

## **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/8NiD0zSJa1E>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

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

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

The spirit of imagination is a gift to all people. The spirit of faithfulness  
is the gift of the earth.

The spirit of love is a gift to the church in every age. We see the flame  
of the Spirit of God.

We come together this morning, seeking a reality beyond our narrow  
selves;

that binds us in compassion, love, and understanding to other human  
beings, and to the interdependent web of all living things.

We pause, pray, doze and dare new thinking right now. We relax, concentrate, listen and let go. All is well and as it should be. Yet, we are also on the move, on the way in this beautiful summer season. Might we on this new day display the virtue of elasticity; that our minds and hearts and hands would be boundless and active as we think, plan and play. Just as a new galaxy or infant sun is born, so would we be active and open to new birth, another chapter of living and being and discovery. In the perpetual birthing of the universe, we are ever new - in cell and sinew, in thought and habit that would slowly and surely transform our tired thoughts and this troubled and yet gorgeous world.

### Reading from Proverbs 17

You will keep your friends  
if you forgive them,  
but you will lose your friends  
if you keep talking about  
what they did wrong.

You will always have trouble  
if you are mean to those  
who are good to you.  
The start of an argument  
is like a water leak—  
so stop it before  
real trouble breaks out.  
A friend is there to help,  
in any situation,  
and relatives are born  
to share our troubles.

The wicked and the proud  
love trouble and keep begging  
to be hurt.

Dishonesty does you no good,  
and telling lies  
will get you in trouble.  
If you are cheerful,  
you feel good;  
if you are sad,  
you hurt all over.

Anyone with wisdom knows  
what makes good sense,  
but fools can never  
make up their minds.  
It isn't fair  
to punish the innocent  
and those who do right.  
It makes a lot of sense  
to be a person of few words  
and to stay calm.

Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise;  
When he closes his lips, he is considered prudent.

## Reflection

### The need to retreat

A carpet of silence is what we have to create as we take our first step into the sanctuary of quietness — a tall order for most people nowadays. So let's consider the place of silence in the busy world of everyday life. To begin with, notice that silence is often considered awkward: witness the embarrassed silence of people at a party not sure what to say next, or of a group of strangers stuck in a lift. These awkward silences disturb us. On the other hand, there is a silence that consoles us: the silence of a sleeping child, the stillness of mountains, or the tranquillity of a cathedral.

As with silence, so too with sound: there is good sound and bad sound. But in the case of sound we have a separate word to describe the bad sort — namely, noise. Incessant noise creates stress and deprives us of sleep, while at an extreme it can be used as torture; and yet the right kind of sound is highly sought after. Really loud rock music is popular and clubs pump it out to paying customers; it may be noise to some of us, but to others it is 'the latest sound.' Even in the milder context of a supermarket, canned music is present in the background to provide the right kind of sound and to keep bad silence at bay. More positively, classical music is used in classrooms to calm the atmosphere and to help students concentrate. In essence, the wrong kind of noise disturbs us and the right kind of sound helps us.

The challenge for people today is to find positive silence in the city, the setting in which most people now live. Perhaps the biggest challenge,

however, is to help people find positive silence inside themselves. In the quest for sanctuary people often find the biggest obstacles are inside themselves. These obstacles are of different kinds and at different levels, but the first one that people most commonly encounter is what we can call 'noises inside my head.' This is not 'the voices inside my head' of the delirious or insane person; this is the simpler phenomenon of thoughts racing in all directions at once.

One of the newer attractions nowadays is a rediscovery of retreats. Invariably those who go on retreat for the first time, are invited to spend some time in silence. At one level this is what they crave and why they have come. So they are often shocked to discover that no sooner have they removed the daily routine, set aside the television, and found a place of silence than their head fills up with trivial thoughts: 'I wonder what's for supper.' 'I need to book an appointment with the dentist.' 'I need to WhatsApp my cousin.' People discover, to their shame and embarrassment, that the busyness of life has got right inside their heads and they can't get it out. To empty our heads of all thoughts, words, and images is almost impossible; yet somehow these distressing internal noises need to become gentle internal sounds.

So how do we address the challenge of 'the noises in my head,?' In the monastic tradition there is a basic background of silence: where people today commonly have background music, monks have background silence. In some monasteries the norm is that the silence is broken only in order to communicate during work or in order to receive guests. All monasteries promote background silence by having meals in silence during which a monk reads aloud from a book and by having the 'Greater Silence' from about 9 p.m. until about 8 a.m., so that the night-time silence is especially profound.

This degree of physical silence is a great help in fostering inner silence. But this silence is not an end in itself; it is there to let inner silence grow so that the inner life might flourish. A gardening analogy may help here: if we have not been used to silence, the first things we notice when we enter into it are the distractions inside ourselves — the weeds. Even when we pull them up and throw them away, they grow back again quickly and we wonder why we bothered. But we need to keep weeding in order to let the flowers grow. The trouble is that the flowers grow more slowly than the weeds, and so we give up.

That we might find sanctuary without having to become a monk or a nun, can we envisage a kind of community that might be best described as the windows of the building: they protect us from the elements, yet they also allow us to see other people and let in the light of their presence. We can see their needs and communicate with them; we can also open the door of the sanctuary, the door of our hearts, and let them in. If our sanctuary has no windows, it will be a dark and gloomy place. So, like good builders, we need to balance out the need for windows with the need for strong walls. The strong walls of faith need the windows of community to ensure that our sanctuary is bright and welcoming, yet somewhere into which we can also retreat.

### Prayer

We are called to be stewards of the whole earth, responsible to work on behalf of all creatures to ensure what is necessary for all. May the Spirit help us fulfil our vocation faithfully.

We are called to be members of one body and are given a variety of gifts so that we may accomplish a variety of tasks and meet a variety of needs in creation.

May the Spirit help us fulfil our vocation faithfully.

Jesus showed us the way to be a servant people, people of faithful covenant, witnesses to the nations, lifting up one another and bringing down the walls of alienation.

May the Spirit help us fulfil our vocation faithfully.

May we trust the empowering, inspiring and renewing presence of the Spirit in creation. May we let go of our self-importance and allow the Spirit to work beyond us. May we be wise stewards of the life energy of the Spirit in us. May we be people of servanthood and people of Sabbath.

May the Spirit help us fulfil our vocation faithfully.

### Blessing

Go and sow,  
go and scatter,  
go and spread  
the Word of God is for the world;  
the Word of God is the song of love for all.

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

