

“Like Catching Water in a Net”

Gathering

Create a space for worship - perhaps with a small table with a bible, cross and candle.

*This week, it would be appropriate to find a **white cloth** or scarf to signify that this is a celebration day.*

Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.

Gathering

Whether you know your place in the embrace of God, or if you consider yourself small and insignificant within the vastness of the cosmos, as we gather here and share in the hospitality of Christ’s table, may we discover together the creativity, love and intimate touch of God - Creator, Redeemer and Breath of Life.

Light Candle

We light the candle - focussing our attention, allowing ourselves to be drawn to its flame.

The writer of the gospel attributed to John says:

Jesus spoke to them, saying,

“I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”

John 8:12



Trinity stained glass
at St. Gabriel of the
Sorrowful Mother in
Avondale, PA.

Introduction

Today is Trinity Sunday.

It is very tempting to choose to ignore this special celebration and there are plenty who do, coming as it does a week after Pentecost.

I mean, who in their right mind wants to wrestle with what seems to be an ancient doctrine of the Church, with technically no Biblical basis?

But I deeply believe we are part of a community of faith that holds ancient wisdom, and is committed to wrestling with it and trying to figure out how it speaks into our world today.

I also believe that we have a duty, an obligation, to figure out how we translate this ancient wisdom for contemporary ears - we might not use the word “Trinity” when we speak about our faith, but our faith is still deeply trinitarian - and it is important we know what that means and why it matters to our faith today.

So let’s dive in...

Acknowledgement of Country

The Ancient of Days, breathed life into this Land and her Peoples. From time beyond our reckoning the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal nation have blessed this place through their care and concern.

From river to ocean
from campfire to hearth
may the First Nations who have cared for this land be blessed.

From breath to song
from step to dance
**may those who follow your Songlines
guide us on the journey to living honourably in this place.**

From greeting to Amen
from silence to chorus
may our worship join with the voices of the First Nations of this Land.

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Call to Worship - based on Psalm 8

God, our God,
we gather to praise you.
**God, our God,
may your name be known in all the earth.**

God, our God, as we gaze at the moon and stars,
as we contemplate your creativity,
we wonder - why do you care about us?
In the immensity of your universe, we are so small.
And yet, you do care.
You embrace us in your love
and you invites us to watch over and tend your good creation.

God, our God,
we gather to praise you.
**God, our God,
may your name be known in all the earth.**

We pray...
We delight in you, O God.
We give thanks for Wisdom woven, at the beginning,
brought forth from you, Creator God:
before land was shaped,
before the waters swirled and flowed.
Wisdom stood beside you and before you, as you carved the mountains and bent the streams.
She spoke then;
she speaks still.
May we listen for her.
May we open our ears and our hearts to her inspiration.
We delight in you, O God – and we give you thanks that you delight in us. Amen.

Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for Trinity, 12 June 22, p.17

Sing - Creator and Poet (Seasons 3-10)

All our songs today seek to point us to different ways we understand God. This one speaks of the way God has created and is creating...

Father and Mother,
creator and poet,
speaking your wisdom in forest and glade:
telling your glory in ocean and river,
pouring your pleasure on all you have
made.

Christ of the cosmos, you sang into being,
galaxies spinning through measureless
space;
coming among us, and sharing our
weakness;
singing your songs of redemption and
grace.

Spirit, you danced at the dawn of creation,
rising, rejoicing on jubilant wings.
Yours is the rhythm of cycle and season,
yours is the heartbeat of all living things.

God, you have made us of stardust and
spirit.
Etching your image on ev'ry cell.
We are your love song, your poem and
rhythm.
All co-creators, your story to tell.

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Prayer

God, we try to define you at our peril;
our finest metaphors fall woefully short.
You are not our father (or our mother);
you are not king or judge or shepherd;
you are not one or three or, impossibly, both;
you are all of these and none of them
and many more besides.

As we draw ourselves into your presence,
may we stop overthinking and simply allow you to be in all your mystery and complexity—
'I am who I am', 'I will be who I will be'—
just as you encourage us to be ourselves
and to come, without pride or shame,
exactly as we are, to the one who made us and who knows us and who loves us,
and that is enough.
It is all we need.

Gracious God, each one of us has a different story to tell,
but the themes are familiar.
We come with our joys and our sorrows,
astonished at the sheer miracle of being alive and aware at the same time of how fragile
a thing it is to be human, and to be mortal.
If we love, we will have known the pain of loss;
and if we don't, we might as well not have lived at all,
for love is at the centre of everything
and what makes it all worthwhile.
And if it is true, what Jesus said,
that you and he are one,
and if his life is the measure of your love,
then you also know love's blessing and its cost

and that, strangely, is enough.
It is all we need.

Loving God, we bless you for being part
of our crazy human story from the moment it began,
for showing us in Jesus
how a single life lived well can change the world,
and for your presence with us still,
enabling us by your Spirit to live our lives
to the very fullest and to your eternal glory.
Amen.

Spill The Beans, Issue 43, Resources for Trinity, 12 June 22, p.10

Sing - Holy, Holy, Holy (TIS 132)

This hymn was written about 200 years ago, a favourite in the Anglican Church and considered a classic for Trinity Sunday. The language has been updated a bit - but it still includes images that perhaps a bit strange to a contemporary eye and mind (mostly taken from Revelation 4:6-11). The tune that we know so well is named after the Council of Nicaea (325 CE) where about 300 bishops gathered and argued about the nature of God and what we now know as the doctrine of the Trinity. Even if you struggle to take in the depth of its meaning, or even its relevance for today's world, perhaps you can engage with its poetry and its musicality...

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God almighty,
early in the morning to you our praise
shall be;
holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty
God in three persons, blessed Trinity.

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore
you,
casting down their golden crowns
around the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling down
around you,
God everlasting through eternity.

Holy, holy, holy! though the darkness
hide you,
though the sinful human eye your glory
may not see,
you alone are holy, there is none beside
you
perfect in power, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God almighty,
all your works shall praise your name in
earth and sky and sea;
holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

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Listening for God's Voice

Reading: Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31

Does not wisdom call,
and does not understanding raise her voice?
2 On the heights, beside the way,
at the crossroads she takes her stand;
3 beside the gates in front of the town,
at the entrance of the portals she cries out:
4 'To you, O people, I call,
and my cry is to all that live.

²² The Lord created me at the beginning of his work,
the first of his acts of long ago.
²³ Ages ago I was set up,
at the first, before the beginning of the earth.
²⁴ When there were no depths I was brought forth,
when there were no springs abounding with water.
²⁵ Before the mountains had been shaped,
before the hills, I was brought forth—
²⁶ when he had not yet made earth and fields,
or the world's first bits of soil.
²⁷ When he established the heavens, I was there,
when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
²⁸ when he made firm the skies above,
when he established the fountains of the deep,
²⁹ when he assigned to the sea its limit,
so that the waters might not transgress his command,
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
³⁰ then I was beside him, like a master worker;
and I was daily his delight,
rejoicing before him always,
³¹ rejoicing in his inhabited world
and delighting in the human race.

Reading: John 16:12-15

¹² 'I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

For the Word of God in Scripture,
for the Word of God among us,
for the Word of God within us,
Thanks be to God!

Reflection

Wise, creating, and loving God – what a delight it is to be in your presence and to recognise your wondrous touch in all the world. Open us to discern you in usual and unusual places, and to celebrate your unfolding presence in our daily lives. Amen.

Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for Trinity, 12 June 22, p.14

Let me ask you some questions?

What colour is a mirror?

Why is a boxing ring square?

Why is laughing contagious?

How old would you be if you didn't know how old you were?

Why is the alphabet in a specific order?

How can one God be three people living in a trinity?

There are lots of questions that have no definitive answer.
And that is particularly so in the world of faith.

You may have heard it said that faith is less like having all the answers to every question ever asked, and more like learning to live with the questions.

The reality is that there are lots of different ways to describe God, lots of different ways we experience God - none of them adequate, all of them incomplete.

Val Webb, a contemporary Australian theologian, entitled her book about our attempts to describe the divine "Like Catching Water in a Net".

Like many of the ways we describe God, to describe God as Trinity can be helpful and yet it is incomplete.

So why do we make such a big deal about Trinity?

Apart from the fact that a bunch of bishops from all over the known world gathered in Nicaea (Turkey) in 325CE and argued about it, coming to an agreement about how God the Father related to their understanding of Jesus and the Holy Spirit - from which we inherited the Nicene Creed which is still one of the foundational statements of Christian faith today - the point of Trinity Sunday is not so you can espouse the theological doctrine of the Trinity to the next person who comes along and asks about God - heaven help us, if that were so! *[I have included the text of the Nicene Creed in the online materials if you need to refresh your memory.]*

The point of including Trinity Sunday in our annual celebrations is to indeed ground ourselves in the God who reveals Godself to us as Creator, Redeemer and Ever-present Spirit, and also to remind us of the extraordinary breadth of who God is and to invite us to stretch ourselves ever further in not just our understanding of God, but in our relationship with this God and then, in our living out of that relationship in the world.

The readings point us to a God who created the cosmos, and who continues to shape and mould and breathe life into each living being;

a God who comes into the world and lives embedded in the breadth and depth of human experiences of life and death;

a God who longs for their good creation to reflect Love and One-ness in the breadth of its diversity.

Why does it matter?

It matters because how we understand God informs how we understand the world and so determines how we then choose to act in the world.

If we understand God to be angry and judgmental, it is likely that's who we will be.

If we understand God to be Love (1 John), it is likely that we will at least try to be loving too.

Of course, God is much more nuanced than that, but it seems to me that the more we understand who God is, the wider and deeper our understanding is, the more expansive our own love and embrace of the world God created can be.

It matters because it also means that as our understanding of God expands, hopefully we learn to deal more compassionately with people who might disagree with us, or who are different from us.

As we experience God in all sorts of different ways, as we continue to be challenged and have our understanding of God extended, so we can engage with people who are also still discovering.

Which is why it is important that we pay attention to the language we use to describe God. No language - Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, let alone English - is ever enough to capture all of who God is in the world.

It is why I try in our liturgies to use lots of different descriptors for God and language that doesn't limit God to one gender or role.

It is why we use poetry and art, colour, the images on the screen - pictures that can convey meaning in ways words simply can't. The hymns we sing, musical poetry, also stretch our thinking and understanding.

It is why the church is so rich in symbol - things that can never fully embrace the whole person of God but point us towards understanding and relationship.

This table - symbol and sign - a glimpse, if you like, of God's grace and God's intention for the world - gathered, young and old, rich and poor, wise and still discovering, from all walks of life - sharing an experience together that reminds us both of our need for nourishment and nurture, and of God's love that will go even to death to invite us into relationship - an enacted experience that even then cannot begin to capture the wonder of all that happens here.

So what language do you use to describe God?

What images or symbols or music speak to you about who God is?

So I want to encourage you to listen carefully to the language we use about God - here in Church and in your conversations with friends and neighbours - what are we saying about God?

And then ask yourself, does the language we use match what we believe about God?

And even more importantly, does what we say about God match with how we experience God in our own relationship and in the way we relate to others?

And if not, what do we need to explore or discover to expand our understanding?

Let us pray...

Holy Mystery,

as we ponder who you are, fill us once more with a sense of wonder.

Help us to grasp the width and depth and height of your love for the world and give us courage to seek to share the same, in Christ's name. Amen.

Responding

Sing - The Pilgrim Song (NCYC 2003)

This song is like a modern creed - a statement of who we believe God to be and who we are called to be...

We believe in God
in whom the universe
in all its beauty was born.
We believe in Christ,
the Saviour of the world,
and the Spirit who travels with us.

*For we are the people
who travel in Christ's way,
yes we are the people
seeking God's new day,
we are the people
the Spirit binds as one,
together in faith we journey on.*

We believe in Christ,
God come as one with us,
who died to set the world free.
We believe Christ lives,
His Spirit is with us,
that in our lives God's new world will come.
For we are the people ...

There will come a day
creation will be free
and love will rule all the world.
Until then we'll seek
to care for all the earth
and to live for the glory of God.

For we are the people ...

© Paul Chalson

Prayer for Others - Julia Szulerowski

God-with-us,
you know from the inside what it is to be human.
There is nothing we can tell you that you do not already know;
none of our joys that do not delight you
or our sorrows that you do not share.
There is nothing we can ask that will offend you,
whether or not you can give us what we ask for.

You know risky love can be, with loss never far behind.
You know how complicated grief is:
how much deeper it goes and how much
longer it lasts than we ever think it will.

And so we pray today for all who have been brave enough to follow one of Jesus' last instructions to his friends:
"Love one another... as I have loved you".
And before going any further, we pause to reflect just how much he loved and what it cost him.
Pause

And so we bring to your Love, people we know who are suffering in heart, mind, body or spirit and for people who care for them.
We especially pray for people we know who are recovering from surgery.
We give thanks for medical and allied health professionals and for the many people in our community who offer hope and healing to others.
And we pray for people who grieve the loss of people they love - whether recently or long past - the grief remains.

We bring to your Love people who are living with the threat of violence -
people caught in a war between nations,
people who live without safety in their own home,
people who live in communities where violence seems to be a way of life.
May your Spirit of Peace break through and bring peace.

We bring to your Love the leaders of our nation, of our state, of our communities,
leaders of businesses and not-for-profits,
may Wisdom shout loudly in our streets.

We bring to your Love the church - in all its glory and messiness -
give us courage to speak your good news into the world,
and grace to love and respect those who disagree.

And we pray for people for whom change has come, unbidden,
and whose loss is all too real—and sore:
for those whose much-loved church buildings have closed, or are about to,
and who know that it should not matter as much as it does...
and yet it does;
for those whose land has been torn apart by war
and who have lost not only people that they loved,
but all that once felt safe and secure;

for those who are waiting—
at an airport, or on a railway platform or by a hospital bed—
for the moment of parting from someone who is dearer to them than life itself.
May they know the presence and comfort of the one who said, “Do not be afraid...
for I am with you always... to the end of time.” Amen.

Spill The Beans, Issue 43, Resources for Trinity, 12 June 2022, p.11

Sing - You Are Holy, You Are Whole (TIS 753)

As we approach God’s table, we sing our praise of the God who comes to us.

You are holy, you are whole.
You are always ever more than we ever understand.
You are always at hand.
Blessed are you coming near;
blessed are you coming here
to your church in wine and bread,
raised from soil, raised from dead.

You are holy, you are wholeness,
you are present, let the cosmos praise you, Lord!
Hallelujah, hallelujah,
hallelujah, hallelujah, our Lord!

Holy Communion

If you would like to share in Communion and are unable to join with us in-person, please let Rev Kath or Rhonda Back know. We would love to bring Communion to you in your home at a time that suits you.

Offering

As we make our offering, this is not just about the money we give - this time is also an opportunity to consider what time, skills and commitment we make to the work of God in the world...

We pray...
Gracious God,
you held nothing back
when you shared all that you have with Jesus
and he has shared all of himself with us,
which means that we are rich indeed
no matter how much or how little money we have.
Help us to be equally generous
in sharing ourselves with others:
our time; our skills; our listening;
our vulnerability and our strength.
May your Spirit direct us
to where we are most needed
and give us strength when our self-giving is as costly for us as it was for him. Amen.

Spill The Beans, Issue 43, Resources for Trinity, 12 June 22, p.10

Sending

Sing - God of Creation (tune: *Morning Has Broken*)

Again, we sing of the variety of ways we understand God - a contemporary song to a well-known tune...

God of Creation
Gentle life-giver
Present at birth, and
all through our days
Author of sunrise
Song in the night sky
Here in this place, we
offer our praise

Spirit of Comfort
blow through Creation
stir up new life, breathe
peace through our world
Healer of hearts, and
hope for tomorrow
weave all our sorrows
into new dawn

Jesus, Companion
teacher and healer
friend of the grieving,
suffering, the poor
Stand with your people
whisper among us
promise of mercy
goodness for all

Here we give thanks for
life in its fullness
blessings received
your gifts to us all
Make us a people
filled with compassion
selflessly giving
serving your world.

Craig Mitchell (2017)

Sending and Blessing

As you look into the heart of another, try and recognise the touch of God.

As you look into the face of another, try and recognise the Christ within.

As you hear the words of another, listen for the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

And be blessed in the name of God, the source of all life and inspiration.

Be blessed in the name of the Christ whose life liberates our expectations.

Be blessed in the name of the Spirit as she breathes new life through us all. Amen

Rev Keree Casey, Of Ash and Rainbows..., 2003, pp70,72

Rev Kath Merrifield

12 June 2022

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in the Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father,
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

'catholic' means 'universal'