

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/X1PeRgBv7w8>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

**We light this flame to affirm that new truth is ever waiting
to break through to illumine our minds,
May we be always open to the rich possibilities
such an experience brings us.**

We come with open hearts to hear the voice of the sacred
singing through our songs
breathing the word into our silences
challenging us in our speaking and listening
and calling the people down the ages.

We come to be opened by visions that can enlist us in larger causes and more caring actions.

We come to hear stories that might take us into a deeper kind of integrity, and reconnect us with our better selves.

So may the warmer fullness that we seek fill our hearts, our minds and our spirits.

For we are called into community with each other; to love and work, support and heal.

We are called into community with all people; to bring justice and hope, freedom and truth. We are called into community with the whole creation; to live in harmony, to cherish and renew.

Reading

Philippians 4; 4-10; 21-22

Rejoice in the Saviour always! I say it again: Rejoice! Let everyone see your forbearing spirit. Our Saviour is near. Dismiss all anxiety from your minds; instead, present your needs to God through prayer and petition, giving thanks for all circumstances. Then God's own peace, which is beyond all understanding, will stand guard over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, my sisters and brothers, your thoughts should be wholly directed to all that is true, all that deserves respect, all that is honest, pure, decent, admirable, virtuous or worthy of praise. Live according to what you have learned and accepted, what you have heard me say and seen me do. Then will the God of peace be with you. It gave me great joy in our God that your concern for me bore fruit once more. You had been concerned all along, of course, but lacked the opportunity to show it. Give my greetings to all the holy ones in Christ Jesus. The sisters and brothers who are with me send their greetings. All the holy ones send their greetings,

Reflection

To be brutally honest and fair, over the past two to 300 years, little has been made of any connection between the church and the arts and Scotland.

Edwin Muir in his poem *the Incarnate One* has two lines which I think very suggestive of the traditional atmosphere.

'The windlass northern surge, the seagulls scream, and Calvin's Kirk crowning the baren brae'.

There's more to these words than mere topographical description.
Behind them, you sense a situation where little thought or encouragement is
given to the world of art.

Where the things that are lovely and of good report in that world receive a
chilly welcome.

But there is little doubt that we are coming to better days.

Gone are the times when ministers would be criticised for going to the theatre.
And indeed, as has been seen in this festival over the years, the festival service
has been a central item in its programme.

There is still much room for development.
Between the church and the arts, there is often still suspicion and
misunderstanding.
There are still gulfs that need to be crossed for the enhancement of both.

So how is the church to see the arts? How can the arts contribute to the
church?

How can Christian insights serve the arts?

There is both a narrower and a broader way of thinking about this theme.
The narrower way is concerned with the arts as they are connected to the
church as a place of worship.

There is no virtue in having ill designed bleak buildings in which to hold the
church services and we have far too many of these in Scotland.
Art, music, literature, drama, these can all be used in the service and worship of
the church and they have a very real place.

But having said that that is surely one condition to be made namely that the
contribution which the arts make to the church must in some way be an
inspiration to worshippers.

The church is not an art gallery or a museum; everything about it and everything
in it contributed from the world of arts surely must be germane to the function
of the place.

Enhancing the proclamation of the gospel.

Whether it be stained glass windows or beautiful wood carvings or the design
and architecture of the building- all have to be features which will let all who
see them and who enter them know that churches are places of worship and
those who sit and come to services will be edified by the lights and colours and

shapes around them, will be inspired and moved by the atmosphere created.

Equally the church has not to forget and indeed perhaps has to realise more fully the contribution which the arts can make to the proclamation of its message.

But as I indicated earlier this whole subject should also be thought of in a broader way.

As we know there are many buildings which are not church buildings, many paintings that are not religious paintings, many books within that are not specifically religious, many songs that are not hymns and so on.

The history of the church as often tried to separate what might be called religious arts and secular arts but I believe that making that distinction is unhelpful and very indefinite.

Look at it this way look at an architect like Sir Basil Spence. He designed Coventry cathedral but also the terminal at Glasgow Airport.

How are we to say that one building is worthwhile and the other not. That the cathedral has ties with the Christian faith but that the same man using the same brain, involved with the same range of materials, making the same kind of calculations yet time designing a building involved with ensuring passengers getting on planes, engages himself in an activity that has no relevance to the faith?

Or what about the composer like Faure?

An organist composing religious and secular music, or just composing music.... Most famous for his Requiem, are we seeing that Faure has stature in the one but we are not interested in the other?

It's rather difficult if not impossible to divide an artist's work and say that only that which seems specifically religious is of interest to us when the same talents have been used with similar dedication in other spheres.

The heart of the matter is what we have hinted at already and what is so clearly enunciated by the theologian Emil Brunner when he says that the power to shape things in an artistic matter is a gift from the creator.

When things are beautiful and worthwhile themselves, whether labelled religious or secular, we have to see in them the good use of the gifts the musician painter, architect have been given.

A good play, which may proclaim truth to amuse, shock or portray, a painting, a piece of music, a building that is pleasing and beautiful, religious or not is fit to be accepted and appreciated by people of faith.

In the field of the arts, we cannot arbitrarily divide up what is sacred and what is secular, for here we have people involved with gifts, and what they do sincerely and honestly, that is worthy, or to use Paul's words to the church at Philippi, 'admirable, virtuous or worthy of praise'... is to be recognised as being of the Spirit's inspiration.

Prayer

The praise of people is music to our ears,
as we sing of goodness, peace and love;
speak of the compassionate care, of the Spirit
and trumpet the news of unconditional love for all people.
But now we are silent, and listen to the cry of the world.

We hear the cry of the lonely ones,
those without friends,
those who live alone and wish they didn't,
those bereaved who long for the voice they no longer hear.
Through us, may they know compassionate care
and add their voices to our song of praise.

We hear the cry of those in pain;
those who go to sleep hungry, wondering if they will eat tomorrow,
those whose eyes and ears are filled
with the sights and sounds of war,
those whose families are torn apart by conflict or violence.
Through us, may they know justice and peace
and add their voices to our song of praise.

We hear the cry of those on the fringes of society,
marginalised through prejudice, distrust or hatred,
those who are victims of others' greed and lust for power.
Through us, may they know unconditional love
and add their voices to our song of praise.

As we sing, and play and listen this Festival week, may we also
in the silence hear the cry
of the world.

All creation is encircled with love.
Through us, may all people know loving kindness,
and, with us, joyfully sing to praise.

Blessing

The gifts of festival we did not earn, buy, steal, own or create.
So may the appreciation of these gifts expand our hearts
and make room for more light, more love, and more hope to strengthen us
for the spiritual journey ahead.

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