

ECUMENICAL WORSHIP IN THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. ANDREWS

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St Andrews Cathedral is in ruins. But in some ways worship in the University of St Andrews is akin to the pattern of cathedral worship, albeit only during the University semester. With the exception of Saturday, there is at least one service a day. Our Director of Chapel Music is a professional musician, who directs the students of St Salvator's Chapel Choir all of whom have a choral scholarship. Three or four organ scholars accompany hymns and anthems, and offer striking voluntaries. Congregations are mainly students with smatterings of staff, alumni, townspeople and visitors. But of course, unlike a cathedral, university worship does not belong to a particular tradition or denomination: the Chapels are in the care of the University which has no denominational allegiance, and the Chaplains are employed by the University.

There is a full-time Chaplain and part-time Assistant Chaplain. The present writer has been the Chaplain for ten years, and is a Church of Scotland minister, with another ten years experience as parish minister in St Monans and Largoward (also in Fife); the Assistant Chaplain is an experienced priest in the Scottish Episcopal Church. There is a team of honorary chaplains from Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Presbyterian, Quaker and other Christian traditions, alongside Buddhist, Humanist, Islamic, Jewish and Pagan colleagues.

From Monday to Friday there is a ten-minute service of Morning Prayer led by one of the Chaplains, with responsive prayer, a spoken psalm and scripture reading, silence and free prayers of thanksgiving and concern, and a collect said together. Each year the liturgies are refreshed, drawing freely on published resources. A faithful few gather in person and online, to devote the day of work and study to God.

Twice a week on Wednesday and Sunday, in St Salvator's Chapel, there is a service of Evensong (associated with the Anglican tradition) led by one of the Chaplains. Anthems, Responses, Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis are sung by St Salvator's Chapel Choir, while the service including collects is usually sung by the Chaplain. As a Church of Scotland minister, learning to sing the preces and

responses set by Kenneth Leighton was not part of a New College BD, and was initially a fairly terrifying experience.

On Thursdays, in the candlelit St Leonard's Chapel, is a service of Compline. This monastic service of night prayer is spoken antiphonally by the chaplain, often one of our honorary team, and the congregation. Anthems, psalm and Nunc Dimittis are sung by the unauditioned St Leonard's Chapel Choir, directed by a student who holds the Douglas Gifford Scholarship. There is a haunting simplicity as we sing to its plainsong melody, in English, *Before the ending of the day*.

The University Service takes place on Sunday, in St Salvator's Chapel, and is the best attended, many students in their red undergraduate gowns. This is the service most clearly influenced by Presbyterian forms of worship, ordered as Approach to the Word of God, the Word of God, and Response to the Word of God. There are at least two readings from scripture (read by a student and staff member), and always a psalm, usually chanted by St Salvator's Chapel Choir. On two out of three Sundays there is a visiting preacher: over the year an attempt is made to strike a balance in preachers' denomination, theological conviction, gender and ethnicity. We try also to have lay preachers especially lecturers and other University staff members. The choir sings an introit and anthem, the congregation join in with hymns (usually from CH4), call to worship, collect of the day and responses during prayers of concern.

Students who attend are from a wide variety of backgrounds, nationalities and levels of faith. Most are drawn to the beauty of the music, the variety of preachers and formality of the service – following an Academic Procession to begin the service, jokey sermons rarely elicit much appreciative laughter. Presbyterian worshippers often think it Anglican; Episcopalians often find it rather low-church. It is its own blend, but not ossified. During the pandemic, the liturgy has been enriched by lighting a new candle of hope each week for one semester; or adding a new item to a tree of hope another semester; or by repeating a collect for creation each week during the semester in which Cop 26 took place. We livestream the University Service: by the end of the week, more people have participated online than in the chapel.

What of sacraments in this ecumenical setting? Holy Communion is celebrated each Sunday. After greeting the congregation as they leave the chapel, I usually return to the communion table and lead a service of communion with those who stay for it – usually around 20% of the congregation. I've never surveyed those who leave before communion why they do not stay, but I would guess that many do not belong to a sacramental tradition, or to the Christian faith, or they feel that, as Roman Catholics, they should not receive from a Protestant. We use one or other of the liturgies from the 1994 Book of Common Order. On occasion, the Assistant Chaplain presides: she uses an Episcopalian Liturgy. There are occasional baptisms of infants either during the University Service or in separate services – the children of postgraduates or staff, or of graduates who for pastoral reasons request a return to the University chapel. If I conduct the baptism it is according to the rites of the Church of Scotland (though not incorporated in any statistical return to Presbytery, intriguingly); it is an Episcopal baptism if the Assistant Chaplain conducts it.

But adult baptisms are equal in number to infant baptisms, usually of students who have been part of an enquirers' group. If confirmation is sought, then churches are involved. I invite the local Church of Scotland minister to participate in confirmations of those seeking membership in the Church of Scotland; for those seeking membership in the SEC, I conduct a service at which the Bishop confirms the students.

There are many weddings in the chapels, usually of graduates. Each wedding is conducted according to the tradition of the celebrant – Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Church of Scotland, and so on. Same sex weddings have taken place, conducted by our honorary United Reformed Church chaplain.

There can be an interfaith dimension to communal liturgy. Our honorary Pagan chaplain has organised candlelit labyrinths on the winter solstice. People gathered weekly in autumn 2020 outside for *Hearts of Light* – reflections from chaplains and students of different faiths on the impacts of Covid-19 across the world. And an Interfaith Steering Group, led by students but supported by the Chaplaincy, organises interfaith gatherings for Holocaust Memorial Day and other occasions. Some speakers offer prayers from their tradition: this is largely accepted by all.

Perhaps the ecumenical worship requiring most imagination is when a student or member of staff dies. There the ecumenism is less of different Christian denominations than of different philosophies of life. Funerals are usually held close to a student's family home. Then, some months later, people gather for a memorial service. Fellow-students or colleagues will often say how important it is that this happens in St Salvator's Chapel, regardless of their convictions or of the one who died. Being in the chapel marks the occasion with huge significance, formality and solemnity: there is nowhere more important the University could offer. As for the liturgy, that emerges from a process of careful listening and negotiation.

A typical memorial service will have three or four tributes from friends and colleagues. Poems will be read. There will be music to listen to – recorded pop music, or live instrumentalists, or a choral octet, or friends singing from a recent student musical such as *Spring Awakening*. As a University Chaplain, I welcome the ways that people find meaning and hope in the arts, and the memorial service is the better for these specific creative reflections offering points of contact with the life of the one who has died. Yet all such occasions have the resources of faith too. There is the space with its stained glass, communion table and mosaic of the crucified Christ. We do not always sing hymns – though we have sung Stevenson's version of the Skye Boat Song (*Sing me a song of a lad that is gone*) more than once. But I include at least one reading from scripture (which the University Principal often reads), related either to the way the person lived or – following suicide in particular – an assurance of love in the face of life's horrors. And there are prayers which I usually preface as follows: *The following words are cast in the form of the prayer, but you are welcome to hear them as words to inspire your own thoughts.* And, following the tributes, I give an address which tries to speak a word of grace and hope of the gospel in the midst of loss, referring not only to scripture but to the poetry heard, music played, the images on the printed order of service, and elements from the tributes.

It seems to me that that is where our ecumenical energies are best put today: across the spectrum of faith and doubt, conviction and scepticism, matter and mystery. In chaplaincy, I have been asked by atheists to conduct the funeral of their atheist loved ones, in the expectation that I will respect their convictions while offering something of my own faith. Chaplains conduct and contribute

to services with a civic function – at the opening of the academic year, on graduation days, to commemorate anniversaries, to give thanks for those who have donated their bodies for anatomical teaching and research, and on many other occasions. It is a privilege to be invited to lead a community on such a day: those who invite are looking neither for a Christian proclamation which does not communicate with the context, nor for a narrowly secular response. That's the ecumenical task and treasure of a University Chaplaincy: can we offer worship in this open space in which God can be encountered?

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