

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 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.

The invitation has been issued: Be still and to enter into this moment.
Bring your worries into this silence and make them your prayers.

We are here together in this place, to profess and deepen our faith.

A diverse community, each with a life lived and stories to tell, welcoming.
United in faith in the ever-loving God of forgiveness and hope.
The strands of our faith may vary but together they are woven into the
fellowship that we feel here.

Reading

from Habakkuk 3 [Yahweh is the Hebrew name for God]

A song to Yahweh.

You come forth to save your people, to deliver your anointed; you have razed the evildoer's house, bared its foundations to the rock. With your shafts you pierce the heads of their leaders. But like a whirlwind they try to sweep us away, shouting joyfully as if they were devouring the poor in secret. So you tread the sea with your horses as the mighty waters foam.

I hear that roar, and my body quakes; my lips quiver at the sound; weakness overcomes my limbs, and my feet totter in their tracks; I long for the day of disaster to dawn over our attackers. The fig tree has no buds, the vines bear no harvest, the olive oil yield fail, the fields produce no yield, the sheep vanish from the fold, and there are no cattle in the stalls. But I will rejoice in Yahweh, I will exult in God my Saviour. My sovereign Yahweh is my strength! God makes my feet as agile as a deer's, and teaches me to walk on my high places.

Reflection

I have talked often in the past about forgiveness - one the central themes of Jesus' teachings. Forgiveness is about letting go, *really* letting go of resentment and bitterness — both personal and global. We can rally sense the resentment of Habakkuk in his outburst to Yahweh.

Forgiveness requires strength of character, it requires courage, a courage that needs to be replenished daily and rekindled when it falters. Forgiveness requires a commitment to something other than revenge and the natural desire for retribution and/or an apology. It requires, since there are events and behaviours that are unforgivable, ultimate compassion.

To forgive someone or something implies that there has been a transgression. You have been violated, hurt, insulted, treated badly or inhumanely, or somehow suffered greatly by another's actions. Something very valuable has been taken away; there has been grievous harm. Sometimes the transgression is factual; someone has been murdered,

tortured, raped, neglected, beaten, publicly humiliated, or oppressed. Habakkuk finds himself in that position - and shouts loudly to God 'I long for the day of disaster to dawn over our attackers.'

Sometimes the transgression is subjective; we get our feelings hurt in ways that would not necessarily hurt someone else's feelings. Someone forgot your name at a party, your child was overlooked for a school prize, someone assaulted your leadership style, or your boss did not pick up your ideas. I am sure we all have tucked away in our unconscious a little list of people who have hurt us in some way in our lives. And we keep the list even though they can no longer hurt us, as if forgiving them will give us amnesia, and we'll get hurt by them again.

Hatred, resentment, and a desire for revenge and getting even are heavy emotions that weigh us down. Heavy emotions, reliving the trauma or fight, and being tied to the past robs creativity, spontaneity, fun, and any semblance of a free life. We become virtual prisoners caged inside our own moods and dark thoughts, whether we are painfully tied to the traumatic insults waged against our bodies and spirits or fuelling the flames of everyday grudges and insults. We instinctively know holding hate and resentment is not good for us, but being willing to let it go, knowing we are so justified in feeling a sense of outrage and a desire for justice, is another kettle of fish altogether.

It is understandable and instinctive to experience the strong negative feelings associated with being harmed, insulted, and injured. We want to blame the person or people who hurt us; we want to see them suffer. We want them to hurt every bit as much as we have been hurt. We instinctively look for ways to make ourselves feel better, stronger, back to centre. We don't want to view ourselves as the hurt, the weak, and the one under. It feels further humiliating to be unable to right the situation, protect ourselves, or stop the aggression or injustices. Even when we have been victimized, we dislike being the victim.

Resentment creates a heavy heart and fuzzy thinking for the one carrying it. It can result in obsessing and ruminating on what has been done to us or what we have done to someone else. Or, in so many cases, putting childhood events and stored-up hatred and resentment out of mind, only to have them appear as unrelated depression and irritability.

It is not unusual for resentment to keep us awake at night, invade other healthier thoughts, interfere in other relationships, and create

distractions at work. This is costly and counterproductive, to *you*, not the person who harmed you. As the adage says, resentment is taking poison and waiting for the other person to die. We who hold the memory, consciously or not, the thoughts and the feelings of the transgression, are the ones who are suffering, and we are the only ones who have the power to transcend the heaviness.

Through forgiving and cultivating genuine compassion, we take our power back; we open the door to freedom. We discover the freedom to be inventive in relating to others, to handling traumatic experiences in a strong and firm manner and standing up for ourselves without damaging anyone else.

Being resilient, weathering the next storm or navigating the present upheaval requires an open heart and a clear mind that results from forgiving and having compassion.

To be resilient requires a lightness of step and the flexibility to move and not stay stuck or mired in yesterday. It is through accepting the reality of what has been done, accepting the reality of having been hurt, betrayed, wronged; working through the layers and layers of difficult emotions and thoughts accompanying the injury, and finding ways to improve our life and state of mind that gives us the best opportunity for true freedom from insult and trauma. It is through admitting, feeling, and letting go of the negative emotions associated with the perceived wrong that we transcend victimization.

Many people are under the illusion that forgiveness lets the misdoer off the hook; it does not. Genuine forgiveness is not about condoning awful behaviour. Forgiveness and compassion do not give a green light to what has been done. There's no question that perpetrators who are in a position to hurt again need to be stopped. Ironically, the clearer we are, the less saddled with the negativity of previous transgressions, the more creative and effective we can be in stopping further violations. The fewer resentment blocks we have, the more access we have to saying no; cursing the appropriately and in a resilient fashion protects us or anyone else who needs it.

Prayer

"Shalom" said Yocheved to her Hamas guard. Peace. Is that how you feel,
Mother God, when you hold wide your arms of eternal and unconditional
love and forgive us, over and over again?

Forgiveness - we pray about it week by week.
Forgiver, whose embrace brings us to wholeness without our asking,
May we reconcile ourselves to one another in humility.

Mother God, may we practice the forgiveness that we pray for, however
hard it is, no matter how much ego and hurt are involved in forgiving. May
we be mindful and whole-heartedly committed to all that is needed, on
both sides, for reconciliation and forgiveness to work. And to last.
Here. Levelling up. Between north and south. Rich and poor. All the
nations of the earth that are in conflict.

If we were starving, could and would we praise you, Lord?
When shelves on our Islands were empty for just a day or two we felt
aggrieved and vulnerable. But we can change our menus and knew that our
shops will be full again very soon. Yet the empty fields, vineyards and
barns of Habakuk's prayer are a daily reality for many with climate
change the root of so much failure. Failure of fruitfulness, abundance and
fair shares. Of the environment that has nurtured humanity and of which
we are now so careless. Creator God, we are your custodians of this
earth. We should not be its destructors. May we see the changes needed
for everyone to have a chance of survival, and make them happen. We can
be happy with less.

Shalom. Peace. Forgiveness. That the Kingdom may indeed come.

Blessing

We go forth and share in the recreating of the world.
We go in faith to be people of the new creation.
May the God known in humanity walk in our footsteps
and may grace be found in our way.

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

