

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://youtu.be/pnUPDNIsOuA>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

We light this candle as a symbol of our faith.

By its light may our vision be illumined;

By its warmth may our fellowship be encouraged;

And by its flame may our yearnings for peace, justice and the life of the spirit be enkindled.

Amid all the noise in our lives,
we take this moment to sit in silence:

to give thanks for another day;
to give thanks for all those in our lives
who have brought us warmth and love;
to give thanks for the gift of life.

Let us open ourselves to the process of becoming more whole:
of living more fully;
of giving and forgiving more freely;
of understanding more completely
the meaning of our lives here on this earth

Reading from Isaiah chapter 40

"Console my people, give them comfort," says your God. A voice cries out, "Clear a path through the wilderness for YHWH! Make a straight road through the desert for our God! Let every valley be filled in, every mountain and hill be laid low; let every cliff become a plain, and the ridges become a valley! Then the glory of YHWH will be revealed, and all humankind will see it." The mouth of YHWH has spoken! Go up on a high mountain, you who bring good news to Zion! Shout with a loud voice, you who bring good news to Jerusalem! Shout without fear and say to the towns of Judah "Here is your God!" YHWH, O Sovereign One, you come with power, and rule with a strong arm! You bring your reward with you, and your reparation comes before you. Like a shepherd you feed your flock, gathering the lambs and holding them close, and leading mother ewes with gentleness.

Do you not know? Have you not heard? YHWH is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. This God does not faint or grow weary; with a depth of understanding that is unsearchable. God give strength to the weary and empowers the powerless. Young women may grow tired and weary, young men may stumble and fall, but those who wait for YHWH find a renewed power: they soar on eagles' wings, they run and don't get weary, they walk and never tire.

Reflection

It doesn't take a genius or even an opinion poll to work out that a majority of people in Britain think politics is more divided now than it was in the past. A large minority would still say that religion is more divided now than it was in the past. Although to be fair that would rather be between

major religions rather than Christian denominations who might be bucking the trend.

Either way, people are polarized and sticking to their long held perspectives, whether its religion, politics or personal worldviews. We mistakenly think that we know how the story ends and go to great lengths to preserve the world as we know it and protect the end we think we know. This is the essence of fundamentalism, to resist change and fight to maintain the status quo. The problem is that quo changes its status more often than a teen's Instagram account. Overzealous Instagram posters may be annoying, but the fundamentalist's inability to see outside their own perspective is downright dangerous as we saw again and again mass killings and assassinations across the world.

Psychologist Howard Gardner offers a helpful definition of fundamentalism-

Fundamentalism is a decision not to change your mind about something...Many of us are fundamentalists of one kind or another...because it has worked well for us.

At our best, we are willing to change our minds and acknowledge that we don't know the end. No one does. Even the most astute forecaster or the most inspired prophet doesn't know the end. Some people are very good at reading the signs that point in particular directions, but no one knows the whole story with any certainty.

A guy named Dan is working in his store when he hears a booming voice from above: "Dan, sell your business." He ignores it. It goes on for days. "Dan, sell your business for £3 million."

After weeks of this, he relents, and sells his store, for £3 million no less. The voice says "Dan, go to Las Vegas." He asks why. "Dan, just take the £3 million and go to Las Vegas."

He obeys, and goes to a casino. The voice says, "Dan, go to the blackjack table and put it down all on one hand." He hesitates but knows he must. He's dealt an 18. The dealer has a six showing.

"Dan, take a card." What? The dealer has -

"Take a card!" He tells the dealer to hit him. Dan gets an ace. Nineteen.
He breathes easy.

"Dan, take another card." What? "TAKE ANOTHER CARD!" He asks for
another card.

It's another ace. He has twenty. "Dan, take another card," the voice
commands.

"You've got to be kidding. I have twenty!" Dan shouts. "TAKE ANOTHER
CARD!!" booms the voice.

"Hit me," Dan says. He gets another ace. Twenty one.

The booming voice chuckles and says: "Blimey O'Reilly! You got lucky!
That's unbelievable!"

The booming voice in the story is our best intuition. Some might call it
the still, small voice or God within. It's a persuasive energy, not a coercive
one. It doesn't tell us what to do. It guides us with signs and messages. It
doesn't know the future, but each step becomes clear as we are taking it.
Maybe, if we are particularly insightful, we intuit several steps ahead. We
see the necessary changes up to a point, but not all the way. No one knows
that.

The future cannot be determined. It can only be experienced as it is
occurring. Life doesn't know what it will be until it notices what it has
become.

Life is a constant process of becoming, a series of dynamic experiences,
and each one builds on the ones that came before it. The many,
interrelated factors in each experience create the future.

When I was chaplain at Dundee University in the 90s, the students union
had an extension built which meant a reconfiguring of the nearby paths.
Foolishly the designers built the paths before waiting to see the routes
students would take. The future change was made before the future
happened.

Change happens the same way ant trails emerge and paths emerge on a
campus. First, one person walks across the grass from one building to
another. Another person takes a different route across the grass. Soon
there are several lightly marked paths. Eventually one clear path across
the grass emerges and most people use it. No one caused the path to
happen. No single person designed the path. There was no meeting to
agree on a particular path. It wasn't even a conscious decision. It was a

self organizing structure. It emerged as people unwittingly created it. It was co created.

The path from one job to another, or one relationship to another, or any other major life change, is more delicate than a grass path, but similar principles apply. We step out and allow the path to emerge. Change happens within first, and then change manifests around us. We intuit our next steps as others intuit theirs, systems evolve and before we know it the future has become a very present reality.

As business strategist Harriet Rubin said, "To see the future you have to travel on the rough edge of experience."

Prayer

The Mysterious God, is everywhere, all the time, and yet too often we seek in things, we try to make God fit our idea of who and what a god should be.

We place our faith in people and nations, money and power, instead of love and justice, hope and compassion.

May we seek out where love is present and active and join in. May we nurture and grow loving relationships and spread that love to all people.

May we stand up for justice, to use our voices to speak for those whose voices others would silence.

May we spread hope around like snowflakes, feeding hope and starving out fear.

May we be compassionate, to see the needs before us and to seek ways to be Christ's hands and feet, Christ's eyes and ears, Christ's voice, that people might come to follow him through our words and actions.

May the Spirit be with the faithful people all around the globe who are striving to keep the faith alive and well, those who are facing persecution and isolation from friends or family; for the faithful who put their lives at risk to share their faith with others.

May comfort and strength come to all who seek to share the faith of the gospel wherever they are.

And in due time may they become part of the wider body of Christ in our world. Amen.

Blessing

May we go out into the world in a faith
that dares us to believe Christ's way shall endure for aye,
safe in the shadow of love as we walk with him
while the storms of life rage around us.

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