

## **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

In lighting this candle we become aware that the power of resurrection has forever changed who we are, and given us the courage to boldly proclaim a living faith.

Today we celebrate: new life, new joy, new dreams.

This is a strange compulsion:  
to go to that dark place of death,  
to reverence an empty body.

We go in sense of duty,  
we go in the garb of tradition,  
we go with no expectation.  
There is easy access to this place:  
no barring stone nor guarding soldier  
sentry here.  
This is the place of death.  
Death is all there is to find here.  
We can choose to stay,  
to minister to nothingness  
with our broken hands and shallow souls,  
or we can seek the living  
in resurrected power.  
We can leave in disappointment or in awe.  
Saying, 'Good morning,' to the gardener  
or, 'Good God,' to the Lord.

#### Reading **Mark 16:1-8**

When the Sabbath was over, Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought perfumed oils so that they could anoint Jesus. Very early, just after sunrise on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb. They were saying to one another, "Who will roll back the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" When they looked, they found that the huge stone had been rolled back. On entering the tomb, they saw a young person sitting at the right, dressed in a white robe. They were very frightened, but the youth reassured them: "Do not be amazed! You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, the One who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. Now go and tell the disciples and Peter, 'Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee, where you will see him just as he told you.'" They made their way out and fled from the tomb bewildered and trembling; but they said nothing to anyone, because they were so afraid.

#### Reflection

Jesus was killed because he was out of control. He was outside the control of the political and religious institutions. He'd lived and taught and showed a disregard of borders. Whether those borders were around whom you should dine with, or touch, or put as heroes in your stories, or

how you picture God... he deliberately flouted them. His was a spirituality without borders, and the border police didn't like it.

Around Jesus was gathered the morally and theologically poor, those not able to afford the slick, tidy packages on offer in the confident religious brands. Around him gathered the nuisances, nobodies and skeptics. Jesus welcomed, broke boundaries and bread, and loved. In the doing, in the being there, was hope.

It wasn't that Jesus was ignorant of the borders, or just wanted to be kind to outsiders, or promote tolerance. Rather he set his sights on the nexus of ideological control, the Jerusalem establishment, and challenged its reason for existence.

He wanted to break the control system. He hoped that breaking would catch on. He hoped that what horrified the thought police would spread. He hoped that like wild windblown mustard spiritual anarchy would grow, bloom, and seed like a weed in every and any place, beyond the power of the elites.

It was a vision that would get him killed, as it had killed other rebels before him. It was a bad Friday on the Golgotha hill.

In the years following his death his followers caught the wind of his spirit and the weeds of anarchy spread. On the edges of society men and women, slave and free, all races, shared in leadership and resources. There wasn't a lot of control. One never knew quite what would happen. There were lots of good Sundays.

Yet within three centuries a new Christian religious institution with its bevy of rules and rulers had arisen who not only took upon themselves to beat back the spread, but also to redefine Jesus. They sought to bring the movement Jesus seeded under control.

The institutional controllers also split Jesus from the spirituality he'd taught and practiced. What became the mark of a Christian was not someone who lived that borderless inclusive faith but someone who believed that the former out-of-control Jesus was now elevated to the heavens, sitting at the right hand of the in-control God. The prodigal had been reined in, the rebel Jesus domesticated.

The controllers also concocted a system whereby people's fears could be played upon. Everyone was defined as a 'sinner'. Only by correct belief

could people be forgiven. Jesus' death had not been the result of the thought police maintaining the borders; rather it had been everyone's fault, everyone's 'sin', which had required him to sacrifice his all. Only by repenting, believing in humanity's inherent unworthiness and Jesus' sacrifice, could people be forgiven.

And thus institutional Christianity took root and grew into a tree where purity of belief and obedient behaviour were prized, and the ideology of sin and the guilt it produced were its fruit. It was quite different from the wild weed. In most churches, at most services, there is a ritual re-enactment of this Easter sin-redemption bargain.

Many of us don't participate in this bargain ritual. We don't like what it makes God into. We don't do 'parent God'. We don't like what it makes of Jesus' life and death. We don't do 'Jesus died for us'. And we don't like how it defines us as failures in need of forgiveness, when we are 'made in the image of God'.

Yet there is at the heart of this confession/absolution ritual ancient truth that speaks still. We do fail, regularly. We are frail. We do doubt. We are afraid. The good news, that bargain theology doesn't quite get, is that these parts of our humanity are not to be shunned or confessed or disguised. Rather they are to be embraced, held, and valued. For our wounds can be the source of our empathy, our doubts can be the engine in our quest for truth, and our fears can be the wellspring of our pity.

The spirit of the borderless Jesus informs us of a God different from the super parent. This different God holds, embraces, and values our doubts, dirt, and mess. In the windblown community of this God's followers no matter what one does or doesn't, no matter how bound one is to addictions, no matter what one believes, if anything... all belong. The love called God makes room for all.

Hope therefore is not what some cosmic being has bargained for us by having his favourite son killed. Hope is, to quote Richard Holloway, when "the unacceptable are accepted by a community who knows itself to be unacceptable." Weeds welcome weeds.

At Easter remnants of that windblown community gather to celebrate that the spiritual path of Jesus did not end at the cross. Neither did it end when they elevated him to heaven and crowned him there. Instead

the spiritual path of Jesus, his life, lives on amongst all who reach beyond borders in the name of justice, compassion, and love.

When freedom is celebrated, when bread is shared, when the constraints of certitude and dogmatism and fear are broken... then we know that Jesus lives on. In the doing, in the being there, is hope. It is the hope of mustard weeds, spiritual anarchists, splashing the world in hot, vivid colours.

### Prayer

Almighty and ever-loving God, we are in awe of the depth of your love for us, that love which overwhelms, sustains and encourages us. And even more today as we hear again of Christs' resurrection, so we pray for the resurrection of our own faith. Christs' death on that barbaric cross was transformed into hope through his astonishing resurrection. Yet we so often lack joyfulness in our beliefs, and in who we are. Joy in the certainty that You know us and love us just as we are. We cannot fail or be found wanting in any way that matters when we are loved, unconditionally, by You. Your love is beyond our understanding: it is our faith.

Creator God, as our islands burst with golden blooms we are reminded that yellow is the colour of happiness and also of hope. We live in a wild and beautiful place and yet, even in our communities, many are burdened with worries - emotions, accommodation, health and making ends meet - and cannot see the hope in Your incredible, generous world. We pray for them and their dignity, and also for the hopelessness people in Haiti, for the persecuted in Sudan and for all those everywhere who feel forgotten as the world focuses on Gaza and Ukraine. Mother God, you love all your

children everywhere and do not forget them. They are our family too and ours to care for, in any way that we are able.

God of hope, may we be the weeds of anarchy that challenge our society when it seems wrong, unjust and disregarding of the many in favour of the few. As we start to tidy our gardens may we leave some weeds to be vivid distractions amongst the perceived order, creating a richer, healthier environment and greater abundance in a loosening of our control. And in doing so may we embrace, hold and value our doubts and fears and find greater empathy with those on the margins. Those who Jesus reached out to.

#### Blessing

The stone has been rolled away!  
Christ is risen! Love wins!  
With joy in our hearts, thanksgiving on our lips  
and a spring of hope in our step, let us go and  
serve the risen Lord

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