

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.

You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/72gq2wOnZ6I>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

It is God, in the dawning, in the renewal, in the arrival, in the new day. We carry this flame into our midst as the symbol of the creativity of our faith:

Don't look for holy and righteous men and women
who wear halos and are ringed with light. You won't find many.

Look instead at our neighbour, look instead at the tired carers and worried parents.

Look instead at ourselves and see in the eyes the saints of God.

Today's St Columbas, today's St Magnus', today's St Andrews. People with the
greatest commandment ingrained in their souls.

Who intuitively love and share that love with and for the world. This platform is full of God's saints

May God's stillness and peace rest upon us.
May God's presence permeate all our living.

Reading Psalm 71 14-24

As for me, I'll always have hope, and I will add to all your praises. My lips will proclaim your deeds of justice and salvation all day long, even though they are innumerable. O God, I will enter your mighty Temple and there proclaim your justice. You taught me when I was young, and I am still proclaiming your marvels. Now that I am old and gray, O God, do not desert me; let me live to tell the coming generation about your strength and power. Your justice, O God, is higher than the heavens. You have done great things; who is comparable to you? And so on the lyre I'll praise you, my ever-faithful God; I will play the harp in your honour, Holy One of Israel. My lips will sing for joy while I play for you— my whole being, which you have redeemed, will sing. And all day long, my tongue will speak of your beneficence—

Reflection

In this second half of life that so many of us now experience, we have the opportunity to shift from being an 'adult' to becoming an 'elder.' All previous civilizations have asked adults to become elders, so this concept is by no means new, but for us now it is a part of a living miracle: literally, billions of us will actually get the chance to become elders, if we will take that chance. Think of what the world will be like if that miracle — and all the wonder, awe, and good work it implies — actually takes place.

What does the word 'elder' conjure up in *your* mind? For the avoidance of doubt I am not talking about church elders [which perhaps in the past has muddied ecclesiastical waters in terms of perceived suitability if people]. Are you an elder or just 'getting older'? Becoming an elder requires consciousness and concentration, especially in our present century when an elder's way is not clear. For a starting definition, we can look up 'elder' in a dictionary or on Wikipedia. We see that 'elders are repositories of cultural knowledge and transmitters of that cultural information' or 'elders are thought of as reservoirs of certain skills that need to be passed on to younger people.' In Sardinia, elders spend a part of their days passing knowledge of their trade or craft to younger villagers. In Japan, elders seek out opportunities to support and help their family and community members 'when asked.' In many places, elders report 'having reasons to get up in the morning,' and they are known as 'older

people who are comfortable exploring and passing on their faith.' They feel that mentoring is a part of their 'sense of higher purpose.'

As far as a definition might be go would it be fair to say an elder in our society is someone of let's say fifty or older who:

- passes on specific work and wisdom and teaches it to others, while also providing wise counsel when needed;
 - models life purpose and maturity (fewer power struggles with others, more insightful respect and admiration of others, more 'drawing out' of others' gifts);
 - remains as physically and mentally active as possible (takes control of damaging body-mind practices and transforms them so that the body and mind remain healthy as he or she ages, so that the elder can be 'of use' and 'enjoy life' for as long as possible);
- connects young people and society to mysteries of success, compassion, freedom, and faith (takes the risks of modelling both humility and self-confidence in the face of real life, while protecting others' rights to live their own way, in their own mysteries).

Part of embracing the wonder of aging is really taking hold of where we are as elders. We cannot turn back the social clock; we live in an age when 'elderhood' is rarely bestowed on us just because we're older. Our culture focuses more on young people and middle-age journeys, and we are challenged as elders to be visible. We can complain about this, or we can take our own responsibility for it and correct this course. We can (and we must) concentrate so fully on what an elder is now, today, that we support one another in thinking, acting, creating, serving others, enjoying life visibly, and take our place. This 'taking' is part of the redefinition of age that we can make happen. By embracing the wonder of aging, we can embrace a new role in the family, community, group, marketplace, and world, a life position we must not passively wait for people in today's society to give to us. Each time we volunteer at a child's school, teach a child a craft or skill, provide insight to others, or lead, guide, and help younger people sustain life and vision, we can be an elder.

Becoming an elder means realising that a person can still act like a child, not an elder. A person can complain constantly, which an elder probably ought not do if he or she is going to be respected as an elder. A person can spend his or her last decades of life in power struggles with others, which an elder does not. An older person can withdraw from family and community, which an elder does not do. Ultimately the 'glory' of an elder is the choosing to take hold of freedom. This kind of freedom is not about escape; rather, it is the next stage of growth, the next mature kind of love.

To become an elder in our society is not as cut-and-dried as it may be elsewhere or might have been in the past, but it is a maturity on which family, community, and even the soul and spirit of our species depend.

Prayer

Is this taking it too far; too far from the familiar, the comfortable and predictable.

Better the devil we know than risk uncharted territory. Bring back the days when seats were full to bursting on a Sunday and children filled buses bound for summer picnics; when the minister knew everyone's name because he visited them all. And woe betide anyone who uttered that bad word 'change'.

We have taken it so far.....

Or not far enough to reach the promised land where 'used to' and 'always done it' are allowed to die and be buried gracefully before we set off again in search of new life and new ways of meeting Christ

among people. We have the Spirit to lead us forward. A Teacher and leader who took it too far so we might go all the way and be reconciled with him. Who will guide us forward, show us where we can use our gifts to help others in their daily lives; show us where we can use our time to benefit the world we live in and contribute to improving life for all.

Blessing

The holy One calls us to holiness; calls us to wholeness; calls us to be whole-hearted and wholly engaged in the world. The holy One calls us to journey to places of milk and honey and places of thirst and hunger. As we journey, leave behind the worries and regrets, leave behind the rose-tinted glasses: venture forward into places familiar and unknown; share Christ's story of liberating, life-giving love.

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