



St. Andrew's United Church of Christ

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TRINITY SUNDAY

June 7, 2020

10:00 A.M.



Dear Friends in Christ,

Greetings on this Trinity Sunday. As these words are being scribed and worship service planned, it is May 27th, well before your reading them. I hope that you are coping and still managing to find your way through all the changes that are taking place. It's can be tough and stressful.

While every Sunday we worship the triune God, the church calendar gives us this Sunday to simply focus on the mystery, power and beauty of the Triune God. Where as other special Sundays in the church year focus on special services like Christmas, Good Friday, Easter and Pentecost which are tied to specific events; Trinity Sunday is linked with a doctrine which teaches about Gods being. So you may find today's sermon to be a little more doctrinal than usual. The Nicene Creed is helpful in giving more understanding to this; but I thought it was too long to include in today's service.

Normally, this would be a Communion Sunday, but again I will confess to not quite having a handle on how to celebrate the Sacrament while Sheltering-in-Place. Recently you should have received a Congregational Survey by mail or email. If you have some thoughts on ways to celebrate Communion, please add that to your response. The Consistory and I are happy to receive them.

Peace and Prayers

In Christ,

Pastor Bigelow

Silent Prayer for the Beginning of Worship — Gracious and Eternal God, in whom we know the Maker of all things seen and unseen, the Savior of all both near and far, by your Spirit enable us to worship you today in spirit and truth. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

WE GATHER TO WORSHIP THE TRIUNE GOD

CALL TO WORSHIP

May our lives profess and proclaim that “our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.” (Psalm 124:8)

Amen!

This is the day the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it!

Our faith is in God, our Maker
known in creation, revealed in scripture, experienced within.

Our life is in the Spirit, our Sustainer,
known in history, revealed in scripture, experienced within.

God our Maker, our Redeemer, our Sustainer, You write our names in the palms of your hand.

You are our God, we are here to worship you!

SALUTATION

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit we begin our worship. In that name we renew our lives; in that name we confront the need of the world for peace, and in that name we prepare to celebrate God’s presence.

Amen!

GATHERING HYMN [*Come, Thou Almighty King*](#)

OPENING PRAYER

Creator God, you call us to live life believing in your wisdom and mercy, and in your joy and love. We gather to praise and thank you for all these and all your gifts. You bless us with your constant presence in the Holy Spirit, and sustain us at all times and in all circumstances by your power. Strengthen us now to remain steadfast in faith, hope and love. We pray this in the precious name of Jesus, our Savior, Amen.

WE ARE RENEWED BY THE SPIRIT

CALL TO CONFESSION

As we prepare to confess our sins, we are reminded that we gather not out of our need to be good; but rather out of our need to confess our waywardness and sin. Jesus said that the healthy person does not need a physician, but an ill person does. Let us confess our need for the healing of the Great Physician, Jesus Christ. Let us pray.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, You are steadfast. You are holy. We confess that we struggle with faithfulness. We wrestle with peace, we fumble with purity. What comes easy for us is ingratitude. Impatience is easy and harsh words just roll off our tongues.
(silent reflection)

Have mercy upon us and forgive us. Tune the strings of our heart and teach us to live as your disciples. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE AND FORGIVENESS

While it is true that we have sinned, it is a greater truth that we are forgiven, through God's love for us in Jesus Christ. To all who humbly seek the mercy of God, I say, in Jesus Christ your sins are forgiven. Believe this Gospel, go forth and live in peace.

GOD'S DIRECTION FOR OUR LIVES

Please read Psalm 1

WE HEAR AND LISTEN TO GOD'S WORD

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Old Testament—Psalm 8

New Testament — Matthew 28:16-20

John 16:12-17

SERMON – *One God – Three Persons* (found on pages 5-7)

HYMN OF RESPONSE [*Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty*](#)

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Christ has died,

Christ is risen,

Christ will come again.

WE GO FORTH TO REVEAL JESUS CHRIST IN THE WORLD

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

Today's prayer will take the form of a bidding prayer that will offer direction for your prayers. On Communion Sunday, I like to use the Church Prayer List so that it may serve as a resource, too.

Faithful God, we come to you with gratitude in lives this morning and are thankful for:

Your creation from tiny atoms to the vast expanse of the universe...

For the good gifts that we have received from you this past week...

Please continue to add your many thanksgivings...

We acknowledge that we do not always understand your ways and so offer our prayers for:

creation and its care...

nations of the world and its leaders...

our nation and leaders...

our communities and leaders...

the church universal and the ministry of St. Andrew's

our families and friends with their particular needs

We pray this in Jesus' name, who taught us to pray:

***Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory forever. Amen.***

PARTING HYMN [*Be Still, My Soul*](#)

BENEDICTION

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of our Savior, Jesus Christ; and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; be among you and remain with you always.

AMEN.

SERMON – *One God – Three Persons*

SCRIPTURE

Old Testament—Psalm 8

New Testament — Matthew 28:16-20

John 16:12-17

A Family Circus cartoon has Dennis the Menace asking his father this question, “Was God his first name or last name?” Interesting question, isn’t it? How does one talk about God? If someone asked you to tell them about God, what would you say? There is a prior question, does God exist, and if God exists, what does he look like? How does God act? Is God good or evil? The questions can fill volumes of books and they do! Today is Trinity Sunday, when the church celebrates the God who comes to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, or as Creator, Savior or Spirit.

Perhaps you will remember the story of blind people all feeling an elephant. One person feels the leg and says, “Aha, this is a tree; the second person gets a hold of the elephant’s ear and says, “No way, it’s a big fan; and the third person is holding the elephant’s tail and says, “You are both wrong, this is a rope!”

Some will say world religions are like that. When one strips away all the non-essentials, we are like the blind people with our hands on the elephant all talking about pretty much the same thing; we all worship the same God.

Some scholars will speak of Jews, Muslims and Christians as members of the Abrahamic faiths, all emerging out of a monotheistic theology, or as Jews and Christians coming from the Judeo-Christian tradition; and yes, one might say this, and be accurate. But as Christians, we embrace another language about God, we believe in a God named, Trinity, One God, Three persons.

Listen to our language. “I believe God the Father, Almighty...and in Jesus Christ his only Son, I believe in the Holy Spirit” or “I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit” or when we sing the *Gloria Patri*, “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost...” Who is God? It is the doctrine of the Trinity that helps us begin to gain an understanding.

The Bible never mentions the word, Trinity. Some will then argue that it doesn’t exist. The Bible does speak of One God. In the book of Deuteronomy, we read the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:1-9) where it says, “Hear O Israel, The Lord our God is one,” or the first commandment, “You shall have no other gods before me.” When Jesus was asked, “What is the first commandment?” Jesus answered, “Hear O Israel...the Lord our God, the Lord is one...(Mark 12:28-34)

In our New Testament texts this morning, we have the same dynamic with Jesus saying in the Matthew account...to make disciples of all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit...and in the Gospel of John, Jesus speaks of a relationship with the Father and the Advocate or Holy Spirit. Trinity goes beyond a numbers game; it is the churches inadequate way of trying to understand biblically who God is; what God is like; where God is at work in the world; and what God thinks about human beings.

Christians do not so much believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, so much as we believe in the one living and triune God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Faith in this God is what distinguishes us Christians from other people who do not believe at all, or by those whose lives are shaped by other views of God.

In this view, we think of the Triune God as God the Father, almighty maker of heaven and earth. God's powerful work as creator, just ruler and protector and preserver of the world and all living things. We think of God's presence and work over us.

When we think of God the Son, we think of God's loving act of self giving work in Jesus Christ to save and reconcile and liberate sinful creatures and the created world. We think about God's work with and for us.

When we think of God's Holy Spirit, we think of God's work to renew and transform human beings, communities and the whole natural creation in order to achieve a new creation. We think of God's presence working in, through and among us.

Three works, creation, reconciliation/salvation and renewal transformation; three works One Living God! There are some ways that we have been taught to think of this, for example: Water – water can exist in different forms; ice, steam or liquid. The same substance, but different form is electricity – the recent power outage in Dexter reminds us of how important it is...but there is a source – wires, light bulb refrigerator or whatever. These might be a help, but fall short as well. J.B. Philips, has a book entitled, "Your God is Too Small," that says God is a mystery far beyond our understanding; beyond our thoughts and comprehension. Trinity helps us begin to know, live and obey God.

When I plan a worship service, my goal is to include, in one way or another, something of the work of each member of the Trinity. It may be a hymn, prayer, scripture, anthem or sermon. When you look at your bulletin, you will note that the first major heading for the Liturgy is, "WE GATHER TO WORSHIP THE TRIUNE." That is where we begin worship each and every week.

The Good News of today's lesson is that the Spirit, the shy ember of the Trinity for us mainline Protestants, is here to help us! God isn't going to leave us to fend for ourselves, to dig up truth about God on our own. God will teach us about God, God will love us enough to reveal Himself to us. We don't have to serve Christ, we don't have to believe on our own.

Ed Viesturs, is the first American to climb the world's 14 tallest mountain peaks. He accomplished this amazing feat without bottled oxygen. In an interview, he related his great respect for mountains. "Mountains allow us to climb them," he said, "and we climb them with patience, humility and awe." That is a good way for us to climb into God's presence.

AMEN!