

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/Vbned1NM3ZI>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

Like a glowing flame, a guiding star, a beacon in the storm, a light at the end of the tunnel, a candle in the darkness, God is with us.

The stone is rolled away, death is overcome.
The tomb is dark, but empty, darkness gives way to light.

The grave cloths are folded, where has he gone?
The women were the first to see and tell us he is not here.

We are an Easter people, ours is an Easter faith,
the yeast is rising in our hearts, our wine has vintage

taste. Our tears are freed to flow and heal our shattered hopes and hearts. Our fears have died, we rise to dream, to love, to dance, to live. Christ is risen, risen in our lives.

Reading ...

John 20;19-30

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were locked in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Temple authorities. Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Having said this, the saviour showed them the marks of crucifixion. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw Jesus, who said to them again, "Peace be with you. As Abba God sent me, so I'm sending you." After saying this, Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you retain anyone's sins, they are retained." It happened that one of the Twelve, Thomas—nicknamed Didymus, or "Twin"—was absent when Jesus came. The other disciples kept telling him, "We've seen Jesus!" Thomas' answer was, "I'll never believe it without putting my finger in the nail marks and my hand into the spear wound." On the eighth day, the disciples were once more in the room, and this time Thomas was with them. Despite the locked doors, Jesus came and stood before them, saying, "Peace be with you." Then, to Thomas, Jesus said, "Take your finger and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side. Don't persist in your unbelief, but believe!" Thomas said in response, "My Saviour and my God!" Jesus then said, "You've become a believer because you saw me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Reflection

Fear is a great solidifier, one of the primary blinkers that keeps who we really are out of sight. Even if harsh emotions like anger cause more harm in the world, how often is fear a propelling factor? Fear leaves us feeling

like a snail without a shell, afraid, defenceless. Isn't it when we feel unprotected that we do all sorts of harmful things?

We shy away from fear. As Hot Lips Hoolihan used to say in M*A*S*H, 'I don't like fear. It scares me.' No wonder, considering how unappealing its masks are: dread, apprehensiveness, alarm, panic attacks, trepidation, worry, cold feet, anxiety, foreboding, and phobias. 'Stress,' a catchall phrase, is largely populated by fear's mates.

Ironically, as inevitable as fear is, people rarely own up to being afraid. It's unusual to see undisguised fear except in small children, since at a certain age we start covering up our fear by whistling in the dark. We can spew out a barrage of excuses as opaque as octopus ink, hoping to keep our fear invisible. Thus we may even lose contact with fear's presence, until it catches us off guard.

What do we fear? Almost anything: being devalued, unlovable, out of control, insecure, lonely, or worthless.

Our ways of covering fear are innumerable, starting with several 'f word' options: *fight, flee, freeze, fantasise,* and *fake friendliness*. These are reactions that colour, or rather discolour, the fear that is already present, adding more pain to our considerable stash. We may try to distract ourselves from our fear by staying busy, trying to avoid the tension and worry that accumulate when we fear that the fear monster is gaining on us – covering our fear with fearful-looking behaviour may sound strange, but people often avoid even greater fears through addiction to self-doubt, confusion, indecisiveness, and weak or timid attitudes.

Some of fear's camouflage may be angry-looking cover-ups for fear, like suiting up in the seemingly impenetrable armour of righteous indignation, contrariness, resentment, or belligerence. Or even something as seemingly innocuous as 'false modesty'. These may provide a sense of safety, but they leave us just as uncomfortable as before, compounding the tension of fear with the tensions of anger.

One apparent difference between humans and other animals is that when animals are frightened or startled, they run, thus depleting their build-up of adrenalin.

Compliant or withdrawn species tend to remain inactive when frightened. They freeze as their defence mechanism.

The build-up of cortisol courses through our veins, causing cellular mischief. The stress chemicals are eventually compounded into free-floating anxiety; we're scared, and nothing seems to be causing it. We project our worries onto whatever seems perilous – that other country, the stock market, politics. Worst of all, when physical danger is actually imminent, the reservoir of our built-up fear may flood, paralysing us with panic, making us unable to respond. When we're immobilised, the results can be worse than the situation that evoked the fear.

We may reach the point where we even fear happiness, regarding it as a sign that the axe might be about to fall.

Yet it's miserable seeing life through a tunnel of fear.

A key point in working with fear is to keep asking a fundamental question: 'What is this?' The question is *not* 'What is this *about*,' which leads to historical rehashes. The answer to 'what is this' is always physical. For instance, let's say we're afraid a new acquaintance is going to write us off. Rather than withdrawing or turning on the charm, we take a few moments to feel our clenched neck and shaky hands and stay engaged in whatever is going on.

This open awareness can be particularly helpful, providing breathing room for our fear to come out into the open, rather than remaining constricted by the narrowed attention of unaddressed fear.

Entering directly into fear may seem as scary as walking into our house late at night and having something brush against our arm. Terror! Turning on the light, we see that our winter scarf on the hook by the door is gently caressing our shoulder.

The dim corners of consciousness can seem like this, until we have a closer look. Embracing our fear is part of being one with everything.

Unexamined fear starts the cascade of other deadly four-letter-words: *fear*, to *hate*, to calling something we fear *evil*, to a justification to *kill*. Uninterrupted, the cycle mushrooms into hate crimes, religious warfare,

unimaginable atrocities and even war crimes. Fear is the most benign of these four-letter words, and all that it asks is what friends usually ask: that we give the fear some respectful attention and listen compassionately to its voice.

It has been said that fear is the opposite of love. Actually, love, in its fullness, has no opposite, and can encompass even fear within its loving circle. By taking the necessary baby steps to experience our fear, we express our wish to live in the openness and wholeheartedness of love.

Prayer

Christ, set loose from the grave,.... what happens now?
May his new dawn footprints take us back into and not
away from the world.
Now he is risen, may we go back to Palestine and believe
again,
trust again, and follow him again, knowing what we know
now.
May we go back to the poor, and say, "Yes! God is on your
side,
and we will be your companions."

May we go back to the imprisoned, and say, "Yes! God's
intent is to set you free, and it is our fight too."

May we go back to the hungry, and say, "Yes! God is
preparing a feast right now, and we would love to
accompany you to the table."

May we go back to the blind, and say, "Yes! God has a
vision for you, and we want you to lead us into it."

May we go back to the oppressed, and say, "Yes! God is
freeing the world, and we want to work for each others
freedom."

Now he has been set loose from the grave, before we
forget,
and slip back into our normal ways:
our routines that save us from being transformed;
our habits that save us from thinking about recreation;
our patterns that save us from stretching our faith;
may we go back to the old days, and begin again, with
this new trust resurrection brings, the new colours we
see,
and the new confidence we hold,

and lead into every future that resurrection brings,
that we may go with him, and say, "Yes! He is risen in
us,
and we will be the community that brings him alive into
the world.

Blessing

**And now we take our leave. Before we gather here again:
may each of us bring happiness into another's life;
may we each be surprised by the gifts that surround us;
may each of us be enlivened by constant curiosity And may
we remain together in spirit
till the hour we meet again**

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