

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

Love

As this season of sparkle and bright unfolds around us the welcome beauty of love is found, woven into the simplicity of every moment.

May love flow from our hearts with abundance filling every moment with the season's gifts of hope and peace and joy. May it be shared truly and deeply that all who encounter it. Be charged with its message and become, themselves, the agents of love. And may our children, who love without reckoning, teach us the truth of this most precious gift-we are

nothing without each other. Let us live, then, in the blessing of love.

May Love light the world this Christmas.

may the stars take us, past where we are, to the place of promise
alive with light

may the prophets call us past where we are onto the way of vision
alive with hope

may the shepherds lead us past where we are to the Good news
alive among us

may the wise ones guide us past where we are, to further journeys
alive with adventures

may love call us past where we are to a bigger world alive with justice

may Jesus invite us past where we are to unexpected places
alive with God for we believe in incarnation

Reading

Luke 2: 1-6

In those days, Caesar Augustus published a decree ordering a census of the whole Roman world. This first census took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All the people were instructed to go back to the towns of their birth to register. And so Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to "the city of David"—Bethlehem, in Judea, because Joseph was of the house and lineage of David; he went to register with Mary, his espoused wife, who was pregnant. While they were there, the time came for her delivery.

Reflection

It was more than two thousand years ago that the historic figure we call Jesus lived. It was a life of relatively short duration, only thirty-three years. At most only three of those years were devoted to a public career.

Yet, that life appears to have been a source of wonder and power to those who knew him. Tales of miraculous power surrounded him. Words of

insight and wisdom were believed to have flowed from his lips. Love and freedom seemed to be qualities that marked his existence.

Men and women found themselves called into being by him. Those laden with guilt discovered, somehow, the joy of forgiveness in him. The alone, the insecure, the warped and twisted found him to be a source of peace.

He possessed the courage to be who he was. He is described in terms that portray him as an incredibly free man.

Jesus seems to have had no internal needs that drove him to prove himself - no anxieties that centred his attention on himself. He rather appears to have had an uncanny capacity to give his life away. He gave love, he gave selfhood, he gave freedom, and he gave them abundantly - wastefully, extravagantly.

Lives touched by his life were never the same. Somehow life's secret, its very purpose, seemed to be revealed in him. When people looked at him they were somehow able to see beyond him, and even through him. They saw in his life the Source of all life that expanded them. They saw in his love the Source of love and the hope of their own fulfilment. This kind of transforming power was something they had not known before.

Is it any wonder that people had to break the barriers of language when they sought to make rational sense out of this Jesus experience? They called him the Son of God. They said that somehow God was in him. So deeply did people believe these things that the way they perceived history was changed by him. To this day we still date the birth of our civilization from the birth of this Jesus.

When they began to write about this transforming experience they confronted a problem. How could the human mind, which can only think using human vocabulary, stretch far enough to embrace the God presence they had experienced in this life? How could mere words be big enough to capture this divine meaning?

Inevitably, as they wrote they lapsed into poetry and imagery. When this life entered human history, they said, even the heavens rejoiced. A star appeared in the sky. Angels sang hosanna. Scholars journeyed from the ends of the earth to worship him.

Since they were certain that they had met the presence of God in him, they reasoned that God must have been his father in some unique way. It was certainly a human reference but that is all we human beings have to use. Life as we know it, they said, could never have produced what we have found in him. That is why they created birth traditions capable of accounting for the adult power that they found in him.

The time has come for Christians, when we try to talk about God, to face, without being defensive, the inadequacy of human language. These stories

were never meant to be read literally. They were written by those who had been touched by this Jesus. That is why they challenge our imaginations and sound so fanciful and unreal. Our minds are so earthbound that our imaginations have become impoverished. But the beauty of our Christmas story is bigger than our rational minds can embrace. For when this Jesus is known, when love, acceptance, and forgiveness are experienced, when we become whole, free and affirmed people, the heavens do sing "Glory to God in the Highest," and on earth there is "Peace and Good Will among Us All." And we are enjoined to

'Come let us adore him'

How do we adore him?

Rather we should direct our energies to the task of building a world where everyone might have an opportunity to live more fully, love more wastefully and have the courage to be all that they were created to be. That is the way to acknowledge the Source of Life, the Source of Love and the Ground of Being that is experienced in this Jesus.

How can one adore the Source of Life except by living?

How can one adore the Source of Love except by loving?

How can one adore the Ground of all Being except by having the courage to be all that one can be.

So our task as adorers of Jesus is to live fully, to love wastefully and to be all that we can be while we seek to enable every other person, in the infinite variety of our humanity, to live fully, to love wastefully and to be all that each person can be.

Have a blessed and holy Christmas.

Prayer

In the darkness,
in the long nights,
in the short days,
in the noise,
in the quiet,
we wait and prepare.

In the midst of joyful expectation,
in the midst of painful remembering, we reflect on the year that has past
and look forward to what is to come, all the while singing of God's
steadfast love.

In a world aching from division,
disease, intolerance, poverty,

and war, we await his coming,
to bring peace and unity, to nourish our bodies and our spirits.
Today we wait and prepare, to celebrate his coming
once again, to heal this world to gather us in love,
and to be with us forever.

Blessing

May our souls magnify the Lord,
may we go from this time together
with our spirit rejoicing in God, emboldened and challenged,
to walk the way of Jesus and implement the manifesto of God.

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