

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/QuezFC0WyR0A>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.
stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

For every time we make a mistake
and we decide to start again: we light this flame.

For every time we are lonely
and we let someone be our friend: we light this flame.

For every time we are disappointed
and we choose to hope: we light this flame.

We are here because we decided to come to this webpage at
this time.

We come from different places.
We come from different backgrounds.

We are here.

Some of us may be here with certain expectations.

Some of us may be here with no expectations.

Some of us may be here in joy.

Some of us may be here with their challenges and questions.

Some of us may be here with their doubts.

May this place here, may this time now, be a special place and a special time, because the Spirit of the living Christ is here.

May this place here, may this time now, be a special place and a special time, because Christ has promised the Spirit will be among us.

Amen

Reading

Isaiah 45 18-25

Thus says YHWH, Creator of the heavens, the God who designed and made the earth, who established it firmly, and did not create it to be chaos, but rather a place to be lived in: "I am YHWH, and there are no others like me.

I have not spoken in secrets, in a land of darkness; I did not say to Jacob's descendants, 'You will find me in chaos.' I, YHWH, speak the truth. I declare what is right. Gather yourselves together, assemble and draw near, you survivors of the nations! They ignorantly carry about their wooden idols,

and continue to pray to a god that cannot save. I challenge them to declare and present their case— let them take the stand! Who announced this from the beginning, and foretold it from long ago? Was it not I, YHWH? There is no other God but me, a just and saving God— there is none but me. Turn to me and be saved, all of you—even those at the ends of the earth, for I am God; there is no other! By my own self I swear; I never go back on my word,

for it is the truth when I say that before me every knee will bend, and by me every tongue will swear— all will say, 'From YHWH alone comes victory and strength.'" All who were angry with YHWH will stand there ashamed. In YHWH, all generations of Israel will find justice and vindication.

Reflection

We all want to control our lives, to some extent, so that we can feel safe. Change often throws a wrench in that plan, hurling curve balls and body blows that mess with the order we crave. We know that only too well, living on an island, where a ferry or plane cancellation can throw all our plans into chaos.

Change can feel chaotic. But befriend chaos, and we will befriend change. Befriend change, and we will unlock the secret to a peaceful life. The first truth of change is that it happens and we are always in the middle of it.

The second truth of change is to allow the future to emerge within, through and around us. The third truth of change is to embrace chaos. Buckle in, stay present, know who we are and get ready to grow.

Let's take something really ordinary to illustrate the possibilities of chaos. A deck of cards and an iPhone.

The deck of cards is shuffled and completely disordered, a prime example of chaos. The iPhone is a prime example of order, an amazing machine, the result of decades of precision technology. What happens if I drop the cards on the ground? Are they any more or less ordered. No. They are no less chaotic than they were in my hands.

What about the iPhone? If I drop the iPhone, it will be less ordered. It could even be unfixable. The machine will be broken, and just as when I accidentally poured water in my iPhone a few years back, the technical geniuses at the Apple store will tell me to get a new machine because there is nothing they can do to restore order to my phone.

The deck of cards won't organize itself. But it can easily be put into order with the help of an even moderately intelligent mind. It has potential to be put back into order.

When you think about it, this is incredible. The deck of cards which is completely chaotic has greater adaptability and potential for order than the precisely designed iPhone.

Chaos Theory says that even the most disorderly system contains within itself the seed of order. This is true for relationships, families, work teams, political systems, communities, even our own complex personal perspective.

Maybe chaos feels too strong a word. Maybe the word "messy" is closer, like a messy conversation. We don't know how to begin it, but we stumble in and when two people engage the conversation with humble curiosity, incredible things emerge. Or else maybe the word confusion seems more fitting. As psychologist Milton Erickson said, "If you are willing to be confused about what you know, what you know will grow bigger, better and more useful."

This is why chaos (at least some chaos) is a gift. If the world functioned like a machine, it would struggle to handle change. Thankfully, the world is a living system and operates more like a deck of cards (sometimes it feels like a house of cards), where change becomes an opportunity for new things to emerge. If people operated like machines, we would struggle with change. George Orwell's famous '1984' is essentially about trying to eliminate change by mechanising people.

But we are more like a deck of cards. With some reorienting of our perspective, such as recognising that we can't always control the cards you're dealt, but we can always control the way we play them, and some reorganizing of our choices, change brings incredible new opportunities.

Think about that in terms of some intensely personal and difficult situations. On the day we lost our job, it felt like the sky was falling on all our hopes and plans. Little did we know that an incredible new path (blue sky) was unfolding in our chaos. The day our spouse told us they were leaving us, it felt like a heavy door was closing on our face and taking our feet out from under us. Little did we know the new love we would find. The chaos we felt when our parents died, when our beliefs started changing, when our kids left home...all were new opportunities in disguise.

As Friedrich Nietzsche said, "You need chaos in your soul to give birth to a dancing star."

Chaos Theory is closely related to the Butterfly Effect. Change is powerful and not nearly as random as it often appears. Making one, small change such as changing our routine, smiling at a stranger or crossing the street to talk to a neighbour, can lead to incredible transformation. Chaos Theory reminds us of our power to co create the future through mindful participation in change.

As we read in our contemporary reading, fractals remind us that if we a step back from what appears to be chaos, and take a higher or wider view of a situation, we can see beauty and order that was hard to detect when we were close up. Change invites this high and wide perspective. As hard as it is, we can learn to stay open and awake in the middle of change because incredible new doors are opening for you. Change always comes bearing gifts of new possibilities.

As the artist Cezanne said, "We live in a rainbow of chaos." Enjoy the colour, variety and gifts that change brings to your life.

Prayer

Christ has not spoken in secrets, but spoken truth to declare what is right.
And so in truth and justice,
we pray for our world,

a world in which corruption and deceit are all too easily seen,
where misplaced ambition becomes idolatry,
and where those in need are often disregarded and left alone.

we pray that the kingdom of justice and compassion will be made known among us and through us;
that the Spirit will cut through human greed, cruelty and lies, and point to a better way of living.

we pray for those with influence - may those who are in power be wise and not self-serving.
We pray for those who are marginalised - let compassion and generosity be their hope and refuge.
And we pray for those who proclaim Jesus' name - let them do so with integrity and tolerance.
So that justice and truth may prevail for all in our world.

Blessing

As we go now from this site into week ahead, let us be assured that the God of justice and truth is beyond time and space.

Let us hope and trust that God's love and compassion wants to prevail in us and through.

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

