

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 8th August

You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/Kyh1VH0ydQ8>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and meditation

For every time we make a mistake
and we decide to start again: we light this flame.

For every time we are lonely
and we let someone be our friend: we light this flame.

For every time we are disappointed
and we choose to hope: we light this flame.

We wish you balance, enough sun to stay hopeful and enough rain to appreciate the sun even more.

Enough joy to keep the spirit alive and enough pain to appreciate the joys
even more.

Enough gain to satisfy your desire and enough loss to appreciate the gains
even more.

Enough peace to stay grounded, and enough strife to appreciate the peace
even more.

Reading

- *Matthew 11:28-30 (The Message)*

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

- *Matthew 11:28-30 (NRSV)*

'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

Reflection

The author and activist Terry Tempest Williams wrote about "staying in the middle" in his book *Leap*.

"In the middle of my life, I am coming to see the middle path as a walk with wisdom where conversations of complexity can be found, that the middle path is the path of movement. . . . In the right and left worlds, the stories are largely set. . . . We become missionaries for a position . . . practitioners of the missionary position. Variety is lost. Diversity is lost. Creativity is lost in our inability to make love with the world."

I've been thinking a lot about the whole process of momentous change we have all experienced. And how one navigates change. On the one hand, you need to make plans, take action and show some conviction. This is the leading edge of change and sometimes requiring pushing the envelope. On the other hand, you have to stay open and not get locked into super specific outcomes. This is the middle of change where you learn to say "we'll see."

There is a Taoist story about an old farmer whose horse ran away. His neighbours came and said. "Such bad luck."

"We'll see," the farmer replied. The next morning the horse returned, bringing with it three other wild horses.

"How fortunate," the neighbours said. "We'll see," replied the old man.

The following day, his son tried to ride one of the untamed horses, was thrown, and broke his leg. The neighbours again came to offer their sympathy.

"We'll see," said the farmer. The day after, military officials came to the village to draft young men into the army. Seeing that the boy's leg was broken, they passed him by. The neighbours congratulated the farmer.

"We'll see," said the farmer.

This story describes staying in the middle, rolling with the punches, not jumping to conclusions. Another word for staying in the middle is equanimity. Equanimity comes from Latin words *aequus* meaning balanced, and *animus* meaning spirit or inner state. Equanimity is inner balance, impartiality, calmness. Equanimity is keeping your cool no matter what the circumstances.

Jesus, in his little story about a yoke, not the yellow bit of an egg but the piece of equipment used by oxen to pull a plough or a person to carry buckets of water, struck exactly the right note with that description.

To carry two buckets of water on a yoke that balance, that equanimity is imperative otherwise it spills everywhere. It's a great metaphor.

A modern definition of equanimity: 'cool' as in keeping one's cool. This refers to one whose mind remains stable and calm in all situations.

"We'll see" is an empowering phrase. Next time someone tells you you can't do something, say "we'll see." Its a way of disagreeing without getting defensive or argumentative. Next time someone judges you or predicts your future, say calmly, "we'll see." Its a phrase of non defensive, non attached, acceptance and quiet confidence that whatever needs to happen will happen.

Equanimity is about observing without concluding. It's not passive. It's about full engagement with the moment, full wonder at the possibilities, without attachment to specific outcomes. Imagine how many opportunities we would miss in life if we had already made up our mind what needs to happen.

Equanimity is the ability to accept all that happens—praise and blame, success and failure, pleasure and pain, trust and betrayal, without attaching to the feeling and locking into an expectation. Equanimity allows us to stand in the middle of both praise and criticism, success and loss, without losing our cool. Circumstances and our state of mind change so rapidly, that equanimity helps us not to attach to any circumstance or feeling.

Equanimity is the balance of doing what we can and then stepping back and letting life take its course. It stops us from fighting tooth and nail with reality when reality is telling us that is not yet our time.

This is a profound truth. It's not an accident that we often describe people who have inner peace as "centred" or "grounded". As the Buddha said, "They abide in peace who do not abide anywhere".

Or one might prefer to say, "Those who abide in peace abide everywhere". Equanimity makes us at home in our own skin, which makes us feel at home anywhere and everywhere.

Equanimity is the basis for inner peace, a life not ruled by judgment. Stay in the middle. Engage the present fully. Let the outcomes go. As the ancient Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius said,

'You always own the option of having no opinion. There is never any need to get worked up or to trouble your soul about things you can't control. These things are not asking to be judged by you. Leave them alone.'

Prayer

We open ourselves to greater balance – to be buoyed by the grandiose and miniscule, the symphonic cymbal crashes of our days...and the soft, whispering words we may say in another's ear. Let us, as pendulum people, enjoy both passion and reason, risking new decisions and calculated prudence; let us ponder the vast unknown galactic mysteries and act upon the sensual and tender loving possible everyday in the here and now. We break ourselves wide open, affirming unity, embracing diversity...accepting the seeming opposites, expressing tears and laughter, justice and joys as we blossom fully now and again and again.

May our balance include preoccupations on self – and compassion for others; let it include self-care and abounding service to those around. May our lives and daily decisions be as life-giving and simple gifts to those near and far – for we affirm an intimate connectedness with all and the impact our lives and choices have upon others. Let care, affection, humility, fairness and kindness

be our dancing partners and language as we proceed into this day – loving our neighbours, visiting the sick and those recovering, making meals, lifting a glass in honour of one loved and lost. Let body, mind and soul integrate and heal, flourish and nourish – so that all of us are as beaming lights to grey lives and to the often un-illuminated corners of the world. So be it!

blessing

Not even a leaf stirs on the well rooted tree, Christ, who is our centre. It is a pond without the slightest ripple. It is the silence of a star filled sky. Balance knows that all things change and remains calm and grounded. May you realize your own deep balance today.

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