

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

www.stmagnus.org

Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

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FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

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 December

You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/ELcEVZHtj8Q>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Advent candle lighting

Love.

We recognise that everyone views the world differently and different people believe many different things. May we accept others as they are and to give ourselves in love unconditionally.

We recognise that many of us struggle with our faith and our doubts. We recognise that many of us feel trapped by things we have done in the past. May we accept others as they are and to give ourselves in love unconditionally.

We recognise that many of us harbour feelings of bitterness and anger because of things that have happened in the past. We recognise that the experience of loss can be devastating, destroying our confidence in ourselves and the beauty and joy of the world.

May we liberate ourselves by forgiving those who have hurt us and to give ourselves in love unconditionally that we may rediscover the joy of life anew and to give ourselves in love unconditionally

Choir sing vs 4 of Christ be our light.

Reading Luke 1:26-38 read by Helen Killeen

One month later God sent the angel Gabriel to the town of Nazareth in Galilee with a message for a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to Joseph from the family of King David. The angel greeted Mary and said, "You are truly blessed! The Lord is with you."

Mary was confused by the angel's words and wondered what they meant. Then the angel told Mary, "Don't be afraid! God is pleased with you, and you will have a son. His name will be Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of God Most High. The Lord God will make him king, as his ancestor David was. He will rule the people of Israel forever, and his kingdom will never end."

Mary asked the angel, "How can this happen? I am not married!"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come down to you, and God's power will come over you. So your child will be called the holy Son of God. Your relative Elizabeth is also going to have a son, even though she is old. No

one thought she could ever have a baby, but in three months she will have a son. Nothing is impossible for God!"

Mary said, "I am the LORD'S servant! Let it happen as you have said."
And the angel left her.

**Every time we read and listen
The Word is born in us again.**

Reflection

The writer Robert Fulghum has a marvellous reminiscence of winter in 2003. He says 'I remember. The Rockettes came to town at Christmas — a road show version of New York's Radio City Music Hall spectacular, featuring the long-legged lovelies who dance in unison, kick high, and strut around to big band music. The hot ticket for Christmas.'

Spectacular is the operative word. Year on year it seems more and more extravaganza is available each Christmas time — a Big blockbuster film, and a Big theatre extravaganza, and another Big Christmas special music concert and the Big TV superspecial phantasmagorias.

All spectacular. All big, Big, BIG!

But somehow, hyperstimulation is not what I always want for Christmas. Not this year anyway. Some low-key joy would do. Amateur joy.

I recall a story a colleague of mine had when he remembered a conversation he had with a Greek friend in a small village on the island of Crete. My colleague asked why the Greeks minimalise the celebration of Christmas but go all-out for Easter. His Greek friend explained that December Twenty-fifth was just a birthday. Everybody has a birthday. Easter, on the other hand, celebrates a resurrection from the dead. That's amazing. That's spectacular. That's Big.

Besides, by the end of December the local folk of Crete have survived the stress of the tourist season, the exhaustion of the olive and orange harvest, and the first storms of the winter. Nobody is up for roasting lambs outdoors in the windy rain and dancing around in circles in the village square. A quiet church service, a walk home in the silent night, soup and bread, some old songs with family around a fire, and bed — that's it.

What my colleague called...the work of amateurs.

As we approach this most unusual of Christmasses, when we are being encouraged to maintain the levels of distancing and fewer social interactions in order to avoid another potential lockdown maybe we can take a leaf out of the book of the Greeks of Crete. Call it homespun, call it amateur call it low key, call it what you like, there is beauty in simplicity, in the unspectacular. It's about the universal Companionship of Amateurs of any faith or culture, struggling to feel at home in the winter's dark, and awed to be part of the Mystery of It All. No glitz, no glamour, no extravagance. No Big deal.

It's what makes things like local pantomimes so popular and which we miss so acutely this year. Folk we know getting dressed up in ridiculous costumes, singing corny songs, hammed up acting a plot we all know inside out with no surprises. The Companionship of Amateurs putting on a show for their ain folk.

We've probably all over worried whether Christmas this year is going to be as exciting as in previous years. We've maybe compensated with more or bigger presents, or almost a grim determination to enjoy ourselves despite everything and then opening ourselves to the possibility of being disappointed.

Maybe we could aim to be just contented with getting what comes our way and while being aware that across the world everyone is hopefully going to experience a capacity for joy — small and deep and ordinary.

Amateur joy. Infused with love. The birth of a baby after all is essentially just that.

Prayer

For Christmas may we receive the gift of time, to enjoy and reflect in the moment and to savour the future – ours, our children's, our grandchildren's. The time that in our moments together transcends the time of clocks and calendars.

For Christmas may we receive the gift of memory that does not dwell in the past, but rather adds flavour and sentiment to the present and meaning and purpose to the future.

For Christmas may we receive the gift of perspective that enables us to tell what is in front and what is behind. That enables us to distinguish that which requires our attention from that which will sort itself out on its own.

For Christmas may we receive the gift of vision that is so focused on seeing beauty that it finds it everywhere. For Christmas may we receive the gift of God who is love, already delivered to the door of our hearts, ready to pour in when we open it.

Amen

Blessing

Go in peace
into this Advent season.

Follow a star that's twinkling with courage,
blazing with possibility
to the space, the essence that is God.

And may the celestial brightness—source, spirit, sun—
be with you
enlighten, heal and empower you
and those you love

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