

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

www.stmagnus.org

Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation



Minister: Rev Fraser Macnaughton

Tel: 873312

FMacnaughton@churchofscotland.org.uk

Pastoral Minister: Rev. June Freeth

Tel: 721449

JFreeth@churchofscotland.org.uk

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 20th September

You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/CJN9Tlbp1Is>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle meditation

May every morning be a reminder of God's creation for us of the turning from dark to light the coming together of all longing into the birth of life. May we find in this turning moment the opportunity for growth and the hope of tomorrow

May the Spirit come and let us go. Hold us no longer in the safety of our ideas but free us into the rich experience of faith in the world. Hold us no longer that we might become her honest followers and not her perfect clones. Held no longer but let go... that we might live faithfully... Amen

Reading

From Psalm 90 read by Ian Cunningham

God, it seems you've been our home forever;
long before the mountains were born,
Long before you brought earth itself to birth,
from "once upon a time" to "kingdom come"—you are God.
We live for seventy years or so
(with luck we might make it to eighty),
And what do we have to show for it? Trouble.
Toil and trouble and a marker in the graveyard.
Oh! Teach us to live well!
Teach us to live wisely and well!
Come back, God—how long do we have to wait?—
and treat your servants with kindness for a change.
Surprise us with love at daybreak;
then we'll skip and dance all the day long.
Let your servants see what you're best at—
the ways you rule and bless your children.

And let the loveliness of our Lord, our God, rest on us,
confirming the work that we do.
Oh, yes. Affirm the work that we do!

*May we be struck by the wisdom of these words
and marked by hearing them. For within story lies
meaning, and
within meaning, the wisdom for which we seek.*

reflection

I am sure you all know all too well by now how maths and physics have never been my strong points. Heaven knows I have 'fessed up to that often enough. Nevertheless, while I might not grasp the intricacies I can still appreciate the concepts. After all, I take comfort in the fact that 'physics' is shorthand for 'natural philosophy'!

The laws of maths and physics have forever been one of our great constants. They are predictable and reliable, not given to strange surprises. But now, more and more, scientists are finding that even the laws of physics sometimes offer unexpected surprises and exhibit a freedom that leaves us baffled. Freedom, it seems, is everywhere.

Novelists have always known this. A novelist creates an imaginary character, begins to write a story, and then discovers that this character doesn't always want to follow what the author had in mind for her. She becomes her own person, develops her own attitude, goes her own way, and shapes the story in a way that the novelist never intended. In the end, partly independent of the author, each character writes his or her own story.

In his book, *A Million Miles in a Thousand Years*, Donald Miller takes this concept and uses it to offer a

wonderful challenge within which each of us is invited to edit our own life so as to make our story a better and more noble one. A form of autobiography Donald changes his life from being a couch potato to being fully engaged in a much better life.

Miller challenges himself to write a better story with his own life and then invites his readers to each edit our own lives so as to build a story which is more interesting and more noble, one which, will leave its readers longing to do better things with their lives.

In places the author sounds more the comic wit than the wise elder. But slowly, almost imperceptibly, depth, idealism, Christian vision, disarming common sense, and his real challenge begin to seep through, becoming clearer and more inviting as his story goes on.

In one passage he shares how he discerns the real voice of God from the many false, neurotic voices that he, and most everyone else, commonly can confuse with God's voice:

"As a kid, the only sense I got from God was guilt, something I dismissed as a hypersensitive conscience I got from being raised in a church with a controlling minister. But that isn't the voice I'm talking about. . . . The real Voice is stiller and smaller and seems to know, without confusion, the difference between right and wrong and the subtle delineation between the beautiful and the profane. It's not an agitated Voice, but ever patient as though it approves a million false starts. The Voice I am talking about is a deep water of calming wisdom that says: Hold your tongue; don't talk about that

person that way; forgive the friend you haven't talked to; don't look at that woman as a possession; I want to show you the sunset; look and see how short life is and how your troubles are not worth worrying about; buy that bottle of wine and call your friend and see if he can get together, because, remember, he was supposed to have that conversation with his daughter, and you should ask him about it."

And that Voice, Miller writes, is forever saying to us: "Enjoy your place in my story. The beauty of it means you matter, and you can create it even as I have created you."

In the end, this book is a healthy apologetic for faith, morality, decency, and God, the kind of challenge we badly need today. Building a better story. What a refreshing way to look at building a better life. Your life is your story and making your life what you want it to be is up to you..

A colleague of mine told me about his twenty-something daughter who has long protested her doubts about God and, not least, her agnosticism about the church. This young post-Christian, found the book on the kitchen table, picked it up out of curiosity, and then read it cover to cover, admitting that she was much challenged by it.

Now that's not a bad endorsement!

Prayer

We value others' perspectives and realize that we do not know it all. May we recognize our emotions - how they direct and distract, learn facts, follow our passions, and live out our values in the face of it all. We are community - and all are welcome.

A prayer for those who are being forced to grieve in unfamiliar ways:

May they be gently rocked by compassion as we all continue to discover how best to hold one another, may they find meaningful ways to spiritually connect to the loved ones they can't physically touch, may they have generous conversation partners to help them plan ways to mourn and celebrate lives lived and lost, may they meet open hearts who will listen to their honest pain, and may we all nurture undying patience for one another as we feel every individual grief within this collective grief and seek new healing together.

for the youngest among us:

May they observe this time with deep curiosity, recognizing the suffering of a society that has not grown up, even as its consumption and production have grown, and as they themselves mature, may they continually choose to contribute to a collective growing up, paying close, careful attention, especially after we're told we can return to blissfully bankrupt ignorance.

for those who can't remember what day it is:

May they find solace in the fact that so many of us are in this same time-smearing boat, weeks and weekends blending together, some hours flying by and others seemingly endless, and may we all realize that these structures we've imposed on our lives are built for a reality we are not currently experiencing, grant grace to ourselves and to one another, look at the calendar, and calmly carry on.

Let us increase our sense of communion with all living things; our brothers and sisters, plants and animals. The earth is their home as it is our home.

Blessing

May we know that the blessing of God, the compassion of
Jesus,
and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit are always with
us.

Unbidden, undeserved and unconditional love for us all

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