

## **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.

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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](mailto:stmagnuszoom@gmail.com)

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

We light this flame  
For the art of sacred unknowing.  
Humbled by all that we cannot fathom in this time,  
We come into the presence of what we do know,  
Perhaps the only thing we can ever know:  
That Love is now and forever  
The only answer to everything

And everyone  
In every moment.

#### Reading 1 Thessalonians 5:

But as to specific times and eras, sisters and brothers, you don't need me to tell you anything— you know very well that the Day of God is coming like a thief in the night. Just when people are saying, "At last we have peace and security," then destruction will fall on them with the suddenness of labour pains, and there will be no escape. But you, sisters and brothers, are not in the dark. The Day of God will not catch you like a thief. No, you are all children of light and children of the day. We don't belong to the darkness or the night. So let's not be asleep as others are— let's be awake and sober! Those who sleep do so at night, and those who get drunk do so at night. But we belong to the day, so let us be sober. So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you're already doing. And live in peace with each other.

#### Reflection

The old saying "Better the devil you know!" has roots in reality deeper than many of us may realise. It's a spry way of pointing out the genuine safety of well tried and tested methods for dealing with life's uncertainties.

Change is a familiar companion to those of us who live in the world's wealthy economies. It's sometimes hard for us to understand that most of the world's citizens look on new ways very differently. For the most part, they live far closer to suffering and death than do we. And when one lives on the edge, when a relatively slight error could pitch one into disaster, then the tried and tested is a better ally than risky experiment.

There's a story which tells how cattle experts spent days carefully explaining to African tribesmen how to increase milk and meat yields in their herds. After much talk, including quiet consultations in clan meetings, the answer came back: "This is not how our forefathers have done it. Your ways may be good, but ours work better."

Many Jews before and after Jesus, who lived on the breadline, whose families were constantly at risk from war and famine, stayed with the old

ways so fiercely that they died in their tens of thousands to protect the ways of their fathers. To this day in Palestine, the killing continues on much the same grounds.

In this hopeless struggle, the Jewish people looked to the Messiah to eventually liberate them from the oppressive yoke of Roman power and High Priestly collaborators. That's why the Thessalonians to whom Paul is writing, and who thought of Jesus as the Messiah, expected "the end of the world" to come soon. Jesus the Messiah would liberate them because they couldn't liberate themselves. The "Lord's coming" would be soon, and they with the oppressed of the world, would at last be free and secure from war, famine and disease.

Alas, as we now know, their expectation was false. Jesus has not come again as they expected. We all still struggle against those forces which bring suffering and death to us. There is no prospect of anything changing. Far from it! The constant, wearing pressure from those who would subjugate us, who would spend our lives for their own gain and power, is a constant we ignore at our peril.

And so, where is this rescuing Jesus today? Can we still look forward as our Christian forebears did to "... the sound of God's trumpet" and Jesus coming down from heaven? As many of us know, perhaps with a sense of astonishment and disbelief, some Christians are able to do just that. I, for one, can't understand the world in those terms.

So if we are not to be taken by surprise, how can we remain "awake and sober," as Paul puts it?

Think of it this way. When we are asleep or drunk we cease to be fully aware of my surroundings. We are cut off from the messages of our environment. When we're like this, we're at risk from the dangerous yet promise-filled world around us.

It seems to that Christians today should perhaps no longer hang on to the so-called "Second Coming" just because "the Bible says so". There's a danger that we remain with the concept because it's so familiar and we've heard it so often. If so, it may become a "devil we know" and prevent us from living in the real world of opportunity, growth, excitement and adventure - in short, the real world of constant and inevitable change.

We must, however, stay alert. We know enough about how Jesus lived to build on him as a sure foundation. For example, we try to remain sure in our hearts that a full life, including all the changes and risks it brings, is what God's spirit desires for us. Jesus thought that not even a sparrow falls without God's knowledge. There is no need merely to stay with the devil we know just to remain safe.

The Spirit speaks to us through Jesus, through other people and through nature itself - but only when we remain alert, when we strive to hear the still, small voice, when we look carefully for the signs of the times.

The Spirit of God comes to us unexpectedly, like a thief in the night and we need to stay awake.

#### Prayer

We lay before God the hearts, minds and bodies  
of all those suffering from violence  
in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel.  
May the spirit of justice and reconciliation  
be showered upon all the people of this holy land

In Christ all life is connected  
and all the Earth and its land are to be cherished, not controlled.  
The Spirit's gifts are for all.  
Yet as we see the violence and hatred in the land called Holy,  
and see the signs of climate breakdown,  
may we all redouble our efforts to work to live in communion.

As people of many religions remind us:  
All humanity is connected, no one is really free until all are free.  
We pray for those who live in fear of the other;  
For all who consider violence to be the way forward.  
We pray for all who by acting in hate dehumanise themselves.

Our Creator dwells within - All in all,  
In whom we live and move and have our being.  
Whose name is wholeness —  
Whos Kingdom is here and now.

May the Spirit Give us this day our daily bread -  
and help us let go of all grievances — as we  
extend our love to others.

Lead us not into illusions of separation -  
And help us transcend our ego thoughts.  
Surround us with healing light - within which  
are eternal truth and love.

### Blessing

We are sent;

In the name of Jesus, who taught us how to act responsibly;

In the name of the holy Spirit, who guides us still;

Trusting in the talents we have received, to walk in God's way

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