

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 17th May

You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/5p8ZolrLTs>

Candle meditation

Like Jonah in the belly of the whale, we are led where we do not want to go—not once, but many times in our lives. Dwelling in unsettling liminal space, whether we are pushed or we jump, we are led to draw on resources and possibilities we may not have tapped before. In the unknown space between here and there, younger and older, past and future, life happens. And, if we attend, we can feel the Holy Spirit moving with us in a way that we may not be aware of in more settled times. In liminal time and space, we can learn to let reality—even in its darkness—be our teacher, rather than living in the illusion that we are creating it on our own. We can enter into the liminal paradox: a disturbing time and space that not only breaks us down, but also offers us the choice to live in it with fierce aliveness, freedom, sacredness, companionship, and awareness of Presence.

A Reading from the Book of Jonah read by Helen Cunningham

God said to Jonah.... "Get up! Go to the great city of Nineveh right now. Raise a cry against it! Tell them that I know all about their crimes." But Jonah decided to run away from God and set out for Tarshish instead. He went down to Joppa and found a ship bound for Tarshish in order to get away from God. However, a great storm blew up and the crew, on hearing Jonah trying to escape from God said, "What are we to do with you, to make the sea grow calm for us?" For the sea was growing rougher and rougher. Jonah replied, "Take me and throw me into the sea, and then it will grow calm for you. For I can see it is my fault this violent storm happened to you." And taking hold of Jonah they threw him into the sea; and the sea grew calm once more.

Then God sent a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and he remained in the fish's belly for three days and three nights. From the belly of the fish he prayed to God, and said: "Out of my despair I cried to you and you answered me. From the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. You threw me into the Deep, into the heart of the sea, and floods overwhelmed me. All your waves, your torrents, washed over me. I am banished from your sight! Will I ever again look upon your holy Temple? The waters surrounded me right by my throat, the Deep enclosed me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. But you raised my life back up from the pit, my God! As my soul was ebbing away, my prayer came before you in your holy Temple. I will sacrifice to you with a song of thanksgiving. I will fulfil the vow I made. Deliverance comes from God!"

Then God spoke to the fish, and the fish vomited Jonah onto the shore.
And Jonah set out and went to Nineveh in obedience to the word of God.

For the truth made known in texts for the wisdom found
on different paths for the hope that leads us on
We give thanks.

Reflection

A new word crept into the language while I wasn't watching - "liminal".
None of my dictionaries include it. And they were only published 20 years ago.

Not "limn," which means to paint or portray. From which we get 'Limner' a word associated with a well-known Orcadian Stanley Cursiter who was the Queen's Limner.

"Liminal" derives from Latin "limen" meaning the threshold of a doorway. It marks the division between inside and outside, between warm and cold, between calm and stormy.

It is the moment of transition, when one state of being transforms into another.

A liminal moment is easy to identify if it's a doorway. It's more difficult with geography, for example. Exactly where would you say the mountains end and the prairie begins? Which do the foothills belong to?

Or with light. At what point, as light fades, does day become night?

Indeed, it may not be possible to define transition points precisely. Is this shirt dry, or still damp? Is a spring day warm, compared to winter? Or chilly, compared to summer?

And if you think that's hard, try applying liminology to social customs. When did tattoos go mainstream? When did certain four-letter words become acceptable in common discourse?

In such matters, you often only know that you've gone too far, when you've gone too far.

In my previous church we had a wonderful elder, keen as mustard, great ideas, a real team player. But he tended to stand about six inches too close to me. It felt as though he was intruding into my personal space. I don't know if it was his eagerness or just a lack of special awareness.

Today, Covid-19 fears have changed the rules. We're supposed to stay two metres apart. If I thoughtlessly move any closer than that, the person I'm talking with tends to back away.

I wonder how much of our social distancing will become habitual, if and when the rules are relaxed? (It really is "social" distancing, despite euphemisms about "physical" distancing. We have no trouble keeping physical distances between ourselves and snarling dogs, hurtling freight trains, and stinky street people. It's only when we seek social relationships that distancing becomes difficult.)

This is not the first time we have had mass changes in social behaviour. Some stick; some don't. Blackouts in Britain during the Blitz were even more rigorously obeyed than "Stay Home" injunctions today. But blackouts didn't last. Today, many office buildings stay lit all night.

Franciscan priest and spirituality guru Richard Rohr contends that we currently live in a liminal time, a time of transition. Covid-19 has led us to reduce travel, reduce use of fossil fuels, grow more of our own food, and bake our own bread.

When we find ourselves in liminal space," Rohr writes, "does it matter whether we are pushed or whether we jump? Either way, we are not where or what we were before, nor do we know how or where we will land in our new reality."

Commonly, Rohr continues, "We wish such a time to be over. But what if we can choose to experience this liminal space and time, this uncomfortable now, ...as a place and state of creativity, of construction and deconstruction, choice and transformation?"

There have been such times in the past. The most far-reaching might be the abolition of slavery - in Britain, 1834; Tides turned against a practice accepted without question since before history began being recorded.

Other instances might be the discovery of vaccines. The movement towards women's equality. Henry Ford's car for the masses, the Model T. the coming of the internet.

Those were all liminal times, transitions from one generally accepted paradigm towards another. Not everyone welcomed the new status. Some fought it, tooth and coffin nail. Few foresaw the changes that the new paradigm would lead to - for good or ill.

Seismologists speak of fault zones, fracture zones, deep underground. For decades, centuries, vast blocks of the earth's crust remain locked together. And then, one day, something slips. The blocks re-align as an earthquake.

There's an earthquake going on right now. Never before have nations all around the world acted in solidarity as they have to contain

the Covid-19 virus. No one knows yet how the fault zones of culture and belief will re-align themselves.

Liminal times may feel like chaos and anarchy, inexplicable blips on a graph. In reality, they're the labour pains of something new being born.

Prayer;

We gather in the intimacy of community without demanding that all of our individual needs are met. We come first to the gathering bringing our selves, ready to put our selves and our lives in the offering. We deepen our prayer practices with silence and meditation to discover who we are and to discern how best to help.

Today we call to mind....

those who are ill. May they reach out to those who will not only comfort them but also help them to secure the expert care they need, and may they not be embarrassed to weep, rage, fear, be human, even as they trust this care to both hold and heal them.

for those experiencing cabin fever

May they find solace in the fact that so many of us are also seeking surprises in too-familiar spaces, flashes of wonder in corners we know too well, moments of delight in too-similar days, and may this uncomfortable comfort connect us all.

for those who are grieving;

May they seek solidarity and solitude as each is needed, may they feel empathy surround them, even when alone, and may they reject any calls to move through this more quickly, especially when they come from their own heart.

May we remember that in joy and in sorrow
We do not walk alone, but together, on the way of Christ

Amen

Blessing

Love lives in you, ^[I]_{SEP}love lives in me binding us to the God whose name is
love.

The Spirit lives in you, the Spirit lives in me binding us to the God whose
Spirit is love.

All is revealed^[L]_[SEP] in the wisdom of love in the Spirit and so we begin to
know *God*.

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