

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.

You can find our Sunday worship here.

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

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/IJkbwwlCALI>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

How joyful it is, to celebrate the good news of God's love!

We are called to be Easter people!

Darkness cannot claim us!

Fear cannot bind us!

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen, indeed! Amen!

The Light of Christ has come into the world,
a Light into the valley of the shadow of death.

That Light is the Light of Life –
a beacon of resurrection fire.
The Light shines in the darkness
and the darkness has never been able to put it out!

Very early
in the morning,
the disciples huddled
in fear's shadowed corners,
while Pilate
and the religious leaders
drank weak chardonnay
and dropped stale canapes
into the potted plants
at the symphony;

very early
on the first day
of the week,
the women
wandered through
mourning's mist,
their broken hearts
carried gently
in their hands;

very early
in the morning
on the first day
of the week,
leaving death
sitting empty-handed
in the tomb,
Jesus strode into the kingdom,
a bouquet of balloons
filled with grace
in his arms.

Reading

Luke 24; 1-12

Very early on Sunday morning the women went to the tomb, carrying the spices that they had prepared. When they found the stone rolled away from the entrance, they went in. But they did not find the body of Jesus, and they did not know what to think.

Suddenly two men in shining white clothes stood beside them. The women were

afraid and bowed to the ground. But the men said, "Why are you looking in the place of the dead for someone who is alive? Jesus isn't here! He has been raised from death. Remember that while he was still in Galilee, he told you, 'The Son of Man will be handed over to sinners who will nail him to a cross. But three days later he will rise to life.'" Then they remembered what Jesus had said.

Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and some other women were the ones who had gone to the tomb. When they returned, they told the eleven apostles and the others what had happened. The apostles thought it was all nonsense, and they would not believe.

But Peter ran to the tomb. And when he stooped down and looked in, he saw only the burial clothes. Then he returned, wondering what had happened.

Reflection

I cannot help but think of how the awful events of those last few days must have erased so much from their memory as they walked to the tomb that early morning. Even that which they had believed they could not possibly forget.

For while, no doubt, these women had encountered death countless times before, I expect it was not often, if at all, that they saw it come so brutally to one in whom they had put such hope.

Indeed, surely their place at the foot of that cross, looking on as suffering and shame piled on while they stood by helpless, must have caused them to forget the power that resided in the One who hung there.

So, they knew, surely. They knew to the core of who they were what it was to be given their lives back. To be 'resurrected,' if you will. But on that first day of the week as they walked together, we do not sense that they remember at all. No, we do not hear that their steps are light with joyful anticipation. Rather, they are weighed down not only by the spices which are theirs to carry to that place of death, but by confusion and fear which often accompany grief such as this.

And yes, one can understand, for they have seen death before and they know if its finality. Indeed, this cannot be the first time they carried those same spices for this same purpose before.

Surely it left little possibility for anything different from any other time when they arrived where the body had been laid a few days before.

Only nothing is the same this time, is it?

With the stone rolled back and the body gone.

And two men in dazzling clothes asking them a question which only moments before would have had an obvious answer: "Why do you look for the living among the dead?"

For in fact, they had seen the tortured, lifeless body of Jesus there just days before.

And then the words which summed up those last few days: the 'handing over and the crucifixion.'

But somehow, they had forgotten what came next. What was promised next. Something they already knew.

That where Jesus was, suffering and death never had the last word. Indeed, how many times had they seen it for themselves, in so many lives restored, physically and otherwise? And how deep did this truth live within them as well?

Oh, as we walk with them today, at first we wonder how they could possibly have forgotten.

And then I realize how this has also been so for us, again and again.

For over the last two years we find that we do recognize ourselves in these faithful ones who made their way to the tomb that early Easter morning:

For us it was not that, or at least not precisely that.

For us it was word of a virus the implications of which we could not yet imagine, but which froze us in fear nonetheless.

And the inability to gather, to know the physical presence of others who bolstered our own hope, our dearest held beliefs.

And the grief which piled on and piled on in a thousand ways.

And the exhaustion which comes from too many tears wept and too many stored away for later.

And the wondering if the world would ever again resemble what it once did.

I'm sure for all of us there have been days when we could not imagine resurrection anymore. Times when we made our way to the 'tomb,' failing to remember that the Spirit is always poised to do a new thing.

But then these words, for us as well:

"Why do you, why do we, look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen."

Indeed, could it be that once again this time, Jesus will not be where we expect to find him now?

That maybe our hearts have been clouded by all that has been, causing us to forget for a while just what the Spirit can do.

Ours has long been a story of resurrection.

For a while, we just forgot.

And now we are reminded again.

And today, once more we are those carried forward not by grief, but by the powerful experience of what the Spirit can do, that we, along with those women, might bear this promise to all the world.

This one which we now so gratefully remember:

That Jesus is always found among the living.

In stones rolled back and unexpectedly empty tombs.

And hearts awakened once more to what the Spirit has always done.

Bringing life again where we thought death had won.

Do we sometimes forget what the Spirit can do? Indeed, do we see ourselves in the women on their way that Easter morning? Are we able to remember now what we had, like them, perhaps forgotten?

If we are remembering, when had we already known such resurrection? What has the Spirit done that is written on our very bones?

There are those who wake up this Easter with no earthly reason to expect that the Spirit will do a new thing. Indeed, one does not have to travel far to imagine such despair. How might not only our voices, but our very lives extend this promise to those who need it most?

Prayer

The world is different now for, in Christ,
we know that love cannot be contained –
not by death's grave,
not by human walls that divide and separate,
not by barriers of hopelessness and despair.

For all who suffer, are ill, or are in grief, we pray...
For all who wait to be fully included, we pray...
For the places of hopelessness within and around us, we pray...

The world is different now for, in Christ,
The Spirit has pushed its way through
and befriends the earth once again.

For the seasons of creation
and the earth's pattern of death and renewal, we pray...
For all the ways God's presence is revealed to us, we pray...

For the delights and joy of life, we pray...

The world is different now for, in Christ,
hands that held a whip and a hammer,
have seen the futile victory won with violence.
And hands once held in death's grip by nails,
now offer peace to all the earth.

For forgiveness offered and received, we pray...
For tables of diplomacy
and cooperation between nations, we pray...
For peace that transcends differences, we pray

Blessing

Resurrection calls us to go and do God's work in the world,

to bring light to the darkness,

**to bring hope to the hopeless,
to be the voice of the voiceless.**

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