

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

www.stmagnus.org

Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

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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 14th November 2021 **Remembrance**

You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/h1GiSAikl8A>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

The candle is lit

All say; We light this candle as a sign of God's light in a dark world, a glimmer of hope amidst despair, a fragment of love in a world of hate.

Call to Remembrance and a time of Silence

100 years and more. And what have we learned except to kill and maim more? To gaze as millions flee their lands and livelihoods with nowhere to call home? To watch as nations ramp up their arsenals amidst wars of words?

100 years and more and we remember the stench of fear and death; the lives lost the bodies damaged the minds destroyed the families broken by humanity's wanton desire to win at all costs.

100 years and more, and we must never forget; not just the sacrifice and the suffering, not just the scars and the loss but that there is no victory without humility; no winner without grace, no justice without peace.

They wanted wars to end and so, we'll work for peace now as we grow.

We'll find a way to get along, with all we meet both weak and strong.

IN SILENCE NOW We will remember them.

Reading

Bible Reading: Micah 4 1-5

In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised up above the hills.

Peoples shall stream to it, and many nations shall come and say:

'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,

to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways

and that we may walk in his paths.'

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away;

they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,

and their spears into pruning-hooks;

nation shall not lift up sword against nation,

neither shall they learn war any more;

but they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken. For all the

peoples walk, each in the name of its god,

but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.

Reflection

The cost of war also paid by the living

Today is Remembrance Sunday. For over 100 years now nations have paused to recall the suffering and sacrifice of so many people in wars, since the Armistice that ended the War to End All Wars came into effect at 11:00 a.m. on the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918 when the guns fell silent.

If only we could say that they had stayed silent.

They haven't. They've got more lethal. With the Second World War. Then with the Korean War and the Vietnam War, both of which I think of as outbreaks of the first World Civil War, with an incessant parade of people taking up arms against their own people. In Yugoslavia, in Rwanda, in Kashmir, in Sudan and Ethiopia.

And then there are the eruptions where outside forces get involved in local conflicts: Afghanistan, Somalia, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen...

A couple of years ago we visited Carole's brother in Oxfordshire. Right next to the M40 into London, the Chiltern hills begin and on the hillside overlooking the motorway were 101 silhouetted lifestyle soldiers cast in metal. This was part of a commemorative art

installation and the picture is on the front cover. It was a moving sight to walk amongst them.

But I think by focussing solely on the fallen, we miss something important.

Everyone is part of something bigger than themselves.

The soldiers who died were not just individuals. They were part of a community. They had families. Relatives. People they worked with.

During the 1950s and '60s, some psychologists debunked the idea that communities had any kind of collective consciousness. Communities were a fiction, said the conventional thinking of the time. Communities consisted of individuals, and it was only the individual who mattered.

The cult of individualism became so pervasive that author Robert Bellah mused, in 'Habits of the Heart,' that the only way we could imagine breaking free of the individualistic mindset was to become even more individual.

But the tide may be turning.

It is now the perceived wisdom that there is an increasing recognition that the group one belongs to, the group one affiliates oneself with, has a huge impact on what one thinks, and how one reacts.

A wisdom that is demonstrated every day in UK or U.S. politics where loyalty to the group -- whether the Labour or Conservative -Republican or the Democratic factions -- overrides people's personal convictions about honesty, morality, compassion, and even common sense. Because it is unthinkable, literally unthinkable, to betray your group.

Perhaps then Remembrance Day needs to look not just at what those soldiers experienced in the mud and trenches of Vimy Ridge, the Somme, and Passchendaele; not just at the heroism of the Battle of Britain or D-Day; not just at the suffering in prison camps in Germany, and Burma. We need to look also at the impact of war on the communities left at home.

In British Columbia there is a small ghost town called Walhachin. It's heyday was between 1900 and 1914, prospering on its apple orchards. In 1914 all the men of Walhachin, of military age between 18-45, enlisted in the British army, many taking their families back to Britain with them. As the war dragged on too few came back to prune and maintain the orchards that had been planted with so much promise a few years earlier. Of the 107 men who had signed up 97 never returned. The last resident of what had been an affluent and stylish community left in 1922. We know this too here in Orkney. There is not a parish, however small, that does not have a war memorial with numbers of its sons inscribed on it.

We all know that post-traumatic stress disorder can affect individuals for years. How long does PTSD take a community? A nation?

To be brutally frank, those who were left behind had to live with the death of their spouse, parent, lover, child, friend, and co-worker for the rest of their lives. Those who died, didn't.

I don't say that to disparage the sacrifice those young men made. To give your life for a cause not of your making is indeed a huge sacrifice.

But we also need to pay attention to the effects on their communities. How did it change their ways of running their lives? Their hopes and aspirations? Read again Lewis Grassie Gibbon's heart rending 'Sunset Song'. Think too of all the maiden aunts of your own family, who for obvious reasons remained unmarried. Think of the potential brothers, sisters, cousins that your family were denied, relatives that have been denied to you, because of the slaughter of war.

Much more than names of the fallen on a headstone or memorial, war affects communities as well as individuals and past wars continue to affect families and communities even today.

Prayer

Jesus said blessed are the peacemakers. Sometimes we struggle to feel blessed in our efforts to make the world a more just place for everyone.

We struggle as we watch people suffer, as we witness abuse and evil, as we mourn those who lay down their lives so others may have a better life. Today, as we remember those who gave their lives in the service of their country, and those who this day continue to risk their lives for the sake of freedom, we ask that our prayers for peace are more powerful than any weapon; that our actions for justice have more impact than any conflict; that our pledge to fight for freedom is stronger than any army.

We call to mind those in our armed forces, and emergency services who work to protect us and the lives we take for granted.

May the Spirit comfort those who still bear the scars of warfare and hostility. Heal the wounds which exist among nations, races and cultures and which seek to divide us.

Hone our words that they might reap something good. Equip us to seek and speak peace wherever humanity teeters on the edge of disharmony.

Remind us that we serve in Jesus name, and his name only,
Prince of Peace.

Amen.

Blessing

We are called to be love in action as Christ's Body in the world. Speak truth to power; shine light in the darkness; sing songs of joy in times of despair.

Be bringers of peace and bearers of burdens; lift up the powerless; remember the forgotten ones.

Walk with the blameless, the shameless, and the nameless until they find their names and lives in God's own hands.

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