

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 16th August

You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/K5A56jbRrNk>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Opening meditation

Breathe in the morning air; inhale its fragranc^y.
Be still and trust the sacredness that dwells within; whose
presence calms our restless souls.

Walk in the way of love, of justice and of peace. Bring loving
to a world of pain and loneliness. Reach out in love and
gentleness
to heal the hurt of brokenness.

Trust in the love; believe that goodness lives, that hope and
joy and beauty will embrace our days. Pursued by love and
touched by grace, our thankful hearts will offer praise

Reading from Matthew 11 read by Rosemary Moon

Then Jesus prayed, "Abba God, Creator of heaven and earth, to
you I offer praise; for what you have hidden from the learned
and the clever, you have revealed to the youngest children.

Yes, Abba, everything is as you want it to be." Jesus
continued, "Everything has been handed over to me by Abba God.

No one knows the Only Begotten except Abba God,
and no one knows Abba God except the Only Begotten— and those
to whom the Only Begotten wants to give that revelation. Come
to me, all you who labour and carry heavy burdens, and I will

give you rest. Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from
me,
for I am gentle and humble of heart. Here you will find rest
for your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Even as we seek understanding, our minds
too often shelter us from the realities we might uncover.
May we have the courage to hear and hold truths found within
these words

Reflection

Balance is one of the perennial truths. Perennial truths are nuggets of golden wisdom that turn up in many traditions. They are universal truths that individuals and cultures come to realize and experience in their own language and stories. They are often shown to be true by science, nature and instinct as well as spiritual traditions. They tend to be life principles that we innately know but often forget. Balance is one of these perennial truths. Let's take a whistle stop tour through some major traditions.

Balance is a major emphasis in Buddhism. 600 years before the time of Jesus, The Buddha coined the phrase "the Middle Path" in an address to his monks-

"The middle path, monks, avoiding the extremes, gives vision and knowledge and leads to calm, realization, enlightenment, and Nirvana. And what, monks, is that middle path? It is this Noble Eightfold Path, namely: right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration."

The Buddha understood the Middle Path, or balance, through his own life experience. He was brought up a prince, in great affluence. When he first encountered sickness and death, he realized that his protected life had not prepared him to deal with the reality of suffering. He rejected his upbringing and all worldly pleasures, and swung to the other extreme. He spent all his time meditating. He discovered that this also didn't prepare him to deal with suffering. He concluded that neither extreme, indulgence or deprivation, was the path to liberation. Instead he proposed the middle way between these two. At one time the Buddha sat by a river and heard a lute player in a passing boat. He understood that the lute string must be tuned neither too tight nor too loose to produce a harmonious sound.

Now we turn our mind to Christianity. On first reading, Jesus showed little patience with balance. He seemed to be a radical, an extremist. He said, "If you are not for me, you

are against me", "Give up everything and follow me" and "If you are luke-warm, I will spit you out." In fact the word "balance" occurs very rarely in the Bible. When it does occur, it is the Hebrew word "Mozen" and the Greek word "Zugos". Both words refer to the poles carried across your shoulders that balance two containers. Each container needed to be a similar weight and in right position in order to maintain balance. What is the meaning of the teaching? I like to think of this as two containers that hold two different but complementary things; like strength and compassion, independence and accountability, patience and urgency, hope and realism, conviction and openness. We need them both in some sort of dynamic partnership.

In Matthew 11, Jesus offered the gift of balance (usually translated as yoke) to those who felt heavy with life's burdens. What did he mean? I imagine that he meant that when life feels overwhelming we have more options than we realize, and more capacity than we give ourself credit for. The Christian teaching on balance is close to the idea of flexibility or skilful means.

Next stop...Hinduism which teaches the balance of karma. We tend to think of karma in too literal and linear a way, as if each action is balanced by some specific consequence in this life or another. I saw a bumper sticker that read, "If you can read this, I can hit my brakes and sue you." It seems to capture the way we think of karma. Karma is not about justice or some sort of reassurance that others will get their just desserts. The way other people treat you is their karma. The way you react is your karma. Karma is a general worldview about balance. Things tend to work themselves out whether we understand the timing or outcomes or not. Balance, is staying in the middle while the universe holds the pieces in place. Your ability to stay in the middle is your karma, because if other people can push your buttons you will keep suffering.

All the spiritual traditions use their own language and stories to teach about a state of perfect equilibrium; mind, body and spirit in balance. The storms and changes of life can't shake this balance. Not even a leaf stirs on the well rooted tree that is balance. It is a pond without the slightest ripple. It is the silence of a star filled sky. We know how to access our inner balance. We just forget from time to time.

Prayer

The gathering one calls us into community with each other to love and work, support and heal. The gathering one calls us

into community with all people; to bring justice and hope, freedom and truth. The gathering one calls us into community with the whole creation; to live in harmony, to cherish and renew.

A prayer for those who are angry at others or the government
May they remember that rage can be a step toward collective recommitment, inviting us to sustain steady flames together as we fight for change, instead of burning out in a moment of individual combustion.

for our masks

May they protect our noses, our mouths, our lungs, our lives, creating a system where we all work together, precautions not only for ourselves but for others, and may wearing them remind us that we can still practice this communal care and cooperation even after the masks come off.

For Lebanon.

May the people of Beirut feel the focused energy of the world holding them in solidarity and love, and as they continue this period of national mourning, may they sustain their collective strength to comfort the grieving, remember the lost, heal the injured, recreate what has been ripped apart, and demand continued accountability and change from the government, especially as the media moves on, making it easier and easier for the powerful and for rest of the world to lose this necessary focus.

for journalists:

May they continue to ignore the attacks and uncover the truth, always serving the good of the people over the egos of the powerful, and may they be assured that their integrity is always quietly appreciated, even as the loudest, most vitriolic voices continue to blather in their direction.

May Christ's joy, peace, wholeness and justice be the reality for everyone.

Let us become a real community open to all people and all needs as we live by the Jesus Way.

Blessing

May we know the blessing of listening to each other;
may we know the blessing of leaning on each other for courage;
may we know the blessing of exploring together with curiosity and laughter; and so may we know the blessing of God;
endless grace, tender comfort and fierce inspiration
in the light and life of Jesus.

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