

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.

You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VIDvnlUky9w>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

We light this candle to remind ourselves that our faith is not in our words but in our lives, not in what we say but in who we are. May we pass on God's love like an infectious laugh: shining like the sun, like a starry night, like a lamp on a stand, light for life, a light for our lives.

Sandcastles may be fun to build,
but are quickly washed away
in the ebb and flow of the endless waves.

Yet so much of what we do
is but for the moment:
sometimes to impress others,
to pretend that we care,
maybe to declare our love,
until someone or something else comes along.

The work ethic to dig deep
and secure the foundations
has been replaced by sell by dates and instant gratification.

The search for God
is denied by the secularist and atheists,
the Scientists and philosophers
seek to outthink and outmanoeuvre the theologians, to flow with the tides of
morality,
that often seems far from the Ten Commandments passed to Moses on
tablets hewn from the rock.

It is in Christ our Rock,
that we trust
to keep us safe and secure,
on him we rely to show us his way
and in his Spirit we are helped to stand on holy ground.

Reading

Luke 18 9-17

Jesus spoke this parable addressed to those who believed in their own self-righteousness while holding everyone else in contempt: "Two people went up to the Temple to pray; one was a Pharisee, the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed like this: 'I give you thanks, O God, that I'm not like others—greedy, crooked, adulterous—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week. I pay tithes on everything I earn.' "The other one, however, kept a distance, not even daring to look up to heaven. In real humility, all the tax collector said was, 'O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.' Believe me, the tax collector went home from the Temple right with God, while the Pharisee didn't. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, while those who humble themselves will be exalted." People even brought their infants forward for Jesus to touch. When the disciples saw this, they scolded the parents. However, Jesus intervened by calling the children to himself. He said, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to

such as these. The truth is, whoever doesn't welcome the kingdom of God like a child will never enter it."

Reflection

My, my, those disciples!! Poor guys never seemed to get anything right. Jesus must have had the patience of a saint.

"Let the children come to me. Don't stop them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Imagine the effect of those words in a global context. Imagine what it would mean if the harmony that informs the loving, learning relationship between parent and baby were translated into all human relationships, if each person's expressions of emotion and need were met by caring, empathic responses.

We know that ideally a child is loved into being a loving person at home. When school becomes the next significant influence, we need a school culture that fosters social trust and respect. And if children were not loved into being loving at home, can they learn to be caring at school? Yes, they can and, when we consider the implications for health, well-being, and competence over their life span, they must be. Providing them with this opportunity is the only responsible thing to do.

We know too, that when children's needs for love and belonging are not met at home or in school, many of them turn to violence, taking out their anger and frustrations on weaker peers.

As a society we have an obligation to ensure that when parents, for whatever reason, are unable to provide a model of warm, responsive parenting, this deficit does not become the destiny of their children. It is not useful to blame and shame adults for deficits in parenting that they inherited. It is constructive to help parents to take responsibility in their parenting by providing the supports that are required. We have an obligation to halt the cycle, to give every child an alternative, and to open the door to caring and trust for them, so that when they become parents they will not be doomed to pass on to their children the harsh beginning they experienced themselves. We also seek to develop the sense of social justice that will encourage them as adults, whether or not they become parents themselves, to build a society that is a model of interdependence and inclusion.

Imagine a generation of children across the world entering into adulthood and parenthood armed with self-esteem, a reciprocity of understanding of emotions, a sense of community, a commitment to peaceful resolution of

conflict, a valuing of social inclusion. Imagine the world this would call into being:

If every child raised with love in a society where their parents are not penalised in terms of income, opportunity, or self-development for the act of becoming a parent.

If every school becomes a centre of collaborative learning that trains the heart as well as the mind, where character and intelligence are equally valued and nourished, where we celebrate helpfulness, cooperation, and kindness as well as good maths scores.

If every community becomes a place of human connection, where social trust exists, where no one is left to struggle in poverty or neglect or isolation.

If every nation becomes a peaceful member of an interdependent global family, where the valuing of human life and the protection of our environment are the yardsticks by which all decisions are measured.

These are not new values or ideals. As long as there has been strife and hunger and exploitation and cruelty, there have been visionaries, humanitarians, and people of goodwill who have advocated another life-affirming way. What *is* new is that we no longer have an excuse to go on inflicting pain and dividing up the earth's resources as if the world were still a collective of medieval fiefdoms separated from one another by impassable mountain ranges and unknown seas. We know too much.

At the touch of a button, we can see children dying from disease and famine, while we know that the medicine and food that would save them exists.

At the touch of a button we can see the victims of war and poverty, with hopelessness and suffering, while political leaders feed us what we know is diversionary rhetoric about balancing budgets and balancing power.

At the touch of a button we can visit the devastation of a country five thousand miles away or the mean streets of our own troubled cities, where children are hounded by bullies. Where, in all the gadgetry of our lives, is the 'empathy button'? Where is the on switch of human responsibility that would let us feel the emotion behind what we know and impel us to stand up and take action for what we believe in?

We know that the ability to express emotion, the ability to understand another's point of view, and the ability to respond empathically to the expressed emotions of others is the currency of relationship-building.

Jesus had an ability to express empathy as a human trait that affects how we, to use contemporary words "challenge injustice, how we live and care for each other, and how we take responsibility for the safekeeping of our planet."

"let the children come to me'.... These words show us yet again how relevant, how necessary and how perceptive Jesus is, as much today, as to his very first listeners and his very first disciples..

Prayer

Let us stand humbly and unafraid and allow love and a healthy sense of life urgency guide us without fear toward fuller living. Let the wonder and awe stand as is and be life-giving. Let unique occurrences drive us to ourselves and propel us more deeply, lovingly, compassionately into life and relating.

Let us not get caught up in any cult of certainty or dogmatic conformity to any one experience or interpretation of the unexplained, but rather be positively transformed by it all so that we give of ourselves to this world.

Can we commit to sharing a smile or holding a hand with those near, writing a cheque to countless causes faraway – the disaster relief that goes on and on and volunteering our time and talents. Can we commit to neighbourliness, patience and growing compassion – affirming all states, experiences, feelings and identities – enjoying and recognizing all and attached to none.

We are purposefully open and unafraid; we are intrigued and guided by all we know as well as the vast unknown. Let us live with the curiosity, the maybes, the wonder, the convictions that ground and guide – and then continually give ourselves in service to those near and far. Amen.

Blessing

Go, into a world in upheaval,
into a world in which what seemed secure now feels built on quicksand,
but know that upon the rock of Christ you can face the challenges,
you can meet the needs,
you can build the kingdom one brick at a time.

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

