

**St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall**

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Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

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International  
ORKNEY  
SCIENCE FESTIVAL

You can find our Sunday worship here.

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Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here. [stmagnuszoom@gmail.com](mailto:stmagnuszoom@gmail.com)

#### Opening meditation

May we be at peace in this late summer season full of transformation and transition; full of reflection and change.

We are no longer onlookers at the circus of life, but rather performers and partakers. May we continue to breathe deeply of these moments, for life is short and the summer wanes. Live and love now. Be awake and alive! Be free, be wise and humble.

Let us hear the relevant and provocative message of equality and love, a community exploring and living out what is needed on this amazing and tumultuous planet: Relevant relationships, needed change, with and for the world, purposeful and playful existence amidst all the pain and violence; in the midst of disparities and unfairness. This is a time to re-commit to the basics - to thrive in community, to serve people and planet together...in mindfulness, with intention, through giving and generous response. May we be the light, be the change, be the source, the journey and the destination as together we walk the way of Jesus.

Reading Psalm 8 read by Helen Cunningham

Yahweh, our Sovereign, how majestic is your Name in all the earth! You have placed your glory above the heavens! From the lips of infants and children you bring forth words of power and praise, to answer your adversaries and to silence the hostile and vengeful. When I behold your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you set in place—what is humanity that you should be mindful of us? Who are we that you should care for us? You have made us barely less than God, and crowned us with glory and honour. You have made us responsible for the works of your hands, putting all things at our feet— all sheep and oxen, yes, even the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea and whatever swims the paths of the seas. Yahweh our Sovereign, how majestic is your Name in all the earth!

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

### **The whole and its parts**

A physicist, biologist and a chemist visit the ocean for the first time in their lives.

The physicist sees the ocean and is fascinated by the waves. He decides to do some research on the fluid dynamics of the waves and walks into the ocean, never to be seen again.

The biologist decides to research the flora and fauna inside the ocean and wades into the ocean. He too drowns.

The chemist stands and watches for a long time before writing in his notebook, "Physicists and biologists dissolve in ocean water".

Assuming I am not setting off various disciplines against one another on the occasion of the Orkney International Science Festival, jokes aside, oneness is a profound spiritual truth that is taught in all of the ancient traditions. Now physics, biology and chemistry have all found their own paths to this same truth.

Everything shares a common chemistry that unites us with all of nature. Physics points to the connection of wave and particle, and the unity of atoms once joined and now separated

by distances, like an invisible leg rope uniting the surfer to his board. Biology points to the fragile ecosystems within the human body and outside. We become what we eat, and the air we breathe, and the water we drink.

Buddhist Master Thich Nhat Hanh, wrote about this interconnectedness:

'If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud there will be no water; without water, the trees cannot grow; and without trees you cannot make paper. So the cloud is in here. The existence of this page is dependent on the existence of a cloud. Paper and cloud are so close. Let us think of other things, like sunshine. Sunshine is very important because the forest cannot grow without sunshine, and we humans cannot grow without sunshine. So the logger needs sunshine in order to cut the tree, and the tree needs sunshine in order to be a tree. Therefore you can see sunshine in this sheet of paper. And if you look more deeply ... you see not only the cloud and the sunshine in it, but that everything is here: the wheat that became the bread for the logger to eat, the logger's father ... the paper is full of everything, the entire cosmos. The presence of this tiny sheet of paper proves the presence of the whole cosmos.'

Realizing (or remembering) that we are connected to the whole and all the parts fills us with gratitude, humility, openness and self responsibility. We are a wave in the ocean of life, here today and gone tomorrow. But while we are here, we make our own mark, sometimes bobbing up and down quietly, other times raging and pounding the shoreline. Either way, we eventually merge back into the ocean. We are all as much continuous with the physical universe as a wave is continuous with the ocean.

Author Mitch Albom, tells a short story about waves in the ocean.

A little wave was bobbing along in the ocean, having a grand old time. He's enjoying the wind and the fresh air-until he notices the other waves in front of him, crashing against the shore.

"This is terrible," the wave says. "Look what's going to happen to me!"

Then along comes another wave. It sees the first wave, looking grim, and it says to him, "Why do you look so sad?"

The first wave says, "You don't understand! We're all going to crash! All of us waves are going to be nothing! Isn't this terrible?"

The second wave says, "No, YOU don't understand. Don't think of yourself as a wave about to crash, think of yourself as water and energy about to merge with the ocean."

When it feels like our life is crashing down around us, or endings are weighing heavily on us, it can be incredibly liberating to remember that we are part of something larger than ourselves. Breathe in. Breathe out. Like an ocean. We and every other part of the universe is linked, whether a strong link or a weak link. We have an important role to play and we don't need to worry about making mistakes. No mistake is irredeemable and nothing truly ends. Oceanic love holds all of it, all waves, all tides, all currents, in balance.

#### Prayer

Let us take time to stand in awe of this self-evolving universe.

Let us marvel at the living ecosphere of this planet. Let us set a supreme value on all forms of life.  
Let us develop a lifestyle that preserves the balance of the planetary eco-system.

Let us refrain from all activities that endanger the future of any species.  
and devote ourselves to maximising the future for all living creatures.

Let us set the needs of the coming global society before those of ourselves, our tribe, society or nation.  
May we learn to value the human relationships that bind us together into social groups.

Let us learn to appreciate the total cultural legacy we have received from the past.  
And accept, in a self-sacrificing fashion the responsibility now laid upon us for the future of our species and of all planetary life. As we celebrate the contribution, the discovery, the energy and the wonder of science in our Science Festival may these be are our resolutions, our affirmations and intentions, for the healing of the earth, its oceans and it's forests.

So may it be. Amen.

## Blessing

As the currents of our lives swirl us about blurring the clear  
and simple shoreline challenging our expectations, pushing us  
off-course at the still centre, Sophia-Wisdom speaks from the  
deeps in us re-charting our course reminding us to look to the  
stars

When our footprints turn to puddles and our sandbars liquidise  
When through the cloud and mist we hear the shriek of gulls  
not the murmur of waves Christ-Spirit sings in us—Peace, be  
still And we go out where it's deeper letting down our nets.

When the waves, disinterested, pound the rocks; As tempests  
rage in others' lives and we feel helpless We cast our bread  
upon the waters compass and chart to those imperilled on  
life's seas living compassionately, working for peace

We pick up starfish, knowing each one is precious returning  
with them to the Source of Life.

And may the Creative Wisdom of the deep and wide sea, the  
Challenging Teacher of calmed storms and healed lives and the  
Comforting Spirit who leads by still water be with you and all  
you love this day and always

Amen