

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](#)

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

We light this candle
to kindle a flame of warmth
as a reminder
of the connection that draws us in
to a community that opens us up in gratitude
for the gift of this day,
alive.

Already here. Unrecognised.

Loitering in the shadows with the poor
and the outcasts,
the downtrodden

and the marginalised.

Already here,
bringing light into darkness and hope into fear
and we shall see God
when we look at our neighbour.

Already here. Incarnation.
God with us now.

God's kingdom,
not some future hope but here, now
as Christ lives among us, always showing up, bringing light and love,
revealing the kingdom.

Already here.

Reading **John 17: 1-11**

After Jesus said this, he looked up to heaven and said,
"Abba, the hour has come!
Glorify your Only Begotten
that I may glorify you, through the authority you've given me over all
humankind,
by bestowing eternal life on all those you gave me. And this is eternal life:
to know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent,
Jesus, the Messiah. I have given you glory on earth
by finishing the work you gave me to do. Now, Abba, glorify me with your
own glory, the glory I had with you before the world began.
I have manifested your Name to those you gave me from the world.
They were yours, and you gave them to me;
and now they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you've
entrusted to me does indeed come from you.
I entrusted to them the message you entrusted to me,
and they received it.
They know that I really came from you; they believe it was you who sent
me. And it's for them that I pray— not for the world,

but for these you've given me—
for they are really yours, just as all that belongs to me is yours,
and all that belongs to you is mine.
It is in them that I have been glorified. I am in the world no more,
but while I am coming to you, they are still in the world.
Abba, holy God, protect those whom you have given me
with your Name— the Name that you gave me—
that they may be one, even as we are one.

Reflection

Nowhere in the New Testament does Jesus say that he is God. Specifically, he rebukes one who calls him good, saying that only God is good. He prays to God, who he says, is both our Father and his Father. Jesus is adopted as God's faithful son, as his emissary. He is a man who is subordinate to but also one with God, filled with God's spirit. In his life, death, and resurrection Jesus' followers saw God fully revealed. We begin with the scriptures here. We end up with Jesus dwelling in heaven before his birth and coming down to take on a human form. High Christology won. If you doubt this, just look at what is suspect as heresy even now. To say that Jesus was a man who was one with and transparent to God is to invite raised eyebrows in some quarters of the church. But to say that Jesus is God and to pray to him as such is commonplace. This would never be called heresy.

And so the church evolved in its view of Jesus during those formative centuries. We are left with the legacy. Why did this evolution take place, and why is this legacy perpetuated even today? Mainstream theologians tell us that the Holy Spirit, over those four hundred years, lead the church into a fuller understanding of Christ's nature, even fuller than Jesus' own understanding during his lifetime!

I think that there is a more basic, human reason for the victory of high Christology: we put Jesus on a pedestal in order to keep him safely at a distance. It is easier to worship Jesus than to follow him.

Jesus knew his own unity with God, without a doubt. He was beyond dualism. Jesus said that his unity, and the extraordinary things he did, were possible for those with faith. He prayed that we would be one with God even as he was. He asked that we know the fullness of joy and glory

in God that he knew. But it is easier for us to see ourselves as forever separate and sinful.

To see our unity with God would mean that we would learn to move through our sins, our relative separateness, with the confidence of those who know who they really are. It is easier to worry, to be weak, and to lean on the rescuing power of God. To see our unity with God necessitates that we practice a form of prayer that gives us an experience of that unity. It is easier to ask God for help, to have a conversation. To see our oneness means that we revere God's presence in all our feelings, actions, bodily sensations, and thoughts. It is easier to make Jesus into the only place we need to look for God.

Jesus called us to see the immediacy, the incarnation of God in this life. He pointed to God's kingdom everywhere. Jesus called his followers to see the beauty and challenge of this incarnation in their everyday lives. But it is easier for us not to rise to this challenge. It is easier to make Jesus the alpha and omega of God's kingdom. It is easier to make Jesus the only Incarnation of God.

Jesus also called us to die with him. Referring to his own inevitable arrest and crucifixion (which he knew would only be a matter of time), Jesus said that we have to take up our cross daily and follow him if we are to be his disciples.

It is easier to make Jesus' death on the cross a pietistic wonder. Lost in our sins, rescued by the precious blood of his sacrifice, we are grateful. We may be grateful, but are we willing to pick up our own cross daily? To do so means that we must learn how to die daily to our fears and self-centred ambitions, our aversions and attractions. To take up our cross daily means that we enter the emptiness of our heart and die there, like Jesus did. It is easier to glorify the cross of Christ. It is easier to believe in the cross than to take it up.

We need a vibrant, mature, and adventuresome view of Christianity that is "big enough to honour the richness, diversity and sacredness of all."

Jesus' emphasis upon seeing the Kingdom of God everywhere is a path which can give sacred meaning to everyday life. "We say that God took flesh in Jesus, but God also takes on flesh or meaning if you like, in all of creation." The Spirit of God moves within our body, our relationships, community, society, and the whole universe. The

riches and the relevance of the Christian contemplative tradition must be set free to proclaim the immediate presence of God in life. That way the Church can begin to re-engage with the millions who have turned their back on the gospel as being irrelevant to their lives.

Prayer

God, calls us to be Church: to create - across cultural, age and class boundaries - a laboratory of peace, testing out Christ's vision of community and love as we struggle to live with our differences.

God, calls us to be Church: to be a parable of the Kingdom, allowing the upside-down values of Christ's commonwealth to nudge us away from the acquisitive and self-regarding attitudes of our day.

God, calls us to be Church to be a sign of contradiction among the nations, pointing to hope in the midst of disillusion, offering non-violent resistance when evil threatens, accepting loss of prestige or wealth in the cause of justice.

God, calls us to be Church to be a place of welcome and warmth, where what is ignored elsewhere may be heard and honoured, where sorrows may be shared and stories told, where hard questions may be asked and new ideas greeted with joy.

God, calls us to be Church to be a community of praise, cracking open the dry husks of cynicism and despair, being clowns and jesters for Christ, celebrating the mystery of faith in stillness and song.

The kingdom of love is coming because:
somewhere someone is kind when others are unkind,
somewhere someone shares with another in need,
somewhere someone refuses to hate, while others hate,
somewhere someone is patient - and waits in love,
somewhere someone returns good for evil,
somewhere someone serves another, in love,

somewhere someone is calm in a storm,
somewhere someone is loving everybody.

Blessing

May we open ourselves ever more fully to that Eternal Mystery
which lures us onward toward life and creativity.

May we find the courage to live our faith, to speak our truth, and to
strive together for a world where freedom abounds
and justice truly does roll down like water.

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