

04 June 2023 – Trinity Sunday / Communion

Welcome / Announcements / Land Acknowledgement

As we gather for worship in Jesus' name, we remember that we do so on the traditional and unceded territory of the lək̓ʷəŋən and the WSÁNEĆ. We acknowledge their stewardship of this land throughout the ages. As we pray, reflect, and celebrate in this place, we do so as guests lamenting injustice and asking God to lead us along paths of reconciliation – inspiring new relationships of respect and solidarity.

➤ *O let the power fall on me*

Celebrations / Joys & Concerns

➤ *God's blessing on you. God's blessing on you. God's blessing, dear friends. God's blessing on you.*

Call to Worship We come to worship the God of all creation this morning.

Let all creation praise our Maker.

Let the daylight and the shadows praise you!

Let the fertile earth and the swelling sea praise you!

Let the winds and the rain praise you!

Let men and women, girls and boys, young and old praise you!

Let all that breathes, let every living creature praise you!

Let us all worship the God of life.

† Gathering Prayer / Words of Hope

Creator God, the most distant parts of space reveal the traces of your touch. You give the galaxies their form. You choreograph the path of stars and the flights of Canada Geese. You design the patterns of butterfly wings and hold the details of our own lives close to your heart. We rejoice to be a part of this world that you love and sustain. And we give thanks for your redeeming love especially as we have seen in Jesus your Son, our Saviour.

Holy and merciful God, we confess that we have failed to see you in places other than this. For when we have ignored the beauty in other people or in your Creation, - forgive us. For when we have missed your face reflected in the face of others - forgive us. For when we have chosen to live more by our fears than by faith - forgive us. For when we have grown disillusioned, discouraged or indifferent - refresh our hope and vision. Help us to rely on your Holy Spirit in all that we do. Enlarge our capacity to care for the world you have made and for all who live in it. This we pray, trusting in your transforming power and in the name of Jesus. **Amen**

God says to us: *Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing! I am the One who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.* (Isaiah 43) Friends believe the Gospel! In Jesus Christ we are forgiven people! Thanks be to God. Amen

† Prayer for Understanding

God of heaven and earth, before the foundation of the universe and the beginning of time you are the triune God: the Author of creation, the eternal Word of salvation, and the life-giving Spirit of wisdom. Guide us to all truth by your Spirit, that we may proclaim all that Christ revealed and rejoice in the glory he shared with us. Glory and praise to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen

Scriptures **Genesis 1:1 – 2:4a** [OT 1]

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. *And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.*

And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. *And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.*

And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so.

The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. *And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.*

And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." And it was so. God made the two great lights – the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night – and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. *And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.*

And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." *And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.*

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so.

God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. *And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.* Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

Psalm 8 [responsive/displayed]

O LORD, our God,

how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Your splendor is chanted above the heavens by the mouths of babes and infants
you have set up a defense against your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger.

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established;

what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?

Yet you have made them a little lower than the angels,
and crowned them with glory and honor.

You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;

you have put all things under their feet,

all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,

the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

O LORD, our God,

how majestic is your name in all the earth!

1 Thessalonians 3: 6-13 [NT 204]

But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought us the good news of your faith and love. He has told us also that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, just as we long to see you. For this reason, brothers and sisters, during all our distress and persecution we have been encouraged about you through your faith. For we now live, if you continue to stand firm in the Lord. How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith.

Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

John 16: 12-15 [NT 110]

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When 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. He will glorify me because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

Message: ***On Being Community- Trinity Sunday*** (The Rev. Cathy Victor)

I have a dog. He's a standard dachshund - not a mini, but the full meal deal. His name is Johann Sebastian **Bark**. Long name for a long dog. It's rather ironic that he generally howls when Johann Sebastian **Bach** is played on the organ. Or maybe he's just singing along. He also howls when he hears the Jeopardy theme song. I'm not sure why. Maybe it's something high pitch?

He is gifted. - at least to me he is. He can hear things that I cannot. He can smell things that I cannot. Perhaps that's a good thing. Some dogs can be trained to detect illnesses such as cancer, and now there is training being done to help dogs detect Covid 19 too. Some are trained to detect drugs. I knew a man who started the Saanich police Canine unit in the 1960's. His German Shepherd, Rex, could find anyone. In fact, the neighbourhood kids would go to his door and ask if he and Rex could come out and play. And they did. The kids could hide anywhere and Rex would find them.

Some animals can detect earthquakes long before they happen. Birds and sea turtles have the ability to detect magnetic fields in order to find their way as they migrate. Many snakes, - not my favourite creatures - many have the ability to detect infrared light. Elephants with their enormous ears and hearing capabilities can detect a rainstorm from about 240 km.'s away. They can generate low frequency calls to one another - nothing we can hear at all. Some birds can see colours we can't and bees can see ultraviolet light. Flowers reflect UV light. Owls and mountain lions have night vision.

There are so many creatures of God's creation that can sense things or do things that we cannot - there is so much that science has taught us, things that I have no grasp of, and there is so much about God too that we do not see or understand.

Jesus tells his friends to love one another back in John, Chapter 15. That is the bottom line. And then in our gospel reading in chapter 16 that we heard this morning Jesus tells them there is so much more he could tell them, but they couldn't bear it yet. So, he will send his Spirit to help them, to guide them, and teach them. And so - he sent the Holy Spirit and last week we celebrated the birthday of the Church - Pentecost. And today we celebrate and ponder the Holy Trinity and acknowledge that there is so much about God that we do not understand.

These passages of John are difficult to take in. The passage that we heard was only one of a series of comments, prayers and teachings of Jesus. There is much we can't see or take in or grasp,

Theologians, artists, ministers and priests have been trying to explain the Trinity - since the first Pentecost. We do know that those who live in love, live in God, and God lives in them.

Jesus calls us to love all those we meet with the same grace and mercy as Jesus has for us. Each one of us is a Beloved child of God, connected to and enveloped by this Holy Trinity.

We don't have all the answers or understand God or the Trinity fully - it is our human attempt to grasp just a piece of God's magnificence.

You may have noticed that our language to name God has evolved over the years, actually over centuries. Many older hymns refer to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but to acknowledge some Old Testament passages and early church writings, there has been a shift to using terms that aren't necessarily male or female, and on occasion God the creator has been written about as a mother. They are all ways to help us relate and connect with the One who made us and loves us.

Psalm 8 that we read at the beginning, tries to help us praise this unfathomable creator. *"Oh God, how majestic is your name! When I look at the heavens and the work of your hands!"* Or as Eugene Peterson translates it in the Message:

*I look up at your macro-skies, dark and enormous, your handmade sky-jewelry,
Moon and stars mounted in their settings. Then I look at my micro-self and wonder,
Why do You bother with us? Why take a second look our way?*

Artists have tried to depict the trinity in various ways - Celtic art uses patterns of three, such as three triangles, or three interwoven circles. The wild goose, as well, has been a symbol for the Holy Spirit for centuries. It really is a perfect symbol. It turns out that wild geese can also teach us a little about community. Every spring when the geese were migrating north, they would take up temporary residence in many of the farmers' fields around one of my first churches south of Ottawa. They could rest in the expansive fields and be near the Rideau River all at the same time. But I'm afraid they weren't very popular with the farmers.

The geese kept them up at night with all their honking. And it was truly an infernal racket. And all their droppings unfortunately were toxic to the fields, so the farmers would be out in the fields trying to scare the birds off during the day. By night, they would be trying - and I emphasize trying - to sleep. And then every year around Pentecost, when we would be listening to how God's Spirit descended upon the church - that first community of believers - the geese would arrive. They could not be ignored.

Geese have been a symbol for the holy Spirit for centuries. Perhaps it is because they demand attention or can keep you up at night but perhaps it has something to do with living in community. Did you know that geese in a flock have a 75% greater range when they travel together? They also travel about 75% faster than a single goose can when it's on its own. Flocks travel faster and more efficiently together. If we have as much sense as a goose, we will live and work together in community, as followers of Jesus.

You may have seen what I mean. When the lead goose gets tired, he or she rotates to the back and another goose takes a turn and flies up front. The geese honk at the one up front to encourage it to keep the speed up, and when one goose gets sick, or wounded two others fall out of the formation to stay with it to help and protect him.

Neither are there any solo Christians. While the personal aspect of our faith is important and needs to be nurtured, we never really go it alone. Dr. Kent Ira Groff, a Spiritual director at Princeton Seminary says this:

"Without the discipline of community, solitude [can] degenerate into self-absorption. It is in the community of faith that we really learn the language of love... A life-giving church is one where human brokenness is lifted up like bread and wine to be held and touched and blessed – to heal the world." (Paraphrase)

Not only are you a part of the community of this congregation, we are all part of the community of the nearby congregations of Trinity and St. Andrew's, and the community that is the body of Christ through out the world. Hebrews 12: reminds us of the great a cloud of witnesses that surrounds us; an even wider community.

Even God lives in Community. I m referring to the Trinity. In the year 213, Tertullian, an early Church Father and theologian insisted that it was important to preserve the idea of One God, in a world filled with pagan beliefs with numerous gods. He claimed that the relationship or the Community of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit was within God. This concept has challenged theologians ever since.

There is a temptation to consider the trinity as a puzzle to be solved: The Three in One – the One in Three. But another way to think of the mystery of the Trinity, is as a Divine relationship that we are invited to enter into, to experience, and then to allow this community to shape, nurture heal and astonish us, with power and awe.

The artist Andrei Rublev created an Icon, called The Trinity around the year 1410. While we are not particularly accustomed to the use of icons in the Presbyterian or in any Reformed churches there is still some deep wisdom for us to glean from this amazing piece of art.

It's important to note that Icons are intended not as idols to be worshipped, but as a type of prayer and meditative tool.

Back in the book of Genesis (chapter 18) you will remember the story of Abraham and Sarah welcoming three strangers to their tent and offering them a meal under the oaks of Mamre. The three strangers have sometimes been understood in differing ways due to difficulties with the original language and translation.

They are sometimes thought of as angels, which are messengers of God. They announced that Sarah - who would have been drawing her pension for a long time, was going to have a child. She laughed.

In Genesis sometimes they are referred to as the three and sometimes it is just the Lord. Historically the three figures have often been thought of as the Trinity coming to visit Abraham and Sarah.

And so, in the icon we see both visions: the Trinity of God at table, with wine / communion perhaps, and the Trinity of the holy visitors sharing the food prepared for them. at a table under the oaks of Mamre off in the distance. And they sit together in the community of the Trinity. One is not set higher than the other. They are all engaged and connected to each other.

But one of the things that I have always found most interesting and wonderful is that if you look closely the perspective seems off, not because the artist couldn't draw, but the perspective has actually been reversed - most notably in this icon and often in others. The idea is to actually draw the viewer into the picture. Like Abraham's hospitality, we are welcomed to come closer and be at the table with the three figures seated there.

This picture is inviting us closer to God and into the community of the Trinity, while we gaze at it. And again - this depiction just says there is so much we don't know.

Paul wrote to various communities of believers in Ephesus, and Macedonia as well as others from a prison cell. The part of the letter to the Thessalonians (the capital of Macedonia) that we heard read earlier was probably a circular letter that went from community to community and not just there.

Paul wrote to encourage them, to honor them, and to remind them and appeal to them to maintain their Christian unity with humility, gentleness and patience. He wrote to strengthen them and to tell them that he was praying for them. In his letter to the Ephesians he says, *I have heard of your faith!* He points out the diversity of gifts within the body of Christ - prophets, teachers, evangelists, pastors - all of which are given toward one goal: to build up the body of Christ in the unity and maturity of faith.

God's Spirit is an active force, living in you, in me - guiding us. This power of God raised Jesus, and this is the power that we are fellow heirs to. It is the power that continues to enfold us with Divine love.

Living together is never easy. There is nothing romantic about living in community. It requires patience and gentleness and humility as Paul says. There are of course large communities such as Iona, in the Hebrides Island of Scotland, but with members all over the world as well as those living there. Or there is the prayer community of Taize, or the

worldwide communities of L Arche, begun by the late Jean Vanier for those with mental disabilities. There are all the communities of the various branches of the Church and our own Presbyterian community.

And yet there are millions of smaller communities like ours living and working together to praise and worship and serve Jesus Christ and the world that God so loves. It can be hard to remember that everyone is a child of God. Simply as the church, we can have our moments.

I like to remind myself of something that a long-ago Rabbi once wrote. His name was Rabbi Joshua ben Levi and he said, *In front of every person goes a process of ten thousand angels who sing and declare: Make way! Make way for the image of God!* How many angels are among us that we can't see. What is it that we cannot grasp, see, or sense?

All over the world there are Christian communities that surround us and each other- little groups of friends who fly with us together in a V, honking to encourage and stopping to protect and wait for healing.

There is a wonderful book by Sue Monk-Kidd called the Secret life of Bees. It is a lovely tale about a 14-year-old girl named Lily in South Carolina in the mid 60 s. It speaks to issues of racism and the effects of the civil rights movement. Her nanny who is her surrogate mother is black. Lily isn t. For a number of reasons, the two of them end up living with three black women who are beekeepers. It is a unique and caring household, and above all- it is a community of faith. And as Lily s life becomes woven together with all these other women, the threads and details of the beekeeping life are set out for the reader to see.

In early Christian art, bees and hives were used as symbols of Christian community. What a lovely description it is. There are many roles for each bee. There is the Queen of course- the mother bee. -there are drones that fertilize the queen and help to continue the hive. Ninety eight percent of the bees are workers (in a hive they are female) mortuary bees carry out the dead ones, fanning bees keep the hive cool, guard bees protect the entrance and the water carriers help with the production of the honey. Each community or hive produces its own sort of honey, depending on the kind of source they have for pollen.

Each community of the body of Christ produces its own unique sort of honey as well. May we all be blessed with the sweetness and nurturing love of God. May God use us to feed and nurture not only one another but those who hunger and thirst for the sweetness of God.

➤ *She comes sailing on the wind*

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Offering and Prayer *Praise God from whom all blessings flow 306*

Let us respond to God's great love for us we present our offerings,

Holy God, we offer you our selves as well as our gifts - confident that you have a purpose for them and for us. We bring all of this before you with joyfulness, thankfulness and trust. Use them and us to comfort the lonely, heal the sick, feed the hungry, and bring reconciliation and a new world filled with your peace and grace. - A world where your purposes are fulfilled for all people. In Jesus' name. Amen

The Apostles Creed 539

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

Invitation to the Table

Come, not because you are strong, but because you are weak. Come, not because any goodness of your own gives you a right to come, but because you need mercy and help. Come, because you love the Lord a little, and would like to love him more. Come, because he loved you, and gave himself for you.

This is the Lord's table. Our Saviour invites all those who trust him to share the feast which he has prepared. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

➤ *You satisfy the hungry heart*

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† Celebrating Together with Thanksgiving

God be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to God.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is good to give God thanks and praise.

Holy God, Holy One, Holy Three! Before all that is, You were God. Outside all we know, You are God. After all is finished, You will be God. You beyond the galaxies, You under the oceans, You inside the leaves, You pouring down rain, You opening the flowers, You feeding the insects, You giving us your image, You carrying us through the waters, You holding us in the night, Your smile on Sarah and Abraham, Your hand with Moses and Miriam, Your words through Deborah and Isaiah, Your hope through Hannah and Mary.

Therefore with apostles and prophets, and the great cloud of witnesses who live for you beyond all time and space, we join with the whole creation to lift our hearts in joyful praise:

O holy, holy, holy God, O God of time and space. All earth and sea and sky above bear witness to your grace. Hosanna in the highest heaven, creation sings your praise. And blessed is the one who comes and bears your name always!

Holy God, Holy One, Holy Three! You being truly and eternal God, lived as Jesus among us, took flesh and became human for us and for our salvation. Holy God, we remember your Son – His life with the humble – His welcome of the outcast – His death among the wretched – His resurrection for us all. Your wisdom our guide – Your justice our strength – Your grace our path to rebirth. You, loving Jesus, healing, teaching, dying, rising – sharing our joys and our sorrows – inviting us all to your feast. And so we proclaim together the mystery of our faith:

***Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen, Christ will come again!
Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen, Christ will come again!***

Holy God, we beg for your Spirit. Enliven this bread – awaken this body, pour us out for each other. Transfigure our minds – ignite your church, nourish the life of the earth. Make us, while many, united. Make us, though broken, whole. Make us, despite death, alive.

By these signs of bread and wine, we recognize the longings of all our hearts for a time when all humanity will be one family – Holy Spirit, hover over our lives, uniting us in these signs and strengthening us to live the resurrected life of Christ in the world.

As this bread and wine become a part of us, may we become a part you Jesus, and of your healing work in this broken and hurting world.

You, Holy God, Holy One, Holy Three – Our Life, our Mercy, our Might, Our Rainbow, our Ark, our Dove – Our Light, our Treasure, Our Way, our Truth, our Life. You, Holy God, Holy One, Holy Three! All honour and glory is yours forever. And so we offer our selves to you as we sing...

***Amen, amen, O Holy One! Hosanna and amen!
Amen, amen, O Holy One! Hosanna and amen!***

Sharing of the Bread and the Cup

Please come forward to receive Holy Communion – everyone is welcome at this table. If you are unable to come to the front, please signal an elder who will come and serve you. We use gluten and dairy-free bread. Both juice and wine are available. Pre-packaged elements are provided on request.

† Prayer after Communion

God of Grace, you renew us at your table with the bread of life. We thank you for your Son Jesus who is our peace. We thank you that you give us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet in your eternal kingdom. May this food strengthen us in love and help us to serve you and each other. Send us out in the power of your Spirit, to live and work to your praise and glory and grant that we who have received this sacrament of the body and blood of Jesus our Lord, may abide in him and he in us, that we may be filled with the power of his endless life, help us to trust the power of your transforming love at work in us, through us and around us.

Create in us hopeful hearts, as we face our broken and divided world. We pray for people who face discrimination because of their race, religion, gender, orientation, or ethnicity. Open our eyes so that we learn to see each other differently, each one as precious to you. God of mercy, we pray for peace in a world that is marked by so much violence, anger and conflict. Jesus Christ, light in our darkness, lighten the burdens of those we bring to you in the silence of our hearts... for those who are grieving – those who are afraid – for those who are sick.

By your Spirit, you have made us one with Christ, and united us with all who share this feast in every time and place. Send us out as your faithful people, filled with the joy of new and eternal life. Strengthen us to serve you in the places you have called us to until that day when we feast with you in Glory. Hear us now as we pray in the words Jesus taught his friends...

➤ *Our Father in heaven (The Lord's Prayer – no repeats)* **469**

➤ *Immortal, invisible, God only wise* **290**

Blessing

Beloved go! Go in love. Know that you are created in God's own image and loved more than you can imagine. Share that love! Beloved go! Go in peace, following in the footsteps of the Prince of Peace, seeking to bring peace in all that you do. Beloved go! Go in hope. Listen for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as you live into your calling. Beloved Go! Sharing love, peace and hope. In the name of the Creator, the Christ and the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

➤ *Jump with joy* **406**