

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/1da00gUuyfc>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

We light this flame

For the art of sacred unknowing.

Humbled by all that we cannot fathom in this time,

We come into the presence of what we do know,

Perhaps the only thing we can ever know:

That Love is now and forever

The only answer to everything

And everyone

In every moment.

In our tradition the time of rest begins with the lighting of a candle. In this moment the stopping truly begins. To take a few breaths, to allow the mind to quieten. This is the beginning of sacred time.

In myth and poem and parable, in historical chronicle and friendly letter, in lament, and exultation, and oracle, in prophetic warning and gospel invitation, the Bible has served as a vehicle for the creative word of God down through the ages.

We are called today to find our place in this history of salvation, letting our stories find their place in the wider story, and re-mem-bering and re-telling the old stories for this and future generations.

The gathering one calls us into community with each other; to love and work, support and heal.

the gathering one calls us into community with all people; to bring justice and hope, freedom and truth.

the gathering one calls us into community with the whole creation; to live in harmony, to cherish and renew.

Reading

Luke 2 41-52

The parents of Jesus used to go every year to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, and when Jesus was twelve, they went up for the celebration as was their custom. As they were returning at the end of the feast, the child Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, unbeknownst to Mary and Joseph. Thinking Jesus was in their caravan, they continued their journey for the day, looking for him among their relatives and acquaintances. Not finding Jesus, they returned to Jerusalem in search of him. On the third day, they came upon Jesus in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. All who heard Jesus were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When Mary and Joseph saw Jesus, they were astonished, and Mary said, "Son, why have you done this to us? You see that your father and I have been so worried, looking for you." Jesus said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know I had to be in my Abba's house?" But

they didn't understand what he told them. Then Jesus went down with them to Nazareth and was obedient to them. Mary stored these things in her heart, and Jesus grew in wisdom, in years and in favour with God and people alike.

Reflection

It has been often said that the Bible is the best witness the Western World had to the evolution of human consciousness. What is true on the grand scale of one tradition's journey toward wholeness is also true as a map for our personal growth. We can see the ages and stages of our own lives against the background of the biblical story. I will touch on some main points.

In Genesis 1 "So God created humankind in God's own image . . . and indeed it was very good".

This ancient creation myth conveys an intuitive awareness that we are an embodiment of the purpose of the Universe, and that we are fundamentally good. Seeing a new-born, we know in the core of our being that this is true. We, in contemplative moments, see in this child a glorious being, the creative result of a universe that has been evolving for nearly fourteen billion years. "You are a child of the universe."

Then comes the Garden of Eden story, and Eve eating the forbidden fruit. Consciousness enters the picture. Eve is every two-year-old stamping her/his foot and saying "no." The terrible-twos may be annoying for parents, but this is the first step toward becoming a whole and mature adult.

Consciousness has a downside. In becoming conscious we become aware that we are separated within ourselves,; from one another, from the earth, and from God, In the very next story Cain slays Abel, and this has been the human story ever since. Healing our divisions and growing in oneness is the story of our personal gradual transformation throughout life, as well as the human story. Learning how to be human is our personal and communal goal.

To grow and become one's own person means leaving home. As the teen years move on, home can come to feel like a prison. The Exodus is the great leaving-home experience of the Bible. It was fraught with fear and tension. There is the lure of the "Promised Land" - freedom from rules and nagging parents. But who will make the meals and do the laundry?

Leaving home is often followed by "the Wilderness." Hopefully, it does not take one forty years to get our act together enough to move on. However, entering whatever our vision of the promised land might be rarely happens immediately or easily. Taking on the responsibilities of adult life is a giant step in the transformation toward wholeness .

Now comes the time of the Kingdom. Under Saul, David and Solomon, Israel became one of the nations and flirted with significant political power. So we take our place in the world: career, perhaps marriage and family, and the many responsibilities that descend upon us.

After a time cracks may appear. The Kingdom became divided. North and South spent much time and energy fighting with one another. The tensions and divisions of life can take their toll.

One of the major tensions of life is aligning our inner life with our outer life. In career, marriage or wherever, tensions may appear between your situation in life and the needs and dreams and urgings of your inner self. As Joseph Campbell says, "There is perhaps nothing worse than reaching the top of the ladder and discovering that you're on the wrong wall." This can lead to a mid-life crisis, another transformative step on life's journey.

The Exile was the great mid-life crisis of the Hebrew people. "The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold", as Lord Byron put it. With country overrun, temple destroyed, and the elite of the land carried off to Babylon, they were a people without a country and without a God. The meaning and purpose of their lives was taken from them.

There comes the morning when you look in the mirror and realize that the face you see is aging. Youth is gone and the end, though a long way off, is in sight. If your ladder is really against the wrong wall it can be a major

crisis. Reassessing one's life becomes a necessity. Who am I? What is my life about? What do I really value? What am I in this world to do?

This is a good time to pay attention to "the still small voice" that is always there, if we pay attention. It can help us sort out what is important to us and the direction our life needs to take.

This can also be a time of a great expansion in our awareness and understanding of life, world, universe, and God.

Isaiah brought a whole new message and understanding of God. No longer are they being blamed for their situation. They are forgiven. "Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.

At a more profound level there was a yearning for a Messiah who would fulfil the destiny of Israel to be a people through whom all the world would find blessing. This is reflected in our lives by the desire to be successful in the world and be a quality person.

In Luke 2 "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in divine and human favour". The miracle of Jesus is not that he was a superhuman, divine, figure, but that he was a mature and whole human being. To ponder upon his integrity and compassion, his acceptance of women, his confronting of the political powers in the world of his time, is to be awed beyond measure. He is a model of what it means to be fully human.

Not much wonder he was called Christ, an embodiment of the archetype of wholeness that is at work within each one of us and permeates the universe. The goal in the fulfilment of our lives, and ultimately the collective life of humanity, is to "come to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ". And the Christ energy is at work, under various names and images, in every religion.

The New or Second Testament, from the gospels to Revelation, is the attempt of the Church to live out in the world what Jesus was about. They made a start but could not maintain the maturity of Jesus. It is a long journey that still has far to go. The same is true for most of us, but hopefully we are on the way. Transformation is a life-long process "until

the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, the busy world is hushed, the fever of life is over and our work is done" and we sink into the Great Peace.

Prayer

We give thanks for all that we are and all that we have been given. As we worship today, we see the Spirit's work all around us: in the love of our communities; in the dedication of those who work for the good of society; in our friends and families; and in our own hearts as we work together, striving to follow Christ.

We pray today for all people, in this church community and outside it, that they may know love and grace, that we will all use the talents and insights we have to work for a more just world, and a society that values each individual for who they are.

We pray for those working through troubled relationships and those rebuilding lives after failed ones, that they will have an abundance of care and support from those around them.

We pray for those who are attacked in Christ's name, those who have suffered because of a damaging interpretation of the Word, that the spirit will guide all peoples towards love and grace, rather than condemnation and hate.

We pray for all those who are marginalised within the church and outside it, that we will all remember his place, first and foremost, was in and of the margins.

We pray for our troubled world, in which the politics of fear, hate and lies, are commonplace, in which compromise is a lost art, in which those with the least continue to lose, and those with the most continue to gain, that those with the power to do so will consider their actions and remember the impact they have on all our lives.

We pray that grace and love, will guide all our lives, and that we will give everything to do his work. Amen.

Blessing

Let us go as far as our courage takes us,
for we cannot go beyond the reach of Christ.

Let us give as extravagantly as we may,
for we cannot spend all the riches of Christ.

Let us care as lavishly as we are able,
for we cannot exhaust the love of Christ.

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