

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/BJ6MOu_6BtA

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation.

All say; In the light and beauty of day. We give thanks in awe and wonder. In the dark and stillness of night. We dream of healing and hope. And so we take this flame and light our candle for the world

Gathering meditation and a time of Silence

We gather in this place in order to turn ourselves to face outwards that we might be more fully alive in the world, that we might see beyond ourselves, that we might be nourished to seek justice for the oppressed.

We gather to be nourished that we might go from this place to seek justice, to show mercy, to love all. These ways are not dreams or mere options but the way of God.

Autumn invites our reflection and deep changes and calls us out to be more of who we are. May we be like the leaves circle-turning their way to the ground, crying no death scream when changes occur. Let us learn from the cycles and rhythms of nature in this season of retirement and full harvesting – in this peaceful ebbing as all things bow to the mystery of life.

Reading

John 2; 1-11

Three days later, there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, was there. Jesus and his disciples had likewise been invited to the celebration. At a certain point, the wine ran out, and Jesus' mother told him, "They have no wine." Jesus replied, "Mother, what does that have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." She instructed those waiting on tables, "Do whatever he tells you." As prescribed for Jewish ceremonial washings, there were six stone water jars on hand, each one holding between fifteen and twenty-five gallons. "Fill those jars with water," Jesus said, and the servers filled them to the brim. "Now," said Jesus, "draw some out and take it to the caterer." They did as they were instructed. The caterer tasted the water—which had been turned into wine—without knowing where it had come from; the only ones who knew were those who were waiting on tables, since they had drawn the water. The caterer called the bride and groom over and remarked, "People usually serve the best wine first; then, when the guests have been drinking a while, a lesser vintage is served. What you've done is to keep the best wine until now!" Jesus performed this first of his signs at Cana in Galilee; in this way he revealed his glory, and the disciples believed in him.

Reflection

Why Is Marriage in Retreat? Screamed the headline..... as it was in a tabloid newspaper there was little if any substance to trying to provide an answer. It got me thinking, especially in the light of how much was made recently of the longevity of the marriage of the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh. How do we navigate our way through such an important social institution and the momentous changes it has seen in our lifetimes.

Most theories about the supposed decline of marriage start with the impact of structural changes to the economy. The most important of these — the movement of women in the workforce — undid the equilibrium of the male breadwinner/female homemaker template for marriage that had prevailed since the industrial era. At the same time, the development of a postindustrial, knowledge-based economy has diminished the job prospects and earning power of less-educated men, creating a 'marriage market mismatch' at the lower end of the socioeconomic scale. In the old marriage marketplace, a woman needed a husband for financial security. In the new marriage marketplace, fewer women have that need, and fewer men can cater to it.

Other theories focus on the more intimate realms of marriage. Until not too long ago, marriage was the only socially and morally acceptable gateway to sexual partnerships. The

introduction of the birth control pill in the early 1960s helped to pry much of this regulatory authority over sex away from marriage. In an era of what is known as 'friends with benefits,' sex among unmarried or never-married adults carries little if any stigma. This has complicated the case for marriage — and not just because sexual desires can now be respectably accommodated without lifetime commitments, but also because it has increased the demand on marriage to provide something even more precious than sex. More so than ever, people want a spouse to be their lifelong companion, emotional soul mate, partner in the journey toward self-fulfilment. Marriage, in a word, is supposed to be built on love.

But as social historian Stephanie Coontz has observed, love may be the undoing of marriage. At the very least, - and this might sound a bit odd to many of us - it has injected an unstable element into the suddenly fragile heart of an age-old institution. For most of its 5,000-year history, marriage had little to do with love. Across cultures and centuries, it thrived as a way to propagate the species; establish people's place in the social and economic order; acquire in-laws; organize productive activity along gender lines; extract labour from the young; and distribute resources from parents to children. Only in the eighteenth century, with the spread of market economies and the Enlightenment, did love and mutual self-fulfilment start to enter into marital bargain. Today, arguably, they're the dominant part. But love can be fickle and self-fulfilment a high bar. Can an institution built on love be as durable as one built on the stouter stuff of economic self-interest? As a society, we're conducting that experiment right now. So far, the answer appears to be no.

In the middle of the twentieth century, the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer sent a congratulatory letter to some newlyweds of his acquaintance. It contained an quote about marriage that reflected an old-fashioned view of the institution. 'It is not your love that sustains the marriage;' he wrote, 'but from now on, the marriage that sustains your love.' Today one would be hard-pressed to find that sentiment expressed anywhere in Western literature or culture.

A 2013 research paper, 'Knot Yet: The Benefits and Costs of Delayed Marriage,' did a wonderful job showing how young adults view marriage as a 'capstone' rather than 'cornerstone' arrangement — 'something they do after they have all their other ducks in a row, rather than a foundation for launching into adulthood and parenthood.'

Given this new cultural framework for marriage, it's no surprise that it's the high-achieving young adults who are most likely to get hitched. Marriage has become a status symbol, a highly regarded marker of a successful personal life. . . . Something young adults do after they and their live-in partners have good jobs and a nice house. That certainly is my experience of conducting weddings over the last forty years. Indeed I cannot remember the last couple I married who came to their wedding from their respective family home.

I wonder then if we might not try to emphasis the value of reverence into the debate. Reverence comes not with perfection but with profound intimacy: the true knowing of ourselves in relation to another and acceptance of all the joys, tedium, pain, sorrows, tenderness, and vulnerability that being deeply connected brings. Talking of the home as sanctuary; wise decision-making; deep, mutual respect; nurturing each other; resilience through life's ups and downs; mending what's broken; open communication; and celebrating and enjoying one's marriage.

Reverence as a spiritual practice can certainly make all the difference in a relationship as complicated and as changing as marriage. Maybe our role as older people, with all the

experience of life we have accumulated, is to help spread the seeds of reverence far and wide.

Prayer

We pray for greater consciousness through searching within for awareness.
We believe questions are more helpful than absolutes and diverse sources of wisdom are available to us.
Knowing the true expression of what we believe informs how we behave towards others. We value community which includes all types and styles of faith, belief and people.

Seeking the grace of progress in our spiritual walk, we commit, as we are able, to a path of life-long learning, compassion, and selfless love.

Seeking understanding and experience of the Sacred and the Unity of all life, we will follow, as we are able, the spiritual practices involved in following the Jesus Way. Seeking peace and justice among all people and the integrity of our Earth, we will work, as we are able, where there is damage and brokenness, for restoration and reconciliation.

Blessing

May we go and un-shame those the world shames,
un-exclude those the world fears,
un-wrong those the world has wronged
and rebalance the world with the power that is love.

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