

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

www.stmagnus.org

Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

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.

SUNDAY 3rd May

You can find our Sunday worship here.

<https://www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation/>

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/nSab78G4muQ>

Candle Meditation

In the presence of the Spirit of life and love,
we gather together in different ways this morning,
from computer screens,
from telephones,
from car radios;
we gather,
reaching out across the wires,
waving from a safe distance,
to come together in religious community.

From living room to front porch to car seat,
we gather as we are able,
ready to be of service to each other,
to the world,
ready to build the community of hope and of love,
as we face this bright morning.

We are apart,
but we are together,
offering our love,
our commitment,
our hope,
and our prayers,
in service to one another and this world.

It is a new way,
but an old way,
that we come together in worship today.

Reading
from Mark 12

One of the religious scholars who had listened to them debating and had observed how well Jesus had answered them, now came up and put a question to him: “Which is the foremost of all the commandments?” Jesus replied, “This is the foremost: ‘Hear, O Israel, God, our God, is one. You must love the Most High God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You must love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.” The scholar said to Jesus, “Well spoken, Teacher! What you have said is true: the Most High is one and there is no other. To love God with all your heart, with all your understanding and strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself—this is far more important than any burnt offering or sacrifice.” Jesus, seeing how wisely this scholar had spoken, said, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And after that no one dared to question Jesus any more.

For the word of God in scripture, For the word of God among us. For the word of God within us. We give thanks

Reflection

I have become the designated shopper in our household during lockdown. Either picking up orders from Shearer's or Williamson's [other retailers are available] or joining the almost ritualistic one-way system in Tesco. It is a curious experience, nodding to acquaintances, and finding that my old side stepping skills from rugby days still are a]functioning and b] useful. I have discovered of course the key thing is to have a list marked with the required items in the order of direction of travel. Bitter experience of a second or third lap have taught me that.

The woman in front of me at the checkout a couple of weeks ago had two trolleys. How she managed to push two trolleys around the store by herself remains a mystery. The first trolley was stacked high with paper goods. That's a polite way of saying ROLLS AND ROLLS OF TOILET PAPER. The other trolley must have had 50 boxes of chicken nuggets.

Now, in fairness, perhaps I was behind Old Mother Hubbard. Maybe she did "live in a shoe" and have "so many children she didn't know what to do." That's certainly a possibility. Or she may have been doing the shopping for someone who was in quarantine. But the more likely scenario is that she had two toddlers at home and was panic buying.

At one level, I understand the impulse to hoard toilet paper, chicken nuggets, and bread making flour. In times of uncertainty, fear is an appropriate and expected emotional response. People want to take action to protect themselves and their loved ones. Do you really need the last 12 bottles of hand sanitizer that you spotted on the shelves of Lidl? Well, who knows? So you better grab them while you can, before someone else does.

The problem, from a spiritual perspective, is that we're called to love our neighbour. When Jesus distils everything down to the basics, he tells us to do two things: love God and love neighbour. That's it. Simple, really, at least in theory if not in practice. But loving our neighbour is half of what we're supposed to do!

In these unusual circumstances in which we're living, we are encouraged to think about how our actions align with the notion of loving our neighbour? This concept is an essential part of every faith, but it's also part of what it means to be a decent human being. It's called "Mr. Smith's Neighbourhood," after all, not "Mr. Smith's Dystopian Free-For-All."

Every action we take has consequences, but the good news is that this works both ways. We can reach out to those in our community who may feel isolated and alone. We can give that extra roll of toilet paper or bottle of hand soap to a neighbour who needs one. We can donate to a local charity that is struggling to raise funds right now. We can all download a Christian Aid e-envelope this week. We can buy a gift voucher from a local restaurant for future use.

And, I know this sounds radical, but these devices we carry around in our pockets that have cameras and social media apps also have this function where we can dial a number and speak — in real time! — with someone else using nothing but our own voice. Who knew, right?!

In the first weeks of the pandemic the reports of hoarding and price gouging hogged the headlines but they have given way to far more stories of generosity, courage, compassion, and sacrifice for the sake of others. We do not all have the same gifts, but many seem to be giving their very best.

This is an opportunity to let the love of neighbour shine brightly through us. Can we think of creative ways to do just that. We will get through this time, we will survive this ordeal. But we will only thrive if we love our neighbours as ourselves.

Prayer

Even in the darkest moments, love gives hope.

Love compels us to fight against coronavirus alongside our sisters and brothers living in poverty.

Love compels us to stand together in prayer with our neighbours near and far.

Love compels us to give and act as one.

Now, it is clear that our futures are bound together more tightly than ever before.

As we pray in our individual homes – around the nation and around the world – we are united as one family.

And may the love that never fails
continue to be shared
through the kindness of strangers
looking out for each other,
for neighbours near and far
all recognising our shared vulnerability,
each of us grateful for every breath,
and willing everyone to know the gift
of a full and healthy life. AMEN

Blessing

We go now with peace, ready to live it,
We go now with joy, ready to share it,
We go now with love,
for the spirit of love goes with us always.