

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

[St Magnus Cathedral Facebook page](#)

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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 on Facebook](#)

<https://www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation/>

or [on YouTube here](#)

<https://youtu.be/kHju3w29eLQ>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

As we kindle this symbol of light - our Christ Candle - let us think for a moment about why we've logged in here today, and what it is we hope this time of worship might bring.

We are a tiny part of this amazing universe . And yet the word tells us God saw we were very good.

We are weak and selfish, we are easily led astray and give in to temptation more often than we should. And yet Jesus tells us we are forgiven and loved.

Love is revealed in creation, in word and flesh how can we fail to believe it?

Why do we fail so often to live a life that reflects love?

We know we are loved and yet we too often choose to respond to situations in hate.

We know we are forgiven and yet we too often choose not to forgive others for their wrong doing.

We are made in the image of God but we are not God... we are prone to make mistakes and choose wrong over right.

May we see our faults and failings - to desire to be better to be more like Jesus and to follow in his way.

Reading from James 1;

Think of it as pure joy, my sisters and brothers, whenever you face trials of any sort. You understand that your faith is put to the test only to make you patient, but patience too has its practical results—it's to make you fully mature and lacking in nothing. If you lack wisdom, ask for it from God, who gives generously and ungrudgingly to all, and it will be given to you. But you must ask in faith, never doubting, for the doubter is like the surf tossed and driven by the wind. People like this must not expect to receive anything from God, for they are devious and erratic in all they do.

Make no mistake about this, my dear sisters and brothers: every worthwhile gift, every genuine benefit comes from above, descending from the Creator of the heavenly luminaries, who cannot change and is never in shadow. God willingly gave birth to us with a word spoken in truth, so that we may be, as it were, the firstfruits of God's creatures. Remember this, my dear sisters and brothers: be quick to listen, but slow to speak and slow to anger; for God's justice is never served by our anger. Pure, unspoiled religion, in the eyes of our Abba God, is this: coming to the aid of widows and orphans when they are in need.

Reflection

Religious scholars and cultural analysts have been trying to map the complicated phenomenon of the changing landscape of religion in the UK.

The numbers of people who call themselves Christians are steadily declining, while the "Nones," those who claim no religious affiliation on polls and surveys, is now the fastest growing group in the population overall. A third of millennials identify themselves as religiously unaffiliated, and about a quarter of adults overall. We call this group "spiritual independents" because although some do say they are atheists and agnostics, most consider themselves to be "spiritual."

These people are on a quest, like religious people in the past, but they are seeking new forms of community and their own practices and devotions. They advocate intuition rather than institutions.

So there is an immense transformation taking place in what has been called the 'post-religion age' where culture wars are raging, spiritual anarchy is popping up in strange places, and many of those who have left Christian churches are still yearning to create their own special tribes with a strong and a keen sense of belonging.

A plethora of different faith systems have come alive during the decline of Christianity. These range from the beliefs and practices of fandoms and fan fiction sites with the Harry Potter franchise leading the way; the growing popularity of Wicca and its many neopagan rituals; the wellness culture and its emphasis on self-care, characterized by products promoted by Gwyneth Paltrow's *Goop* like jade eggs and juice cleanses.

The diversity of "new religions" take adherents on a jaunty quest for meaning, purpose, and ritual. Internet and consumer capitalism have got into this post-Christian religious search which excludes an institutional base, creeds, and clergy.

These spiritual orientations offer lively opportunities to think about one's view of what it means to be human, to be free, to reside in a hackable future, to think about utopianism, to probe the religious dimensions of extremist groups, and to contemplate the importance of modern justice movements.

It will be edifying to see what kinds of rituals, values, mystical excursions, and philosophies these devotees of "remixed" religions come

up with, especially in the face of future environmental disasters, economic woes, more global pandemics, and the ongoing crises facing millions of homeless refugees.

It perhaps comes as no surprise that some are critical of the self-oriented character of these paths.

What observers are seeing is a return to what might be called 'old-school forms of worship' as a way of escaping from the crisis of modernity and the liberalist-capitalist faith in individualism.

By a return to "old-school forms of worship," I means things like Eastern Orthodox piety and an affirmation of the Latin Mass.

Today's new expression of religion centre round a sense of meaning based in narratives placing the locus of authority on people's experiential emotions, what you might call gut instinct. Society, institutions, credited authorities, experts, expectations, rules of conduct — all these are generally treated not just as irrelevant, but as sources of active evil. Wellness culture, modern occultism, social justice activism, and others all share a fundamental distrust, if not outright contempt, for institutions and scripts. Most of these new religions share, too, the grand narrative that oppressive societies and unfairly narrow expectations stymie natural — and sometimes even divine — human potential.

Today's religions trumpet different forms of emotional experience as the key to interpreting both meaning and purpose. They value, too, authenticity: the idea that one's actions are in harmony with one's emotions. They're less keen on rules, or doctrines, or moral codes that they dismiss as restrictive or outmoded. They're suspicious of moral or truth-claims that don't root themselves in subjective experience. Three-quarters of millennials (and 67 percent of the religious Nones overall) now say they agree with the statement 'Whatever is right for your life or works best for you is the only truth you can know,' compared with just 39 percent of the elderly, and half of practicing Christians of all ages. Among the most common sayings among the people in one survey was, 'I made my own religion.'

People are willing to put their consumer collars into pursuing these new religions. 'Spirituality sells' is the slogan for post-2016.

"The most successful new religions of 2020 and beyond are the ones that have taken this intuitional turn and found ways to make it both communal and — in an increasingly brand-driven age -- saleable. They're the ones that take the extant consumer-capitalist culture of our age — smartphones, social media, Moon Juice, oat milk — and make interacting with it into a sacred ritual, an avenue to fulfilling a wider purpose in a meaningful world. They're the ones that alchemize our everyday activities — eating, working out, following the news, posting on social media — and turn them into strange and sacred rites, not hobbies but rituals.

Often we have brought it on ourselves. For many women who see in organized religion the relics of an oppressive patriarchal culture, or for the nearly 50 percent of queer people — so often marginalized by traditional faiths — who now call themselves religiously unaffiliates, these new religions offer an opportunity to seek out spiritual trust and a connection with the divine, beyond doctrine (and often communities) that would treat them as pariahs.

"But, at the same time, the unmanageable nature of these new intuitional religions — each one, at its core, a religion of the self — risks creating a culture in which our desire for personal authenticity and experiential fulfillment takes precedent over our willingness to build coherent ideological systems and functional, sustainable institutions.

When we are all our own high priests, who is willing to kneel?

Prayer

May the Spirit of God,
among the streets of business
and in places of healing and learning:
Renew the face of the earth.

Among the swaying barley and in the grass filled meadows
Renew the face of the earth.

Among the tired and broken families:

Among these people and with their gifts:

Renew the face of the earth.

We are people of all ages who enter this platform
bringing our joys and concerns.
In the light and beauty of day
We give thanks in awe and wonder.
In the dark and stillness of night
We dream of healing and hope

In all our joys and in all our concerns, may we be ever mindful
of the presence of God among us, and to see new possibilities of the now.

Blessing

Let's pledge ourselves anew to that high cause of greater understanding
of who we are, and what in us is true.
We would be one in living for each other
to show to all a new community.

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