

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

In our tradition the time of rest begins with the lighting of a candle. In this moment the stopping truly begins. To take a few breaths, to allow the mind to quieten. This is the beginning of sacred time. In the light of this new year may we see Christ more clearly, and follow him more nearly, that we might find a faith that holds a mystery, enough for us to come and see where his Way will lead us.

May we find Christ in the next turning, around the next bend, in the mist that still falls over the future. May we recognise him only in part, for he

is not yet fully known, always a word, a colour, a place, an event, still to be discovered, in a relationship that is never the same, always evolving.

May we find the wonder again in the story and choose to follow it. May we find the mystery, and chase it. May we find the questions, and ask them. And may we find in all our travelling a presence that loves, a grace that cares, a compassion that welcomes, and a place to grow.

May we find our meeting place with Christ, and find him restless to move us into the world, towards our neighbours, and into a deeper relationship with his Spirit.

Reading

John 1:43-51

The next day, after Jesus had decided to leave for Galilee, he met Philip and said, "Follow me." Philip came from Bethsaida, the same town as Andrew and Peter. Philip sought out Nathanael and said to him, "We've found the One that Moses spoke of in the Law, the One about whom the prophets wrote: Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary and Joseph." "From Nazareth?" said Nathanael. "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" "Come and see," replied Philip. When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he remarked, "This one is a real Israelite. There is no guile in him." "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked him. Jesus answered, "Before Philip even went to call you, while you were sitting under the fig tree, I saw you." "Rabbi," said Nathanael, "you're God's Own; you're the ruler of Israel!" Jesus said, "Do you believe just because I told you I saw you under the fig tree? You'll see much greater things than that." Jesus went on to tell them, "The truth of the matter is, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Chosen One."

Reflection

Today's gospel reading is a delicious story. We encounter enthusiasm, prejudice, and extraordinary insight all in one short story. It is sometimes good for us to remember that we get above ourselves when we regard the people of Jesus' day as being so inferior to ourselves as not to be taken too seriously. Obviously we know a good deal more than they did

about all sorts of things. Yet we share not only a common humanity but those very same traits that enliven and sometimes sully our day-to-day lives. Philip and Nathanael are not unlike you and me, prone to bursts of enthusiasm and almost unconscious prejudice.

Philip's encounter with Jesus was obviously dramatic and life changing. Jesus was direct. He met Philip and told him to join Jesus' small band of followers. There may have been more to the encounter that added to the extraordinary excitement that sent Philip off to find Nathanael, but however long or short the encounter, Philip was hooked. So off he ran to find his friend.

Nathanael thinks Philip is crazy. To a pure Jew, the inhabitants of Nazareth were not only country folk with a country accent, they were a racially mixed community. The same sort of prejudice that we encounter, and perhaps exhibit in unguarded moments, caused Nathanael to blurt out, "Can any good come out of Nazareth?"

It is interesting that the writer of the fourth gospel includes this detail. There's no attempt to whitewash the resumes of the disciples. Despite our stained-glass windows and their depictions of the first Christians, we encounter them as real people, warts and all. How could Jesus choose people who demonstrate the same failings we meet in human beings in our daily lives? How could Jesus choose us?

Jesus saw in Nathanael a character that was totally honest and probably blunt, "an Israelite in whom is no guile." That description is about all we shall know about Nathanael, except that he was probably also called Bartholomew - and that he had a low view of people from Nazareth.

We usually associate St. Peter as the follower of Jesus who blurted out that Jesus was the Messiah, the one yearned for, the one sent from God to establish the Kingdom. Yet in this story, a new convert, amazed that Jesus knew where he came from - under the fig tree where Philip found him - blurts out, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

Jesus answers Nathanael by recalling the story of Jacob and Bethel, who placed his head on a stone, dreamed that he wrestled with an angel and saw angels ascending and descending on what seemed to be a ladder. This all seems obscure to us, but to a faithful Jew, the story of Jacob is one

of redemption and calling, of God reaching into a human life in a transforming way. *Bethel* means "the place of God."

At some point in our lives a "Philip" cared enough about us to bring us to the place where God is, the thin place which was maybe a font or an invitation to join them at worship - our Bethel. Perhaps our Bethel is the church where we worship today. Like the disciples, like Nathanael, we had the potential to be the sort of person Jesus calls to be his intimate followers.

We are challenged to blurt out our faith that even though Jesus was from northern Israel centuries ago, he is the *Great Teacher* and he is our guy. With that challenge comes the bounden duty and service of representing Jesus to others. He calls us because he knows us. To him, "all hearts are open, all desires are known and from him no secrets are hid." He sees our potential and our prejudices, our talents, and good bits and our not so good bits - and chooses us.

Is that not amazing? If the *Messiah* can be born in the backwaters of Nazareth in a mixed community, anyone can live in Jesus as he lives in us.

Jesus calls us to be Nathanaels, whose prejudice about people in the past, whom we look down on in our 21st century hubris, can be changed by an encounter with him. Today we encounter Jesus at the font in baptism, in bread and wine and Sunday by Sunday as we gather in the Cathedral or connect remotely, those simple elements, like a stone, in which we may encounter the living God.

Such an encounter calls us to engage people in the totality of their being, whatever their race, background, class, wealth, or poverty, and to bring them to Jesus. Bringing people to Jesus is evangelism, but a whole evangelism for Jesus cares about poverty, disease, hurt, grief and systemic sin, and calls us to be agents who cooperate with him as his Kingdom comes "on earth as it is in heaven."

We do this by becoming the presence of Jesus and as we touch life where we find it and become healers, feeders, lovers, and redeemers

Prayer

Our simple prayer and our deep hope is for the Way of Christ to be found between our neighbours - in the love we share between our nations, in the

compassion we offer between all people, in the peace we make. There may
we all see the Way unfold.

And so we bring our words and our longings and shape them into the
relationships we build this year and affirm the truth that in our
relationships
is where the Way will be found.

We pray for those in conflict, for refugees and the displaced, for so
many who suffer in so many ways from disease, hunger, fear, and division.
This is not of the Way and it does not need to be the story of our world.

We pray for the longing to find stability and a future that is balanced and
fair, equally shared, and Kingdom-shaped.

We pray for our congregation and parish, for our neighbours around us
and the way we live and speak together of love and grace and truth.

And we pray for our families and friends, for those ill and those
recovering,
for those grieving and hurting, those anxious and worried, fearful and
afraid
and for the love that directs us and calls us and challenges us to be
Christ's people, to see the Way ahead, between us, among us, through us.

Blessing

Today, we came and saw.

Today, tomorrow and always
may we renew our invitation to come and see Jesus for themselves.
And as we do,
may we go in peace to love and to serve

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