

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 2nd May

You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/0IF5zeml6lQ>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Welcome

We are people of faith, faith in each other,
faith in the ability of our church to make a difference,
faith that our common humanity can sing in harmony so the
threads of the great web resonates with joyful life,
faith in a loving and compassionate God working through
us - who can only work through us - to make the world a
better place.

Opening meditation

Nothing is lost to the heart of God, nothing is lost for
ever;

God's heart is love,
and that love will remain,

holding the world forever.

No impulse of love,
no office of care,
no moment of life in its fullness; no beginning too late,

no ending too soon,
but is gathered and known in its goodness.

Reading from *Genesis 2* Helen Cunningham

At the time when God made the heavens and the earth,
there was still no wild bush on the earth nor had any
wild plant sprung up, for God had not yet sent rain to
the earth, and there was no human being to till the soil.
Instead, a flow of water would well up from the ground
and irrigate the soil. So God fashioned an earth
creature out of the clay of the earth, and blew into its
nostrils the breath of life. And the earth creature
became a living being.

God planted a garden to the east, in Eden— "Land of
Pleasure"—and placed in it the earth creature that had
been made. Then God caused every kind of tree, enticing
to look at and good to eat, to spring from the soil. In
the centre of the garden was the Tree of Life, and the
Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. A river flows
through Eden to water the garden, after which it branches
into four tributaries. Then God took the earth creature
and settled it in the garden of Eden so that it might
cultivate and care for the land. Then God said, "It is
not good for the earth creature to be alone. I will make

a fitting companion for it." So, from the soil God formed all the various wild beasts and all the birds of the air and brought them to the earth creature to be named. Whatever the earth creature called each one, that became its name. The earth creature gave names to all the cattle, all the birds of the air, and all the wild animals.

**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

One of the old stories at the beginning of Genesis tells us that God's first act after completing creation was to plant a garden—the garden of Eden. And in the first sighting of Jesus after the resurrection, he is mistaken by Mary Magdalene for the gardener because that is precisely what he is—the gardener of the new creation. We read about the life, death and resurrection of Christ in the Bible, but in the garden, we experience it. Every time we plant a tiny misshapen seed and watch it burst into life from its earthy tomb it is as though we have seen the Easter story re-enacted.

Early Celtic Christians were very aware of this. Three days before sowing, farmers would sprinkle the seed with water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If possible, they would plant on a Friday. The moistening hastened the seed's growth and planting on Friday was always a reminder of Christ's death and burial. Planting was always symbolic of the planting of Christ, the seed of the new world from which resurrection life will come for all humankind as well as creation.

Donna Schaper, senior minister at Judson Memorial Church on Washington Square in New York City, once wrote, "Gardens have been the ground, which has rooted me as a citizen of the globe. I have loved all kinds of dirt in all kinds of places, and in each place I have improved the soil. . . . Gardening is a landed, dirty ritual that sustains hope for the new — which is another way of saying gardens sustain activists."

Gardening, is a good grounding activity that keeps us humble and open to the mysteries and miracles of growth, transformation, and radical change. I am sure you, like me can reminisce about the many gardens we have tended over the years in different places. For those who have got down on their hands and knees to tend the good earth, we are reminded of plenty of cogent insights into planning a garden, moving through the seasons, mulch,

weeding, seeds, and compost. Along the way, we will also recall our backs seizing up by overdoing it, and learning the lessons that the soil can teach the soul about hope, possibility, renewal, balance, and change. Of course, gardening is also about play, attention, openness, and patience.

Gardening almost brings it's own rituals too. We go beyond just working the soil, toiling mightily, head down. Do we ever leave without a good look around, without taking the opportunity to be? Or think how often we are in the garden and not working it, but just enjoying it, even though the temptation just to pull up another weed is always there. Stopping long enough to see the growth – and how things have changed, usually since a few days before. Learning to see change is important for both all of us gardeners and non-gardeners alike: otherwise we think nothing is happening when all the while the nature quietly goes on living.

Here is how one writer described their experience. 'In the process of caring for and admiring my tulips, I encountered the spiritual dimension of gardening. One sunny late afternoon as I walked past the tulips, I was drawn to one tulip in particular. The tulip's pink petals were wide open. The inside of the delicate tulip revealed the exquisite intricacy of the tulip's black and soft yellow stamen and a brighter yellow pistil. I was overcome with awe and wonder. Something so beautiful could not be designed by human hands. An overwhelming sense of peace came over me. This moment was a God experience. The next morning the tulips were tightly closed and asleep. Their petals were sprinkled with droplets of morning dew. Simply magical! My success with the tulips and my God experience with them planted the seed for my growing love of gardening. Little by little, I planted more gardens and more kinds of flowers."

Gardens and gardening also stimulate people into activism, inspired by the spirituality of being close to the earth.

Think for example of food cooperatives like Farm Share a network of small-scale, sustainable food growing projects. Their vision is to support food systems that educate, connect and empower local communities to be healthier and more resilient, to be rooted to the land and to each other, and to experience a direct relationship with how our food is produced. Through that are opportunities for learning about ecologically sensitive farming methods, enjoying and celebrating local seasonal food, and sharing knowledge and expertise

Some Farm Share projects receive and deliver nationally tons of vegetables 'too ugly' for supermarkets. One, started by a woman going through a difficult divorce, at the suggestion of a grower who wanted to get rid of the high fees he was paying in waste collection, Farm Share now supplies soup kitchens around the country.

Imagine the pressure on a tomato or a squash: it must look perfect to go to market, just like many of us must look better than we do in order to go to the shops ourselves..

Prayer

Senses stimulated; sights to delight in and dream about.
Sensual and evocative
or more earthy ... smells, that bind us with creation.
Textures and tastes, both familiar and rediscovered.
Birdsong echoing our inner response
to a walk or seat in a garden.

The Spirit desires us to enjoy the beauty of creation;
in our gardens, allotments and window boxes,
parks and roadsides, wild and tended.

Yet, there is:
soil to be turned over,
manure to be dug in,
and seeds to be sown.
Flowers need watering and grass cutting,
hedges trimming and trees pruning.
A garden needs planting, tending and love.

A gift to be worked with
as well as enjoyed.
A living thing to invest in
as well as to treasure.

We give thanks for gardens,
small and large,
local and global.

May we delight in them,
respect them,
enjoy sharing them
and their fruit,
with neighbours and creatures,
great and small.

Blessing

Walk bravely
Facing the truth
With goodness in your heart
And beauty in your actions

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