

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 24th October

You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/1a3Yu7AH8go>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and Opening meditation

We light this candle as a symbol of our faith.

By its light may our vision be illumined;

By its warmth may our fellowship be encouraged;

**And by its flame may our yearnings for peace, justice and the life of the spirit
be enkindled.**

We bring our hopes and anticipations.

We bring our joys and celebrations.

We bring our sorrows and lamentations.

We bring our faith and adorations.
we bring to this hour of worship,
all that makes our lives real and meaningful,
that they may be blessed by communion
with the lives of others.

Reading Romans 11; 33- 12;5 Helen Cunningham

Oh, how deep are the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge, how inscrutable the judgments, how unsearchable the ways of God! For, "Who has known the mind of God or been God's counsellor? Who has given God anything to deserve something in return?" For all things are from God and through God and for God. To God be glory forever! Sisters and brothers, I beg you through the mercy of God to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Don't conform yourselves to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your minds, so that you can judge what God's will is—what is good, pleasing and perfect. In light of the grace I have from God, I urge each of you not to exaggerate your own importance. Each of you must judge yourself soberly by the standard of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members—and these members don't have the same function— so all of us, in union with Christ, form one body. And as members of that one body, we belong to each other.

Reflection

We don't talk much about *counterculture* anymore. The word conjures up the 1960s with its echoes of revolution and antiwar demonstrations and flower power. Perhaps we never thought we'd be part of anything that could be labelled countercultural.

Well, now we are.

In sociology, the word has a more precise definition: 'cultural patterns that strongly oppose those widely accepted in a society,' as one text puts it. By that definition, dialogue as a habit of the heart is countercultural on several levels. We have already seen one of them in abundance: Intractable conflict has become a cultural norm in many spheres of activity. We have come to expect it as standard operating procedure from elected officials and pundits. In so many church controversies, school board fights, and relationship squabbles, the possibility of dialogue as an option rarely crosses our minds. When it does, we worry that any attempt to reach across divides will somehow compromise our principles.

Dialogue flies in the face of all this intractability: its very first instinct is to listen, to seek peace, to try to understand. It approaches from a position of openness rather than defensiveness. It does not seek to interrupt the other or even formulate a response while the other is speaking. Some people may see this not only as countercultural, but as dangerous; they have built their careers, even their whole orientation toward life, on conflict, so an orientation toward dialogue leaves them adrift.

This sort of dynamic brings us to another way in which dialogue is countercultural: its resonance with the message of Jesus. His emphasis on mercy over rigid observance of the law — healing on the Sabbath, talking with women of a despised class or ethnicity, dining with the dreaded tax collectors and even calling one of them to be an apostle — ran him foul of the authorities. When called to task by these same authorities, Jesus challenged them to reflect and reconsider their own assumptions.

Dialogue presents a similar challenge to our long-held assumptions and rigid categories, no matter how gently or delicately we pursue it. Many people deride dialogue as an attempt to 'just all get along,' as 'fuzzy thinking' for the sake of avoiding conflict. It is quite the opposite. But rather than take up our adversarial culture's typical approach to challenge — shout, defend, cut off conversation — it seeks to engage the other in a deep experience of listening and conversing. It may not directly issue the challenge to change one's thinking, but that is often the effect.

There is also a third way in which dialogue is countercultural. It has to do with values that our culture prizes above many others: efficiency, speed, results, return on investment.

As we have seen, dialogue is a funny thing. Sometimes it succeeds beyond all expectation, the parties reach consensus, and everyone moves forward together. Sometimes it fails, we end up squabbling, and the answer arises from the ashes. Often it falls short of uncovering the truth, but satisfies the deepest longings of our souls, like the hunger for companionship or the need to be heard. At times it fails to achieve a policy solution but moves the participants to see the legitimacy of the 'other side' and the humanity of its advocates. Sometimes dialogue sheds little light on a situation but somehow, mysteriously, brings us closer.

Maybe, just maybe, we can say that dialogue *never* fails. Often it just succeeds in unexpected ways, and we fail to perceive it.

Prayer

In a time when communication gives us so many options, from phone calls to texts, emails to facetime; when social media lets us tweet and like, may we lift our eyes from our screens and take time to use face to face words and ensure that our words are kind and loving, encouraging and nurturing.

In a time when everyone is so busy, when time itself seems to disappear, it is easy to stop communicating to stop finding ways to share thoughts and emotions with our loved ones, may we take time to review what it is that makes us busy and give more time to family time.

In a time when families spend so much time apart or because they live so far away, may they find space and time to be in contact with each other and to make the most of the time they get to spend together online or face to face.

In a time when families suffer more and more from breakdowns and splits may they find ways to speak to each other that are kind and gentle, to listen to all sides of story and to try to see the best in everyone.

In a time when our worldwide brothers and sisters are struggling more and more with less and less and fear is creating suspicion that stops us trusting each other may we find ways to reduce fear and to rebuild trust.

Blessing

Go, as God's children into a weary, worried world: to be bringers of vision and dreamers of dreams. Go, as God's people into a messy, broken world: to be builders of bridges and makers of peace.

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