

## **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

### **Joy**

As this season of "sparkle and bright" unfolds around us the transforming wonders of joy await discovery like shimmering sugar crystals on a favourite treat.

May we create joy in all our surroundings as we share gifts, meals, and simple pleasures with family and friends. May the easy gift of a smile bring the power of joy's touch to those we meet through these busy days. And may we experience the joy of this season as though with the eyes and hearts of children that we might be transfixed by power of what

could be.

May Joy light the world this Christmas.

To Mary, unsure and unprepared, came the call to serve her God.  
To Mary, came the call to leave the tried and tested ways behind and to  
venture out.

To Mary, an ordinary young woman, came the call to accept a radical  
change in her life's pattern.

To Mary, came a call to understand and accept God's presence in her life.  
May we be open, to the call of God wherever, and whenever it may come  
to us.

To the risk of faithfulness and our regrets over what has been left  
behind.

To be alert, to the need to tread unfamiliar pathways,  
To be sensitive, to the God presence in the routine of our lives, and to  
the faithful messengers who come unbidden to guide us.

Reading

**Luke 1: 47-55**

L Every time we read and listen

**All; The Word is born in us again.**

Mary said:

"My soul proclaims your greatness, O God, and my spirit rejoices in you,  
my Saviour. For you have looked with favour  
upon your lowly servant, and from this day forward  
all generations will call me blessed. For you, the Almighty, have done  
great things for me, and holy is your Name. Your mercy reaches from age  
to age for those who fear you. You have shown strength with your arm;  
you have scattered the proud in their conceit; you have deposed the  
mighty from their thrones and raised the lowly to high places. You have  
filled the hungry with good things, while you have sent the rich away  
empty. You have come to the aid of Israel your servant,  
mindful of your mercy—the promise you made to our ancestors—  
to Sarah and Abraham and their descendants forever."

## Reflection

At the heart of Luke's retelling of the Jesus story (and I believe it was the reason he—unlike Mark and John—included the details of Jesus' birth) is a desire to contrast Jesus' vision for human community of no more oppression, exploitation or marginalization with the much larger Roman society they lived in.

These contrasts in Luke told in the upcoming weeks leading up to Christmas, hold wonderful encouragement for those working within or alongside marginalized communities today, especially for Christians who allow Jesus' teachings to speak into their lives.

In the midst of all that is taking place in the news presently, we must not forget what these stories say to those who are marginalized in our society.

For now, it is enough to ponder on the fact that in the gospels' birth-narratives about Jesus, it is the marginalized who are centred. It is foreigners, shepherds, the poor, the marginalized, so-called "nobodies," and even the animals of a stable that gather around the manger to symbolise the human community this newborn babe will grow up to speak about. The good news is for them.

People are of infinite value in this story. In these stories, people and communities marginalized by their present society are, especially of immeasurable worth. When I was born, my parents printed and sent out baby announcements to all their family and friends. There were notices in the papers. I know some parents still do this here in Orkney, not so much south. To think of Jesus' birth stories in this light, it is the marginalized who are the ones to whom the birth announcements of Jesus' birth are first sent.

In the hustle and bustle of this season's celebrations, traditions, and revelry, Christians who still subscribe to various forms of exclusion (xenophobia, racism, homo-, bi-, and transphobias, sexism, etc.) must allow the universal truths this story tells to confront them.

If we are setting out nativity scenes in our home, let's stop for a moment and look at each of the figurines we're placing. Who do these figures represent today? How are they represented in our life? Are we one of them? If not, are we living in solidarity with those represented in this scene?

Our nativity scenes hint to us that this babe lying in a manger, born into poverty, and surrounded by those on edges of his society, will grow up to cast before the imagination of his listeners a vision for human society and those society considers less-than. His is a story for the powerless, the oppressed, the poor, the marginalized, the unclean, the judged, and the labelled, and excluded, the insignificant, and forgotten. These are the very ones that can gather around this lowly manger and dare to believe that the babe who lies there really is for them.

Miguel A. De La Torre's *Reading the Bible from the Margins* says to us that our nativity scene reminds us thus:

"Jesus's audience was primarily the outcasts of society. This is why it is important to understand the message of Jesus from the perspective of the disenfranchised. The marginalized of Jesus' time occupied the privileged position of being the first to hear and respond to the gospel. By making the disenfranchised recipients of the *Good News*, Jesus added a political edge to his message."

Jesus' birth narratives are not calling for societally privileged Christians today to begin including those presently marginalized. On the contrary, the Christmas stories call these specific Christians to recognize that the Holy Spirit is already working in the margins of their society. The question for those presently at the centre is not whether they will include the presently marginalized at their table, but whether they will participate in the socially transformative work that is already taking place on the margins of their society.

The stories of Jesus are not stories of inclusion where those presently centred maintain their positions of privilege. These are stories about a fundamental change in the way we shape our human communities. And it begins with recognizing the universal truths of the manger scene. Change always happens from the grassroots up, from the margins inward. The question for those at the centre is whether they will obstruct those working for a safer, just society, or work in harmony with them.

This is what these stories are saying this year and every year. What are they saying to us?

Wherever we are, let's keep choosing love, compassion, action and reparative, and distributive justice.

Another world is possible if we choose it.

## Prayer

*We bring to mind those who are enjoying successes, and those who are taking stock after painful defeats. May neither success bring selfishness, nor defeat breed bitterness.*

*We bring to mind those who are just and compassionate, and some who are unjust and cruel. May injustice be brought down and mercy be blessed with greater mercy.*

*We bring to mind those who seek peace and those who are out to make enemies. May the Spirit meddle in human affairs and teach us the way of justice and peace.*

*We bring to mind people who are celebrating the birth of a new child, and those who are mourning the death of a dear one. May the Spirit's presence minister to each according to their need.*

*What we have prayed for others we now pray for ourselves. No matter what happens, may we be blessed with that good humour which flows from a faith founded on Christ and nurtured by the Holy Spirit.*

## Blessing

Like John, we may not be the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor a prophet, yet we are called to serve God, as part of a graceful family. So let us go to bear witness to the coming Kingdom, and the Son of Light who shines for us all.

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