

# twelvebaskets



## TRINITY SUNDAY A

A complete Sunday service ready to use  
for worship and inspire ideas in your church

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**Trinity Sunday - Year A**  
4th June 2023



## **Order of Service**

Call to worship

**Hymn:**

**21 STF – Born in song! OR**

**85 STF – Praise the Lord who reigns above**

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

**Hymn:**

**105 STF – God said world and the world span round OR**

**59 STF – Lord, the light of your love is shining**

Readings: Genesis 1:1-2:4a; 2 Corinthians 13:11-13; Matthew 28:16-20

**Hymn:**

**82 STF – O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder OR**

**707 STF – Make me a channel of your peace**

Reflections on the readings

**Hymn:**

**585 STF – God, whose love is all around us OR**

**477 STF – Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart**

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

**Hymn:**

**313 STF – Thine be the glory OR**

**663 STF – I, the Lord of sea and sky**

Blessing

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The Vine Services are compiled and produced by twelvebaskets.

Many more resources and inspiration for this week's lectionary, leading worship and other church use are available on [www.theworshipcloud.com](http://www.theworshipcloud.com).

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## Call to worship

God is relationship, and you are invited in this day.

God is connection, and the Spirit is reaching out for your hand this day.

God is love, and the heartbeat of the divine is for each and every one of us, this day, and always.

Come, by your Spirit, Lord God.

Amen.<sup>1</sup>

## Hymn:

21 STF – Born in song! OR

85 STF – Praise the Lord who reigns above

## Opening Prayers

Holy and Triune Creator God, as we worship you today our hearts are filled with awe.

As we worship, we see your glory in the night sky, the moon and stars shining on, century after century, we see your glory in the land around our feet, beauty and abundance to sustain life, we see your glory in all people, humankind made in your image.

Today, and every day, we worship you.

Lord Jesus Christ our Redeemer, as we worship you today our hearts are filled with praise: you are the timeless Word of God, through whom all things were created, you are the incarnate Word of God, demonstrating life in all its fulness, you are the eternal Word of God, present with us now and to the end of the age.

Today, and every day, we worship you.

Holy Spirit, Energy of God, as we worship you today our hearts are filled with wonder: we feel you sweeping across the earth now, as you swept over the waters at creation; we feel you stirring your church now, as you first stirred the church at Pentecost; we feel you connecting your worldwide family now, as we are joined with one another.

Today, and every day, we worship you.

Gracious God, One-in-Three and Three-in-One, accept our worship, our praise and our wonder.

Reveal again to us your great glory through your Living Word, as we are transformed by your tireless Spirit.

Today, and every day, we worship you.

Amen.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Call to worship written by Tim Baker

<sup>2</sup> Opening prayers written by Jill Baker

## We say together the Lord's Prayer

### All Age Talk

Does anybody know what special Sunday today is?

It's Trinity Sunday – an often overlooked part of our church calendar, because sometimes it is hard to know where to begin and end with the Trinity. On this Sunday, we put aside a day to focus on our understanding of the nature of God as three-in-one.

Can anyone name the three elements of the Trinity?

*[See how many different answers you can get – perhaps: Father, Son, Spirit or Creator, Christ, Spirit or Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ and Holy Ghost – or different combinations of these!]*

As we've heard there are different names, lots of words, trying to describe this mystery called the Trinity of God. Over the years, there have been lots of books written about the Trinity too. But essentially, we are just trying to find a way of describing an amazing, awesome God who loves us very much but who we still can't really understand. Whichever words you prefer, we look at it as three different parts of the same person:

*[You might like to get three different voices to read the next three paragraphs].*

- 1) The Creator: part of God's nature is as creator. At the beginning of the Bible we have a story that is all about helping us to see God's hand on all of creation. We think of this part of God as powerful, strong, large and able to make something out of nothing. Perhaps when you look at a dramatic landscape, or feel the power of the waves, the wind or the heat from the sun you encounter something of this aspect of God. When some people talk about God, they are only thinking about the Creator aspect of God's person and that means they picture God as distant, difficult to relate to, or uninterested in human beings. But nothing could be further from the truth, as the second person of God shows us.
- 2) The Christ: the Christian church is founded on the stories, teaching and life of the man called Jesus Christ, who lived in Palestine two thousand years ago. There is historical evidence that there was such a man, and that he was a Jewish teacher who attracted quite a few crowds during his time on earth. However, Christian tradition also teaches that this man was also somehow fully divine – that he was both God and human. We wrestle with this mystery and try to make sense of it, and however you try to understand it, what Jesus Christ shows us is that God is not distant or absent, God is close. The Jesus stories tell us that God comes alongside us in our pain, our loneliness, the things we worry about, the relationships we have. God is love, and God shows us how to love by coming as a vulnerable, normal, human baby and living alongside us. Christ is God-made-human.
- 3) And finally, the Holy Spirit. Perhaps it is because of the mysterious nature of the Spirit that we avoid Trinity Sunday sometimes – because it means we will have to talk about the Holy Spirit at some point! Like all of the aspects of God, we

can't really explain her (or him – sometimes, because God and Christ are both regularly given male pronouns, people prefer to see the Spirit as the feminine aspect of God's character). The Spirit is the part of God that is still at work in the world, moving amongst us – promoting, prodding, flooding in and overwhelming us. The Spirit is all amongst and around us: as Rob Bell puts it, 'everything is spiritual'. Therefore, we are simply invited to notice – to become aware, to recognise, to connect with the spiritual. We do this when we see beauty in God's creation, when we appreciate those close to us, when we hear bird song or a favourite piece of music, when we enjoy good food, when we laugh together. The Spirit is close, can you sense her?

Any yet – the greatest mystery of all, the three are all together, in one divine person – God. I know it is difficult for us to wrap our heads around, but it is also one of the great gifts of the Christian faith to the world. We can be in close relationships with those we love, as God is in relationship. We can be together, as God is together. This Trinity Sunday, let's remember – we are better together!

Amen.<sup>3</sup>

**Hymn:**

105 STF – God said world and the world span round OR

59 STF – Lord, the light of your love is shining

**Readings:** Genesis 1:1-2:4a; 2 Corinthians 13:11-13; Matthew 28:16-20

**Hymn:**

82 STF – O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder OR

707 STF – Make me a channel of your peace

**Reflections on the readings**

How are you with new beginnings, new starts, saying 'hello'?  
How about with endings, 'goodbyes' and departures?

Editor of the Vine, Tim Baker, offers some brief reflections on his own life, and how that might speak into the readings for today.

I had the incredible privilege of getting to grow up in the south Caribbean, as part of a family of Methodist mission partners. We lived for 4 years in St Vincent, and then another 4 in Grenada, two beautiful islands with rich culture, incredible weather, and lots of reasons for people to 'come and stay' for a while. So, whilst we were 4,000 miles away from the next nearest family member, looking back now it feels a lot like life was littered with guests and visitors and 'hellos'.

There was always a palpable sense of excitement in the house when we knew visitors

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<sup>3</sup> All Age Talk written by Tim Baker

were coming, especially if they had children of a similar age and/or imaginative capacity as my brother and me. Endless games of sport, pretending to be our favourite fantasy characters and – towards the end – Nintendo Gameboys (other handheld gaming devices are available, but I'm not sure they were then!) beckoned. I loved the hellos.

And yet (and this isn't meant as an insult to any of our visitors over that time), I don't think we – as a family unit – particularly hated the 'goodbyes' either. We were a long way from 'home', but we'd built a life, found a community, been welcomed, and it was important to have our own rhythms too. The hellos were magical, but the goodbyes weren't totally hateful...especially if they were followed by a 'see you soon'.

We see these same rhythms of 'hello' and 'goodbye' in today's lectionary readings. Genesis 1 – the ultimate 'hello' story. Hello to the whole of creation. Matthew 28 – the 'goodbye' at the end of Jesus' earthly ministry. 2 Corinthians 13 – Paul signing off at the end of his two longest (surviving) missives to his contemporary church in Corinth.

The rhythm of visitation, of change, of relationship. As my mum's book (or one of them!) about the time we spent in the Caribbean is called: 'Coming and Going'. There is a constant 'coming and going' in relationship. Times when we must be apart, and times when we can be together. Times when it suits and helps us to be apart, and times when we must find a way to be together.

The Trinity is an invitation into seeing God this way too. Yes, of course, God is unchanging and secure, and that is one of the great attractions of a life of faith: in a world where everything feels like shifting sand, we have this faith in an immovable, eternal, unchanging God who loves us the same yesterday, today and forever. But, as R S Thomas describes the divine: God is a 'fast God...always leaving as we arrive'. There is a constant flow with God, an energy of 'hello and goodbye', of inviting us 'further in and further up' (as Aslan puts it in CS Lewis' *The Last Battle*). That's because the gift of Trinity Sunday is to be reminder that God IS relationship. God is in relationship with Godself, with the other-bits-of-God's-character, with us, with all creation, with all time and space.

And, as Rublev's famous painting of the Trinity (sitting at a table, with a fourth seat just where we, the viewers of the painting must be) so graciously depicts: we are invited into that relationship. That's the miracle of the Trinity – not some complex doctrine we can't get our head around, but a letter through the post that says: 'Hello, it's God. I'm inviting you to come and join us...'

As is typical of both Jesus and Paul, their 'goodbyes' are really an invitation into future 'hellos' – more of a 'see you soon'. As the disciples let go of Jesus, they are promised the 'advocate', the Holy Spirit – the dove, the wild goose, the inspirer and nudger part of God, who travels with us and coos or quacks her way into our lives. And they are challenged with the invitation of the great commission – to go and be a part of a bigger story, a story full of 'hellos' and 'goodbyes'. The story of your own journey of faith, of the existence of the church community you are in today, of you and I being here at all, begins with Jesus' goodbye in Matthew 28, and has been handed down, through countless 'hellos' and 'goodbyes', until we get to today, in June 2023. Paul picked up the story for a while, but after his 'goodbye' to Corinth, he eventually too had to say goodbye to all the disciples and churches he'd helped emerge. Across the last two

millennia there have been thousands of people we don't know, who stepped into the relationship of faith, said hello and then - at some point - goodbye. And towards the end, a few people we could probably both name - who said hello to us. And maybe goodbye too. And now, here you are. And I'm here too. Hello.

I wonder what you need to say 'hello' to today.

What you need to say goodbye to.

How is God moving and shaping your relationship with God's Triune self?

As you grapple with these discussion questions together, you might like to think about that. If you need a minute, to separate yourself off from the conversation, then please do take it. Go for a walk, get some fresh air, find a quiet corner, and use this time to enrich your relationship with the living, changing God.

*[This is your opportunity to have a conversation about the nature of the Trinity, together as a church congregation. It is one of the great mysteries of our faith, and has been pondered about by great academics for centuries, but also a challenge and an invitation for us to reflect on what it means to believe in a God who is three-in-one.]*

On this Trinity Sunday, we are reminded of one of the distinctive, but inexplicable, parts of the Christian faith – the Trinity. We understand our God as having three distinct elements, and yet remaining one God. We worship the Father or Creator, Jesus the Christ and the Holy Spirit, but in doing so we don't worship three different people, but one interconnected God of all things.

Just for a moment, I invite you to turn to the person sitting next to you, or make little groups of three or four, and share with each other what the Trinity means to you – do you think about this three-in-oneness much, is there a particular part of the Trinity you struggle with, have you done any reading or heard any helpful sermons about what it means to believe in a Triune God? I'll give you a few minutes to do that...

*[Pause for around 3 or 4 minutes to allow conversation, then invite people to share some of what they have reflected on – this might mean half a dozen people coming to the front to share at the microphone, or people just shouting out from where they are – depending on the size of your church and how comfortable people are with joining in a conversation].*

*[As the conversation is drawing to a close, or once 8 – 10 minutes has passed]*

The Trinity has lots to teach us, and hopefully our conversation this morning leaves you with plenty to think about, reflect on, and perhaps an invitation to go away and find out more or ask more questions after service. As we journey along our walk with God, we come to see that there is always more to learn, more to know, more to feel, more to experience. The interplay of the three persons of God is inviting us into that holy dance again today.<sup>4</sup>

### **Hymn:**

585 STF – God, whose love is all around us OR

477 STF – Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart

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<sup>4</sup> Reflection written by Tim Baker

## **Prayers of intercession**

We offer our prayers for others to the God who is Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, already present in every place, already bringing good out of every evil, already holding in love every person:

We hold in our prayers those who feel surrounded by chaos at this time...  
Lord, give calm. **Lord, give calm.**

We hold in our prayers those who walk in the valley of the shadow of death...  
Lord, give light. **Lord, give light.**

We hold in our prayers those who are oppressed by violence and war...  
Lord, give peace. **Lord, give peace.**

We hold in our prayers those who seek to lead our communities, our nations and our world...  
Lord, give wisdom. **Lord, give wisdom.**

We hold in our prayers those who find it hard to believe, who struggle with doubt...  
Lord, give courage. **Lord, give courage.**

We hold in our prayers those with whom we try to share the Good News of your love...  
Lord, give grace. **Lord, give grace.**

We rejoice in your promise to be with us always, to the end of the age, as we commend all those for whom we pray into the care of our Three-in-One God.

Amen.<sup>5</sup>

## **We will now take up the offering.**

God of Trinity, you are a God of relationships, and you call us into relationship again today – relationship to each other, to the earth and to people and places we have never met or visited.

May we use our gifts, and these gifts of money, to build better relationships and connections,

In Jesus' name,

Amen.<sup>6</sup>

## **Hymn:**

313 STF – Thine be the glory OR

663 STF – I, the Lord of sea and sky

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<sup>5</sup> Prayers of intercession written by Jill Baker

<sup>6</sup> Additional prayers by Tim Baker



## **Blessing**

Christ before, and Christ beside,  
God all around me, and the Spirit at work in and through me,  
May each of us take the relationship that is God with us, into the relationships and  
situations we will find ourselves in this week.  
Show me how to love with your divine love, O God.

Amen.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Additional prayers by Tim Baker