

## **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

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.

If for just one day

we might walk in the shoes of others, what might we learn?

That it hurts to tread a path of despair and hopelessness;

that it is frightening to face a difficult journey alone;

that it takes courage to step into new and unknown territory;

that it is frustrating to never get to where you want to be;  
that it is wishful thinking to even be able to stand;  
that it is painful to walk with no shoes at all.  
Christ walks in those shoes every day,  
May we learn that his footprints are our guide and  
may our feet follow in faith.

Reading from Judges 16

Delilah said to Samson, "Tell me, what is the source of your great strength? Could anyone tie you up or make you helpless?" Samson replied, "If you took seven locks of my hair and wove them into the fabric of the loom and fasten it with the peg, I would be as weak as anyone else." As he slept Delilah took the seven locks of his hair, wove them into the fabric and tightened them with the pin. She then called out, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" He woke up and pulled out the peg, the loom, and the fabric. Then she pleaded with him, "How can you say you love me, when you won't take me into your confidence? This is the third time you have deceived me, and you still won't tell me the secret of your great strength!" She pressed him night and day, haranguing him relentlessly until he grew sick to death of her nagging. So he told her his secret: "No razor has touched my head, for I am a Nazirite, consecrated to God from the day of my birth. If my head were shaved, I would lose my strength, and be no stronger than anyone else." Delilah realized that she had finally learned Samson's secret. She notified the rulers of the Philistines. They came quickly and brought the money with them. She lulled Samson to sleep on her lap, and then summoned a Philistine to shave off the seven locks of his hair. Then she called out, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" He woke up and thought, "I'll get out of here as before," but he did not realize that Yahweh had abandoned him. The Philistines quickly captured him, then they gouged out his eyes. He was bound with bronze shackles, and he was put to work grinding grain in the prison.

### Reflection

I know you might find this hard to believe, but a few months ago, I went to the Phoenix cinema to see.... Wait for it.. 'Barbie'. Having got over myself wondering if the audience was just going to be me and a horde of tweeny girls, and having it recommended to me by a reliable source, sure enough I discovered it a robust comedy filled with complicated characters, philosophical jaunts, and rowdy satirical commentaries on

feminism, patriarchy, and pop culture. It is of course centred on the classic doll. Barbie's striking body is entrancing to little girls who give up their baby dolls for a fashion doll with lots of clothes and accessories and a boyfriend named Ken.

So we have Stereotypical Barbie, a blonde, curvy, blue-eyed beauty. She lives in in the glamorous community of Barbieland with many other Barbies - Doctor Barbie, President Barbie, Teacher Barbie, Physicist Barbie, Writer Barbie, Lawyer Barbie, even Weird Barbie (who was damaged when played with too harshly by a child). Waiting for her at the Beach is Ken, who only has a good day when Barbie looks at him. Other Kens also play second-fiddle to various Barbies.

Stereotypical Barbie's day is upset when she starts having strange sensations. She talks about death; is she turning into "Irrepressible-Thoughts-of-Death Barbie"? She discovers that her thighs are not as smooth as they used to be; is she becoming "Cellulite-All-Over-the-Body Barbie"? What's more; she has flat feet that don't fit in her high heels.

She learns that these deviations are coming from whoever is her partner in the Real World. So Barbie leaves her home and sets out for this strange place where she confronts difficulties and dangers before returning home with new understandings of herself.

Ken tags along on this quest and discovers to his surprise and delight that in the Real World, men are in charge. They have horses and rule as a patriarchy. He decides to bring what he's learned back to Barbieland. Now Barbie and all her sister Barbies face even more challenges as all the Kens take over and misogyny reigns.

In searching for her connection in the Real World, Barbie meets a group of young women, including Sasha. She criticizes Barbie as "a tool of sexualized capitalism that has set the feminist movement back years." She also states "women hate women. And men hate women. It's the only thing we agree on." This is a surprise to Barbie since she thought that she and her sisters, by modelling all kinds of occupations, were actually telling girls they could be whoever they wanted to be. Other Barbies were under the same impression

Barbie's reaction (most likely shared by at least half the audience) is that "the real world isn't what I thought it was."

Gloria lives in the Real World. Surprised to discover that even Stereotypical Barbie), a gorgeous blonde, can feel insecure, she explains why contemporary society is so difficult for women.

"It is literally impossible to be a woman. You are so beautiful and so smart, and it kills me that you don't think you're good enough. Like, we have to always be extraordinary, but somehow we're always doing it wrong. You have to be thin, but not too thin. And you can never say you want to be thin. You have to say you want to be healthy, but also you have to be thin. You have to have money, but you can't ask for money because that's crass.. You're supposed to love being a mother but don't talk about your kids all the damn time. You have to be a career woman, but also always be looking out for other people. You have to answer for men's bad behaviour, which is insane, but if you point that out, you're accused of complaining. You're supposed to stay pretty for men, but not so pretty that you tempt them too much or that you threaten other women because you're supposed to be a part of the sisterhood. But never forget that the system is rigged. So find a way to acknowledge that but also always be grateful. You have to never get old, never be rude, never show off, never be selfish, never fall down, never fail, never show fear, never get out of line. It's too hard! It's too contradictory and nobody gives you a medal or says thank you! And it turns out in fact that not only are you doing everything wrong, but also everything is your fault.

Another tale to challenge us to hear stories differently, we read earlier. Considering them from the woman's point of view. When we do that with Delilah, she stops being a villainous traitor and becomes an intelligent woman in an impossible situation doing the best she can for herself and her people.

Samson was an easy target. Deceiving him was, as they say in Glasgow 'like taking toffee off the weans'. After two failed attempts, Delilah gets the truth out of Samson, that shaving his head, thus causing him to break his Nazirite vows, would bring an end to his supernatural strength, and she has no hesitation in doing what she has to do.

The Philistine woman, Delilah, is set alongside the unnamed Samaritan woman whom Jesus met at a well. Once again we are challenged to put aside our preconceptions and see the humanity in someone who would have been regarded as below contempt by her own people, the Samaritans, for her immoral lifestyle, and certainly by any normal Jewish man. Jesus was not any normal Jewish man, however. He needed what she had to give

him—a drink of water—and knew that her life would be transformed by what he could offer her—a fresh start in life and a renewed sense of her own worth.

### Prayer

We have come to know the Way through the teachings and example of Jesus, who renounced the way of violence, who spent his life breaking down barriers, who told us to love not just our neighbours but enemies and strangers and those with whom we most profoundly disagree. He came to bring peace on earth, and still wars are being fought in his name, and communities divided, and people excluded from the fellowship of the table that should be open to all.

We are part of whatever it is that keeps going wrong in this world so that good intentions turn sour, good people hurt others without meaning to and lasting peace never quite takes hold. And so, we cannot pray for others, or for the healing of our broken world, without asking first that we might be healed of our brokenness and set free from the fear that causes hatred and division.

We pray for lands laid waste by conflict, for families divided and friendships broken, and for churches squabbling over doctrine while hungry folk remain unfed, sick ones untended, strangers unwelcomed and sad ones devoid of cheer.

We pray for mothers everywhere old and young.  
We pray especially for those who find motherhood hard,  
and for those for whom motherhood has not been possible.

We pray for victims of physical violence and of emotional abuse, grieving as we do so for the hurts that cause one person to treat another in this way.

We pray without words, because there are no words, and because we know already what needs to be said, and what needs to be done to fulfil the purposes of love.

### Blessing

As we step out into a world where the true nature of a person is often hidden by the legend presented by the media,  
may we follow the One in whom the truth can be trusted.

May we know God's peace, Jesus' love and the Spirit's stirring  
as we walk in faith this week.

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