

Mooretown Presbyterian Churches  
June 4, 2023  
(<https://pccweb.ca/moorepc/>, 519-813-9646)

## Trinity Sunday



\*Indicates to please stand as you are able.

### God calls us to worship

Call to worship: Deuteronomy 6:4-5; 1<sup>st</sup> John 4:16b  
Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.  
You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,  
and with all your soul,  
and with all your might.

God is love,  
and those who abide in love abide in God,  
and God abides in them.

Come, let us worship and draw near,  
let us kneel before the Lord our Maker!  
For He is our God,  
we are the people of his pasture,  
and the sheep of his hand.

*Let us worship God.  
Let us pray.*

### We respond in praise and confession

Prayer of praise and supplication:  
Holy God,  
you are Three in One and One in Three.  
Praise to you, Father, maker of Heaven and Earth,  
who created us in your image and called us good.  
Praise to you, Jesus Christ, born in our flesh  
to teach us how to love and offer us grace and mercy.  
Praise to you, Holy Spirit, for the energy you bring us  
to greet each day as a gift.  
Holy God, Three in One and One in Three,  
we praise you for your mystery and mercy.  
Reveal to us how to live as your people  
and witness to your wonder and grace. Amen

\*Hymn #295 "When long before time"

Prayer of confession (*unison*):

**God of mystery and mercy,  
you know the details of our lives.  
You see the sin and the sorrow we bear;  
you see the problems and the possibilities we face.  
You see how we fit into the world around us  
and how we rub each other the wrong way.  
We confess we do not always see what you see.  
Open our eyes to the truth of our lives and touch us with your  
grace.**

### **God speaks to us**

We hear the gospel of God's grace:

(*The response to: "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good", is: "His love endures forever."*)

Hear and believe the good news:  
God so loves the world  
that He gave His only Son,  
so that whoever believes in him  
may not perish  
but may have eternal life.

Believe the gospel:  
In Jesus Christ, sin is forgiven.  
Accept his grace,  
be at peace with God,  
with one another,  
with your own self,  
and give thanks to the Lord, for He is good.  
**His love endures forever.**  
Amen.

\*Hymn: #300 "Father we love you"

Prayer for Illumination:

God, you have spoken through your Living Word, Jesus Christ. Your Spirit speaks through the Scriptures. Grant us understanding through what we see in Jesus and hear in the Scriptures that we may know your will and follow your way.

Scripture: Genesis 1:1-2, 26-27, 31; 2:1-4a; 3:8-9  
Ephesians 1:3-14

(*The response to: "This is the word of the Lord" is, "Thanks be to God"*)

Sermon:

## Trinity

### **Father:**

By observing our natural surroundings, we can conclude that there is a God.

By noticing the rhythms of the seasons, the terrifying power of storms, the delicate spheres of dew drops, the perfect crystalline symmetry of atoms, the immense variety of life that is nevertheless all interconnected and dependent, we can conclude that there exists a being who transcends our experiences and who has created and orchestrated all of the things and systems in which we live, move, and have our being.

Then, by prayerfully attending to these observations of our natural surroundings, we can learn about this Creator's attention to detail, about His ability to orchestrate immense variety into harmonious systems in which complementarity produces life. We can learn about His power, His beauty, His order and His creativity (after all, the One who designed the rocks also designed the platypus, there seems to be no limit to his imagination!)

And, we can even sometimes experience a sense of the immanence of this transcendent Creator. This God is not merely the Creator, He is someone with whom we can relate. We can know Him. We can speak with Him. We can listen to Him. We can sense His presence.

From the beginning, humankind have known this.

In the coolness of the evening breezes, as they attended to their observations of their natural surroundings (albeit, supernaturally planted!), the first man and woman heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden. He wasn't a distant, unfeeling, uncaring Creator; He is personable, capable of emotions, and desirous for relationship. Although they were ashamed for their failure to trust Him explicitly and honour Him alone as God, nevertheless, they heard Him call out to them. They heard this personable Creator call out and invite them to Himself:

*The Lord God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?'*

It's an invitation. It's an invitation to join in the Lord God's fellowship even in light of humanity's unfaithfulness.

So, by prayerfully attending to your observations of your natural surroundings, you can conclude that there is a God. That this God is the Creator.

That He has created beauty, variety, and life that thrives in the complementary workings of the different aspects of creation. Yet, more than being a robotic assembly-line creating machine, you learn that this God is personable. You can enjoy His presence. As with a loving parent, you can talk with Him and listen to Him. You learn that He has a system of rules and order in which life can thrive. You learn as well that He is a God of emotions. He is grieved when you break His trust and overjoyed when you are reconciled.

He is, as the scriptures testify, Father.

### **Spirit:**

As you prayerfully attend to your observations and reflect on the Creative Father, you begin to realize there is something within you that connects you with this Creator and, in a way that's hard to express, with the creation around you. There is another presence that you observe. You observe this presence in your rhythms of renewal following times of fatigue and burnout. You observe this presence as the dots connect in your mind and you see pictures in what was previously formless void. It's a hard-to-define presence of renewal, and life, and wisdom. It's as real, and as life-giving, and as invisible as breath or wind.

This presence is, as the scripture testify, Spirit. A particular and personable spirit. A Holy Spirit.

This Holy Spirit seems to be intimately intertwined with the Creator, and yet at the same time, unique.

You begin to realize that there are two spiritual persons at play. They are different, yet inseparable. Independent, yet intertwined. They do different things, yet move in the same direction.

You begin to realize that these two spiritual persons have been working together from the beginning. They created a world of rhythm, order, beauty, and life. They've guided a nation by covenant, law, and physical signs through millennia of enslavement, freedom, feasting, fasting, wandering, and settlement.

### **Son:**

Then, along came a man. Named Jesus.

This man knows things, and does things, and says things that are only possible by supernatural power.

He heals the sick.

He feeds the hungry.

He walks on water.

He casts out demons.

Above all else, he forgives sin.

You begin to realize that this man is not only human, but, like the Creator and the Spirit, this man is also, and has always been somehow, part of that divine, spirit-body.

He is, as the scriptures testify, the Son of God and Son of Man.

### **The Doctrine:**

This is how God has revealed himself in the unfolding revelation of Scripture. We see throughout the Old and New Testaments references to the Father and the Spirit (sometimes using words like “breath” or “wind”), and to the God-Man (called in scripture “Messiah” and “Son of Man” and “Son of God” and “Servant”) to which the New Testament bears witness is Jesus of Nazareth.

Very early the church noticed a problem.

The Scriptures clearly testify to the reality and agency of these three divine persons. In the first chapter of Ephesians, Paul clearly shows all three working together: the Father, Jesus the Christ in whom we have redemption, and the Holy Spirit who marks us with the pledge of our inheritance.

Scriptures also clearly testify, from beginning to end, that there is *one* living, holy, and powerful God.

The early Christians held to their belief in both these testimonies: there is one God, there are three divine characters. And as they wrestled with the aftermath of Jesus’ death on the cross by which he has forgiven sin, his bodily resurrection, his ascension, and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, they wrestled with how these two testimonies can both be true.

As they prayerfully attend to their observations, experiences, and convictions in light of Scripture, the early Christians learned that a defining characteristic of God is love.

Unless it's a purely self-interested, egocentric concern, love doesn't exist in solitude.

Love requires more than one person.

And this, it turns out, is key to accepting both of the testimonies of Scripture concerning God.

As the church prayerfully attended to the witness of Scripture, together with their observations and experiences of these three unique yet somehow inseparably intertwined holy and spiritual entities, they began to conclude that this One God exists in three unique, yet interwoven persons bound together in love.

Then, the church decided to get together and figure this out.

In the year 325 A.D. they met in Nicea.

In the year 381 A.D. they met in Constantinople.

The result of these councils was what we call the doctrine of the Trinity.

("Doctrine" simply means: instruction, or teaching.)

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*There is one living, real, good, and able God ("Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.") He is distinguished in three persons (equal in substance, power, and glory) who are called: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

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The doctrine of the Trinity doesn't fully explain the character of God. However, it summarizes what God has chosen to reveal about himself to us through the pages of Scripture. It sets the boundaries for what we are to know about God.

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*There is one living, real, good, and able God and He is distinguished in three persons (equal in substance, power, and glory) who are called: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

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### **Implications for us:**

From this we learn that God doesn't exist in solitude.

He has always existed in community: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, joined by holy, and untarnished love.

He was so before we were created.

He is so now.

He will be forever.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit held in perfect community by divine, holy love.

The implication that is often drawn from this is that we ought to model our human communities on the internal life of the Trinity: Just as God exists in this mutual, patient, kind, serving community, so too should we.

There's more that can be said about that. And, it's not wrong.

However, there's an application that must come first.

In this trinitarian community, God has always had, in himself, perfect love. God doesn't *need* us. God didn't create in order to satisfy His loneliness. He creates to share what He already has. We exist by His grace.

Before the foundation of the world, He set forth his plan to *adopt* us as his children and *gather* to himself all things in heaven and on earth.

He invites us in, so that, in that holy and triune community, we needn't hide from the presence of God and others; rather, we can find the connection, peace, and joy we crave.

In the divine, triune community we find:

our perfect parent;

our brother who gave his life for us

and continually intercedes on our behalf;

and the Spirit who guides us, by the Scriptures, into true holiness.

In communion with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each one of us can individually find adoption, redemption, purpose, security, and love.

This is our inheritance.

Are you willing to believe it?

Will you accept His invitation?

Will you find your home in the divine and triune community?

For the health of your soul, the good of our human communities, and the glory of God.

Amen.

## **We respond by affirming our faith, offering our tithes, and prayer**

*Let us respond to God's Word by affirming what it is we believe in the words of the Apostles' Creed. Please stand as you are able.*

\*The Apostles' Creed

\*Offering:

*(Offering plates are presented at the Communion Table while congregation sings:)*

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
praise him all creatures here below;  
praise him above, ye heavenly host;  
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.**

\*Prayer of dedication

God of overflowing love, receive our gifts as signs of our love and commitment to live for you. Bless our gifts and our lives, that they may accomplish more than we can ask or imagine, as we follow Jesus, equipped by the Spirit to serve you well and wisely. Amen

Prayers of thanksgiving, intercession, the Lord's Prayer:

*The response to "let us pray to the Lord", is "**Lord, have mercy.**"*

Lord, our God,  
whose glory is beyond compare;  
whose mercy is boundless, and love for us is endless;  
look upon us now in your compassion.

For peace that calms our hearts and saves our souls,  
and for peace in the whole world and throughout creation,  
let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For the stability of the church and the unity of this congregation,  
for the ministries of your church around the world in these challenging times,  
and for the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada  
meeting this week in Halifax,  
let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For our country, our leaders, and all those in public service  
*(names may be added)*  
for this community, and for every neighbourhood and nation,  
and for all who offer themselves in service for the common good,  
let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For the whole of God's creation in its beauty and bounty,  
for the wellbeing of every creature and their habitats,  
for a willingness to change our ways to protect places and people at risk,  
and for generations yet unborn that they too may thrive,



let us pray to the Lord.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

For the safety of those who must travel by land, sea, and air,  
for those who long to travel but cannot,  
and for all those who are separated from those they love,  
let us pray to the Lord.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

For the sick, the suffering, and the isolated,  
for victims of violence, refugees and captives,  
and for our protection against all affliction, danger, and distress,  
let us pray to the Lord.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

To you, Holy God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
belongs all glory, honour, and worship,  
now and forever, and to the ages of ages.  
Hear us now as we pray in the words that Jesus taught us:  
**The Lord's Prayer**

\*Hymn: #298 "Glory be to God the Father"

### **God sends us to serve and witness with God's blessing**

Benediction:

Trinity celebrates the overflowing love within God's very nature, a dance of unity and diversity in the heart of God.

Join the dance and let God's love flow through you each day.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and communion in the Holy Spirit fill you with joy and lead you onward, now and evermore.

Congregational Amen