

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/>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Candle Lighting and opening meditation

**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.**

Be at peace in this late summer season full of transformation and transition; full of reflection and change. We are no longer onlookers at the circus of life, but rather performers and partakers. Continue to breathe deeply of these moments, for life is short and the summer wanes. Live and love now. Be awake and alive! Be free, be wise and humble. Let us hear the relevant and provocative message of equality and love, a community exploring and living out what is needed on this amazing and

tumultuous planet: Relevant relationships, needed change, with and for the world, purposeful and playful existence amidst all the pain and violence; in the midst of disparities and unfairness. This is a time to re-commit to the basics - to thrive in community, to serve people and planet together...in mindfulness, with intention, through giving and generous response. May we be the light, be the change, be the source, the journey and the destination.

Reading Proverbs 3

Happy are you when you find Wisdom,
when you develop discernment. For she is more profitable than silver,
and brings yields greater even than gold.

She is more precious than rubies;
nothing you can conceivably desire
can equal her value. She holds long life in one hand,
riches and honour in the other. Her paths are pleasant ones,
and all her roads lead to peace. She is a tree of life for those who
embrace her,
and all who hold fast to her find happiness. For it was through her that
Yahweh laid the earth's foundation, through her that the heavens were
set in place.

by God's knowledge the depths were deepened, and clouds dropped down
dew.

My children, maintain sound wisdom and right judgment,
and don't let them out of your sight, for then they'll be the life of your
soul, jewels to grace your neck.

Reflection

A dance bandleader who died recently at the age of 97 liked to tell people he was in 'the happiness business.' Aren't we all, in a sense? Everyone wants to be happy, as the Dalai Lama often points out. In our fractious world, this may be the one point on which we all agree. But when it comes to the question *What is happiness?* there are probably eight billion different answers — one for each person on the globe. If we're observant, we may know when other people are happy: the 'Duchenne smile,' produced by involuntary muscle contractions around the eyes and mouth, is a universal, if subtle giveaway as recognizable to a Papua New Guinean tribesman as to a British parliamentarian. What we

generally can't tell is *why* someone's happy. Half the time, we can't even say why for ourselves. The right to pursue happiness is a wonderful opportunity, but it doesn't automatically move us closer to an answer. That may be the work of a lifetime.

Indeed, for thousands of years philosophers have argued that finding happiness is the purpose of life. The Greeks thought it was our highest moral duty. The Utilitarians, centuries later, said it was our duty to make sure everybody else was happy too. Spiritual leaders have been of mixed mind about happiness: the Christian church never has quite resolved whether it's strictly a reward of the next life or a virtue in the here and now. To the Buddhists happiness is the fruit of awakening — freedom from the agony of desire. By the time Sigmund Freud came along and psychology became our *de facto* religion, happiness seemed like a loaded gun. Whatever made us happy probably wasn't good for us; the pursuit of happiness was fraught with inner conflict.

Now, at long last, positive emotions like joy, affection, awe, and humour are in the spotlight. It's not just okay to seek happiness, it's essential. Our best hope of having a good life — and a safe planet — is to develop the kindlier, friendlier, more optimistic side of our nature.

A green light to pursue happiness is terrific, but where to begin? Do we look to our surroundings — work, family, our social sphere? Or do we look within, at the desires and personality traits that predispose us to be happy, and the genetic or behavioural quirks that prevent us from feeling unalloyed joy? Some happiness pundits have argued that we're only as happy as we choose to be. If we're not happy, it means we've fallen down on the job. Not a very happy prospect. Now, brain science is coming to our rescue, with exciting new findings about neuroplasticity, the brain's ability to adapt and change. Pursuing happiness is not a moral issue but a practical one. Though we inherit a certain potential for happiness, we can enhance it by forming new neural pathways. With practices like meditation and cognitive training, we can reset our brains to experience the world the way naturally happy people take for granted.

Happy people see life as opportunity. Challenges are blessings in disguise. When we feel happy, our minds are open and expansive. Conversely, when we're open and expansive we feel happy. Happiness makes us not only feel better but *be* better — better able to forge fulfilling relationships, find meaningful pursuits, and handle the vicissitudes of life. Happiness helps

us stay healthy and whole no matter what the circumstances. Best of all, we can pass it on to those around us. . . .

Happiness, it has been said, is the whole end and aim of life. But it can be elusive. We have to approach it indirectly, and with patience. Even then, we may not be sure what will be required of us. A teenager participating in an experimental programme to prevent depression may have said it best: 'People have the idea that being happy means skipping through the flowers. But happy is being happy with who you are.'

Prayer

How can we break bread
and not remember those
who have no bread?

How can we meet together
and not remember those
separated from their families and friends?

How can we shelter here
and not remember those
whose only shelter is a refugee camp or cardboard box?

How can we speak of peace
and not remember those
whose peace is shattered by constant fear and the rattle of guns?

How can we sing our hymns
and not remember those
who cannot openly express their religious beliefs?

How can we offer our gifts
and not remember those
who are caught in the never-ending cycle of poverty and debt?

How can we pour wine
and not remember those
who are imprisoned by addiction to bottle, needles or pills?

How can we celebrate
and not remember those
who suffer from depression, mental illness or grief?

Through the human experience of Jesus, born in a stable in Bethlehem,
and whose Spirit is alive in us today, present in community,
in our worship and in our reflecting,
may we look outwards to the suffering of our world,
remembering the hope of his shalom.

Blessing

Let us together commit ourselves:
to give thanks each day for the abundant gift and beauty of life
to show love and compassion for others
to listen to the stories of others
as they share their journey with us
to challenge injustice when we see it
and to try to follow Jesus in everything we do

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