

Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

*We recognize that the land where we gather for worship belongs to God, as does all of creation. We also acknowledge that the Lkwungen people – the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ – have lived on this land since before settlers of European descent claimed ownership and displaced those for whom it was home. As we pursue our goals to dismantle racism and attend to growing diversity, we lament this injustice in our history and commit ourselves to just and respectful relationships within our congregation and our neighborhood.*

***May we live with respect on this land and live in peace and friendship with its people.***

➤ ***Dance with the Spirit***

***MV 156 (repeat)***

Call to Worship (Based on John 3:16)

For God so loved the world;

**The sparrows, the mountain lions, the fish and the people.**

For God so loved the world;

**In success and failure, in sickness and health, in mediocrity and extraordinary.**

For God so loved the world;

**Enough to become one of us, enough to suffer along with us, enough to offer new life for us.**

For God so loved the world;

**Let us worship God!**

† Prayer

Creator God, open our hearts, our spirits and our minds today to seek ministries of justice and peace. Let the words we speak and the deeds we do represent your love and compassion, for it is in the name of Jesus Christ that we come together to worship and pray.

➤ ***RESPONSE***

***Holy, holy, holy***

***303***

Holy and Healing God, slow to anger and swift to forgive – you have shown us the depth of your love day by day, yet we are often reluctant to love others even a little. You have shown us compassion and forgiveness, yet we turn away from one another for even small slights, saving our concern for those most like us.

You know us so well, O Lord. You know our fears and our misgivings. We have many questions and doubts. We sometimes wonder if you even hear us. Forgive our faithlessness. Heal our broken and bruised spirits. Open our ears and our hearts to receive your words of hope. Challenge us to live lives of loving service in your name. Create in us clean hearts and a desire to begin again with you and with one another. Give us courage to forgive each other and know

your healing grace. We pray together in Christ's name ...*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. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen*

### Words of Hope

God has washed away our sin and presented us with a new life of hope and service. Do not fear. Let us place our trust completely in the God of justice, mercy and love. Praise the Lord!

➤ *Holy, holy, holy*

299

### † Prayer for Understanding

**God of wisdom, with the wind of your Spirit, open our minds and hearts to receive your life-giving Word through the scriptures. Energize us to follow Christ, your Living Word, wherever the Spirit moves us.**

### Scripture    **Isaiah 6: 1-8**

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."

The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke.

And I said: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"

Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out."

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"

And I said, "Here am I; send me!"

### **Romans 8: 12-17**

So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh – for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ – if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

### Message     ***Trinity – Our Communal Identity***

One thing we have learned – or remembered – over the past 15 months is that we can't accomplish all that much alone. We need one another. We have depended on relationships to mitigate the forced isolation of the pandemic – we have reached out and connected and supported one another. Government departments, provinces and nations have all needed to build relationships for successful outcomes – and people suffer when they fail to do so.

We know that one person getting immunized is not enough – we all need to get our vaccination against Covid-19 for the effects of the virus to be pushed back to manageable levels. And we need all countries in the world – even the poorer ones – to have ready access to vaccine so that the world is safer. We are a community – a global community – which means that we are all connected – dependent on the health and safety and thriving of everyone for our own health and safety and thriving. We forget this at our peril.

I believe we are created to be in community – to be in relationship – that mutuality is key to the created order. Yes, we are individuals and some of us are pretty content with our own company, but we know that connecting with others or animals or the natural world is better for us than the sterility of cutting ourselves off from all contact. Expressions like “no man is an island” and “it takes a village to raise a child” affirm this perspective. So does the doctrine of the Trinity.

Deep in the mystery of God there is community. There is only one God. Yet there is relatedness within this one God. That capacity for relating, for loving in communion, within the one being, is extended to include us. Jesus prayed for us to have the same unity that is the unity of communion within the one God. He said, *the father and I are one* – yet they are in relationship. That is the beginning of our understanding of the Holy Trinity – of communion within unity. A similar mutual relationship of the Father and the Son is expressed with the Holy Spirit, who is promised in Christ's farewell to the disciples and in the final prayer of Jesus.

Today is Trinity Sunday – the day we celebrate the unique three in one nature of our God – Parent, Sibling, Breath – Mother, Teacher, Wisdom – Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer. How can we describe a God who is one and three at the same time?

All our language about God is appallingly inadequate, but Christians have clung tenaciously to the doctrine of the Trinity as a way of preserving the many tiny truths God has revealed to us.

Maybe our formula of the Trinity is a mere glimpse of the truth about God, but it is a critical glimpse – one that makes all the difference.

Trinitarian theology offers a profoundly relational and communal understanding of God as well as of life created and redeemed by God – God as self-expending, other-affirming, community-building love – God in terms of shared life and love. The Trinity also expresses the thoroughness, the pervasiveness, with which God wants to be part of our lives. Not just as our Maker, God wants to be with us in human form – and not just as a human incarnation, God wants to be within us as our very breath. Let's not get mired in defense of the doctrine but seek to enter into the spirit of Trinity.

We struggle when we try to express the mystery of God in human terms. God as Creator and Parent – God the Father – how did we come to such an understanding our God? Jesus brings the Aramaic word *Abba* into the centre – not a patriarchal, kingly head of the Hebrew people – *Abba* is the tender, forgiving, welcoming persona – the one who comes down to the small child's level and sits on the floor – the one who plays games, tells stories, builds kites, picks the child up and carries them on shoulders. *Abba* is the extravagant parent of the prodigal, who throws dignity to the wind and runs to meet and hug and welcome.

When we come to the Son – the Child – the Sibling, there are still some hurdles. With Jesus we have a real human being with a real story. He is not a religious concept but an unforgettable life. Jesus is a human being in whom God dwelt without reserve. Look on Jesus in action and you see God at work. Here is a God who can laugh and cry, thirst and suffer. Here are tears rolling down the cheeks of a unique visible expression of God.

God the Sibling is not an outsider who redemptively drops us a lifeline from above but is one of us in the hazards of human existence. Humanity is being saved from within. God in Christ is the divine insider. Jesus – the Son – gives himself absolutely so that through his love – through his saving grace – we might know God – the Parent – in the community of the Spirit.

Just as inadequate a description as Father and Son – Creator and Redeemer – is the Holy Spirit – Sustainer and Breath. It is a slippery concept, yet there seems no better word in our language through which we can describe the God who is invisibly and intimately here, now and always. When we say Spirit, we remove all barriers to contact between divine and human. By the power of the Spirit we can meet and be nurtured in community. God unseen, untouchable, uncontrollable, yet nearer to us than anything – any person – nearer than any doctrine or idea.

In the Bible, the word Spirit is used to describe God's presence in the world – God's very breath – creating things and creatures – recreating that which has fallen into degeneration. The Spirit is that fire in the belly which makes prophets discontented with the injustices of society and leads them to speak hard truths to people who do not want to hear. The Spirit is the holy witness that endorses Jesus at his baptism and sends him to preach, teach and heal. The Spirit is the

divine intimacy that empowers the church at Pentecost – empowered us again as we celebrated Pentecost last Sunday. The Spirit breathes faith in each one of us.

We have come to see the inspiration of God our Parent, the healing grace of God our Sibling in Jesus, and the intimacy of God our Breath – one God, yet a community revealed throughout scripture. The Trinitarian formula insists that the nature of God is closer to a loving community than to a lofty individualism. The highest form of existence, of personal being, is communal – relational. God is communal – relational.

If this is the God we worship, then true greatness lies in the direction of community and mutuality rather than in self-sufficient individuality. We find the true meaning of being human – of *being* – in relationship with others. The community of faith reflects God far better than any one person no matter how gifted that one may be. In theological terms, individualism is a way of limitation, diminishment, and death. Abundance, growth, and life take place as we give and receive – as we recognize our need for others and the whole creation, and their need – its need – for us. Join your voices to affirm your faith in the mystery of God...

**As a community of faith, we proclaim that the Lord our God is One.**

**We will love God with all our heart, and mind, and soul and strength.**

**This is the One who patiently and lovingly created and nurtures us –**

**The One who prepares a future for us beyond all imagining.**

**This is the One who amazingly and lovingly came to us in Jesus.**

**The One who teaches a brighter, more blessed way – who lives and offers grace.**

**This is the One who is intimately and lovingly among us in Spirit –**

**The One who continually creates community – inspiring justice and mercy.**

**In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit –**

**Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer – Divinity, Humanity, Wisdom – Parent, Sibling, Breath –**

**As a community of faith, we proclaim that the Lord our God is One.**

**We will love God with all our heart, and mind, and soul and strength. Amen**

➤ *Thou whose almighty word*

291

† Offering and Prayer

Trinity Sunday proclaims the outpouring of love within God's own being, for God's very nature is love. May our gifts offer an outpouring of our love for God and our willingness to put that love into action in God's world.

**Holy God, you touch and bless our lives. Your holiness inspires us to be more holy – your love causes us to be more loving – your life in us brings to birth dreams and visions for a better and more just world. We offer these gifts and our lives in thankfulness for all you have done and are doing in our lives. Amen**

## † Prayer

We thank you O God for how your Wisdom calls to us – for how your Spirit speaks to us – for how your Word reaches out to our souls. Grant O God that each one of us may have a growing faith and a deepening love, that we may confess with our lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that he is risen from the dead. We thank you O God, for the witness of our congregation in Victoria.

Lord we pray for those among our family or neighbours, colleagues or friends, who are at present living through difficult days of sickness, sorrow, injury, injustice, anxiety or bitterness. May they discover the loving resources of the Holy Spirit surrounding and filling their souls.

➤ **RESPONSE**      *Father, I adore you (verse 1)*      **292**

Merciful God, we pray for those whose names or concerns come quickly to our minds – we pray both in thankfulness and in intercession. We pray for each person in this congregation today, with personal worry, heartache, pain or distress. Give each one recovery of courage and peace of mind.

➤ **RESPONSE**      *Jesus, I adore you (verse 2)*      **292**

Lord of Peace, we pray for all nations, that there may be an end to all injustice, poverty, and persecution. We especially pray for a just reconciliation between warring factions throughout our world.

➤ **RESPONSE**      *Spirit, I adore you (verse 3)*      **292**

Most loving God, source of all grace and peace, restore to all people the joy and health of your salvation – through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and evermore. **Amen**

## Blessing

Always remember that you have been invited to new life by God and that your hospitality is God's invitation to others. May the grace of the Risen Christ, the love of God and the nurturing community of the Holy Spirit embrace us all.

➤ *Go now in peace, never be afraid*