness, and the inner journey. Not just in the exterior world, but also in the interior world, there is a natural stripping away.

Even with its snow storms and blizzards, winter is the quietest time of the year. There is a hush after a new snowfall. When there is no wind, nothing is moving, and all we hear is a deep silence... everywhere. It is in those moments that we realize how magnificent silence can really be.

Our spiritual journeys are the human experience of winter. On our journey we realize it is not so much about looking for a right answer, or even our concept of enlightenment, so much as it is a stripping away, and letting go of what is not necessary, what we can do without, what we are without our leaves.

For human beings, our leaves, are our ideas, concepts, and attachments, all that defines our identity. Our spiritual journeys are the letting go of these leaves, our return to our essential root nature.

Reading

**Matthew 5: 38-48**

Jesus said...

"You've heard the commandment, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you, offer no resistance whatsoever when you're confronted with violence. When someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn and offer the other. If anyone wants to sue you for your shirt, hand over your coat as well. Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go two miles. Give to those who beg from you. And don't turn your back on those who want to borrow from you. 43 "You have heard it said, 'Love your neighbour—but hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for your persecutors. This will prove that you are children of God. For God makes the sun rise on bad and good alike; God's rain falls on the just and the unjust. If you love those who love you, what merit is there in that? Don't tax collectors do as much? And if you greet only your sisters and brothers, what is so praiseworthy about that? Don't Gentiles do as much? Therefore be perfect, as Abba God in heaven is perfect.

Reflection

I tell you, love your enemies and pray for your persecutors. This will prove that you are children of God.

There are many ways to be a peacemaker and an activist for justice in the world. Not everyone can be on the frontlines doing the gritty work of trying to turn things around. Not everyone can be in contact with government decision-makers or march in demonstrations. But we can each make steps for inner and outer peace. I know of a person who reconciled with her family who had violated her in body, mind, and spirit. She made an arduous and painful journey of forgiveness. That, too, was peacemaking.

But what of what has been called the "quiet activism" of bringing peace and justice into being through praying for others and the world, praying with our actions, praying for renewal, praying to be transformed, and praying for discernment. As Richard Foster reminds us: "Praying for justice and peace is a prophetic act that calls us to stretch our arms out wide and embrace the whole world. In holy boldness we cover the earth with the grace and the mercy of God."

Experience tells us about the incalculable benefits of intercessory prayer. Keeping those who struggle for peace and justice in our hearts is an important contribution to the healing of our communities.

There are many illustrations of the value of praying for one's enemies. We are reminded that in the Aramaic [the language Jesus spoke] the word that is commonly translated as "enemy" can mean "someone with whom we are out of step." This opens up plenty of fresh possibilities for carrying our enemies to Christ in our prayers.

Peace activist Bernie Glassman "bears witness" as an example given of prayerful activism. He has lead retreats at conflicted places that are drenched with the suffering and pain of others. Those who participate in these events "go with empty hands and minds and hearts to simply be present with what is." Glassman calls this loving presence with no words, no actions, and no agenda.

Sometimes wordless prayers are a way to pray for our enemies. We can simply lift the person or the people up in the Spirit. To do this, imagine you are holding in your hands the one with whom you are out of step. Using your body, raise your arms and hands as high as you can reach, as if you were lifting the person into the presence of God. Hold him or her there for a moment, then open your hands and let the person go into God's loving care. As you allow your hands to return to your sides, feel the experience of release. When resentment, bitterness, and anger

return, you can pray this prayer again — holding, lifting, and releasing — until your heart softens and your prayers are transformed.

There's a great example story of how Lois, a student in theological college, decided to pray for Osama bin Laden, following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States and discovered this prayer form for herself. She made her commitment in the context of a class assignment to choose one issue of justice and peace to pray about daily for the ten weeks of the course. The students had a week to reflect and to decide where they would focus their prayers of intercession. At the beginning of the following class, they were asked to share one at a time who or what they would be praying for. Lois told the group later that she had been surprised by her decision to pray for Osama bin Laden. 'When we were asked to share our prayer commitments, I hadn't made up my mind. When it was my turn to speak, his name just popped out of my mouth. I knew I would have no prayer words to utter. I realized that all I could do was to hold him up to the love of God.'

As the class paused to reflect on the wide variety of prayer commitments, one woman said, 'I am grateful someone is praying for Osama bin Laden. I know I can't.' There was a murmur of agreement and appreciation from other students.

'I felt their support for my difficult prayer,' Lois said. 'It made it easier in subsequent weeks to raise him into the presence of the Spirit. Sometimes he felt so heavy that I could hardly lift him, but I knew I was being supported by my classmates.'

One day when she was praying, Osama bin Laden seemed particularly difficult to lift. She remembered a phrase from an old song from the Hollies: 'He ain't heavy, he's my brother.' Lois was overcome by the grace of that insight. In praying for the enemy, her heart had been transformed. 'I cannot think of him as I did before. I read the newspapers differently. He is still the enemy of my country. And he is my brother.'

### Prayer

Some days are like this,  
you wake with an ache in your chest  
that isn't even yours.

You know that somewhere, great rivers  
of blood are being shed.

Somewhere, mothers are weeping over  
children, bodies strewn like wildflowers.  
Somewhere, men and women eat a bowl of pain —  
A man tells his wife that he is leaving,  
A woman wakes in an empty bed  
or puts her hand to an empty place  
where a breast was.  
Somewhere, in the screeching of brakes  
there is a shattering, of glass, of lives.

This earth is covered in a sea of suffering.  
If for a few moments we manage to forget  
do not begrudge us our wine, our prayer, our reaching out  
for a word, a touch,  
even from a stranger.

#### Blessing

Be a blessing in the world.  
Be a word that brings life.  
Be a community that speaks love.  
Be God's people wherever you are.  
Be the blessing of the kingdom.

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