

## **St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall**

[www.stmagnus.org](http://www.stmagnus.org)

Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

[www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation](https://www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation)

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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.

<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 Candle to light our way as we journey to Jerusalem, the cross, and the tomb.

May it's light strengthen us where the road is hard, embolden us when our hearts lose courage, and bring hope as the road grows dark.

We see in our generation people who yearn for something.  
May we listen openly to those whose lives are different from ours and find God's presence.

We see in our generation people who are afraid.  
May we use our voices wisely even when we are nervous.

We see in our generation people who have kept the gospel like a secret.  
May we free ourselves from barriers that keep us ashamed to name  
Jesus in our ordinary lives.

We are aware that we have talked much about faith yet have been slow to  
take its risk, we have lauded forgiveness yet have been miserly in giving  
it,  
we have praised truth yet have fudged our own integrity,  
we have extolled love yet have placed conditions on our loving, we have  
urged hope for others yet have ourselves lived like cynics, we have  
honoured Christ's Cross yet have avoided our own.

May we learn to seek out solidarity with lovers of life that we might learn  
from them and so transform the world together.

#### Reading Matthew 7: 1-8

Jesus said... "Don't judge, or you yourself will be judged. Your judgment on others will be the judgment you receive. The measure you use will be used to measure you. Why do you look at the splinter in your neighbour's eye and never see the board in your own eye? How can you say to your neighbour, 'Let me remove the splinter in your eye,' when the whole time there's a two-by-four in your own? Hypocrite! Remove the board from your own eye first; then you'll be able to see clearly to remove the splinter from your neighbour's eye. "Don't give dogs what is sacred; don't throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they'll just trample them underfoot—then turn and tear you to pieces. "Ask and keep asking, and you will receive. Seek and keep seeking, and you will find. Knock and keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For the one who keeps asking, receives. The one who keeps seeking, finds. And the one who keeps knocking, enters."

#### Reflection

An exploration around the concept of evil with Christian priests, rabbis, Hindu yogis, Native American elders, spiritual healers, energy healers, and spiritual teachers all asked the same question 'Do you believe evil exists? If so, what can we do about it?' Their answers might surprise us.

The most common response is that evil is a dangerous concept because the boundaries of good and bad can become so easily blurred. We'll never

be able to exactly prove or disprove it, and the identification of it is tricky. How do we know the difference, for example, between an evil act and an evil person? Who decides? If the criteria are written in a sacred text, who interprets it? How do we separate crimes of need from crimes of passion, or crimes of defence from crimes of political greed? The most spiritually experienced and mature teachers agree that the very idea of evil can be used to perpetuate and justify evil (violence, persecution, and power over others).

The fear of evil evokes feelings of defence and judgment and causes people to focus on what they're afraid of and what they believe they must avoid, instead of focusing on love and what they hope to become. We look for sources of problems and blame others when we should be investing in solutions and being a part of change.

The most common advice from spiritual leaders is that while evil may be a real energy or entity in the world, it doesn't deserve our time, effort, or attention in the ways we've been taught. What we put our attention on will grow. If we feed evil with our energy, then we become a part of it; we affirm its reality.

Rather then, let's focus on positive people and forces, as well as compassionate outcomes. Stay intent on love, health, and connection in our life and evil won't be an issue to address. There can be no shadow where there's a bright light. If we have a strong spiritual practice that connects us with a sense of peace and a spirit of love, the topic of evil rarely ever arises. A healthy spiritual practice will help us see how we judge people and things, and how we can live more deeply from the wisdom of our heart.

An Anglican priest once said, 'Sometimes I think the concept of evil is itself evil. I see the way people blame with it, judge with it, and think they are better because of it. They use it in so many selfish ways; and in the end, they do as much harm as those they accuse. I've stopped preaching about evil because of that. Even Jesus said, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone." I think his message was clear!

Do we not need a sort of 'spiritual optimism' as protection from negativity in life? It's not an excuse to avoid the challenging topic of 'bad things' in the world; rather, it turns our attention to what we can do about it.

As we explore the different spiritual practices, let's not fear the possibility that we may expose ourself to something 'bad' or 'evil.' Place the energy of our heart and mind on the goodness, love, and light that we wish to bring into our life and the world.

Let's keep connected to all the goodness and love we know. With open-mindedness, guidance, and support, we'll navigate the surprises and challenges that come up along the way. If we have a clear intention of connecting to the highest Source and Light, darkness will find no place to take hold.

Furthermore, as we look for the good in life and practice the laws of attraction and intention, remember that it's all or nothing. It's common for people to focus on all the good things in their life and to think of them as magic, blessings, and evidence of their spiritual progress. But when things go poorly, they end up labelling and judging those things as 'bad' and look for an external source to blame. They may also turn the blame inward, which is just as destructive. The self-judgment and fear feeds upon the self. Many become trapped in a cycle of personal disharmony that's projected into the world.

Spiritual practice helps us break such cycles and teaches us that life is the test. The challenge isn't to expect easy tests but to respond well to the ones we're given.

### Prayer

We pray for the whole Church in all the world, the universal Church, that it may be strengthened in everything that accords with following Jesus way.

As a family in the faith in common with each congregation and parish in the land and all overseas who have special links with us, may we respond effectively to the divine love which is our gospel.

We pray for nations and communities. That we can become one, may people have the peace which sometimes they do not deserve, but which they need. May those charged with great responsibility in all lands be upheld by us that they may be instruments of peace and reconciliation at all levels and in all spheres and situations.

Let us pray for the sick. As the compassion for human need is shown in the life of Jesus, may there be human help inspired by his example for all

who are in any kind of trouble; those in distress; those consumed by  
grief; those engulfed in sadness; those overcome by sickness.

Come Spirit on us breathe, with life and strength anew;  
Find in us love, and hope, and trust and lift us up to you.

### Blessing

Let us go out facing and serving the world with confidence, generosity  
and freedom.

Let us live out the heart of religion which is to bring together all that is  
divided, to live in the moment,  
to love mightily  
and to reverence the mystery,  
beauty and spirituality of all things and all people.

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