

Rev Tim Perkins  
May 26<sup>th</sup> 2021

***“Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now, if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”***

Dear Friends,

Believe it or not, even before I read the passage above, which is one of our lectionary readings for this Sunday (Trinity Sunday) I was wondering what I might write about this week. I was internally thinking that I needed some way to make sense of the Doctrine of the Trinity for our daily lives and contexts – not an easy task! When I said to Lyndsey I was struggling to think of what to focus on she half-jokingly said, “Why don’t you write about the Eurovision Song Contest?!” Call it coincidence if you like but there are not many set lectionary readings which refer to a winner of the Eurovision Song Contest! In fact, I think this may just be the only one!

So, other than the supergroup “Abba”, what can Eurovision possibly have to say to us about the Holy Trinity? I have a couple of thoughts. Despite the occasional political or geographical bias to the voting at the song contest, Eurovision is a celebration of diversity and unity being held together in one dynamic community. Its aim from the outset was to use music to build understanding between different people groups and countries and to celebrate all that we have in common rather than those things which seek to pull us apart.

“A celebration of diversity and unity being held together in one dynamic community.” I am not sure I have ever come across a better definition of the Trinity, not even in the historic creeds of the Church! It is a description which reminds me of the way in which W M Paul Young creates a picture of the three persons of the Trinity relating together in his novel, “The Shack” – well worth a read if you have not yet come across it. The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, three distinct personalities and yet one undivided personality constantly working to create, redeem and sustain all things, working in diverse ways but with a common purpose.

You cannot watch Eurovision without being touched by the sheer joy, vibrancy and life flowing through the participants and for the first time in what seems an age – the audience! To borrow language from Star Wars, there is something of a symbiotic relationship between the performers and the audience, not just at Eurovision but at any musical event where one feeds off the energy of the other and somehow creates more energy and life all around (except of course in the tiny little corner occupied by the entrant from the United Kingdom!)

While a limited image, Eurovision does give us a pretty good insight into the life, dynamism and joy of the Trinity which we are invited to participate in. In fact, if I were to push Paul’s analogy of children and heirs as opposed to slaves, we might get a sense of the same dynamic relationship if we were to imagine ourselves as performers on the Eurovision stage rather than merely watching it second hand via our TV screens.

The second thing I might say about Eurovision stems from a comment I heard in a documentary on Eurovision that I caught a bit of on Friday night. It came from a music producer and TV executive who has long been involved in the song contest, who said something along the lines of: "If you want to win Eurovision you don't set out to write a song in order to win Eurovision. A set formula rarely works. You have to set out to write a song that means something to you and then it will connect with others."

Eurovision has often been mocked for many of the songs and performances which have been of a particular style. One might suggest that there are many performances where the costumes, the lyrics and the music are pretty much identical. But actually, rarely do those songs win. The ones that win are the ones that stand out from the crowd, the ones which capture the imagination of the public vote rather than the votes of the so called professional juries, which tend to look for a particular type of song. One might even say there is usually a sense of freedom rather than prescription about those songs and performances which do well. And that reminds me of what Paul has to say about the contrast between the freedom brought by the Spirit of life which adopts us as children of God and the slavery of the law and those who are bound by the human will or flesh – as he puts it.

Life, joy, relationship, community, unity, diversity – these are just some of the many gifts of the Spirit that God longs to bring to our experience of God and longs for us to share with the world. Perhaps the title of one of Richard Rohr's books expresses the nature of the Trinity and our inclusion into the life of God best of all – it is "The Divine Dance!"

I wonder, how might we as Christians share something of the joy and freedom of life in Christ with the world in which we live, when so often, somewhat ironically, all it has seen from religion is restrictions and division?

Every blessing,

Rev Tim

### **Cliff College – Festival at Home**

Each year Cliff College holds a celebration weekend over the late May Bank Holiday. This year, as last, the Festival has had to go online. The effect of this has been to make it available to a much wider audience than usual. The Theme for this year is "Around the Camp Fire". The full programme for the Festival starts at 7pm on Saturday evening and runs throughout the Bank Holiday weekend until Monday night. The programme can be downloaded here: [FAHprogramme-2021-1.pdf \(cliffcollege.ac.uk\)](https://www.cliffcollege.ac.uk/FAHprogramme-2021-1.pdf)

The weekend includes lots of different activities for all ages, including a children's workshop with the storyteller Bob Hartman from 1.30pm on the Sunday. This event and some others require sign-up in advance so be sure to check out the programme and see what you want to engage with. The best place to watch and join in is via Cliff's Youtube channel: [Festival at Home - YouTube](#)

This year Burley are partnering with Cliff, along with many other churches around the country, to enable two events to be streamed live on their Youtube Channel and Facebook page. These will be a Bible Study led by the Principal Rev Ashley Cooper from 10.30 – 11.15am on Sunday and an evening celebration from 7.00 – 8.15pm where the preacher will be Dot Tyler from TearFund. To join in with these events please go to:

[Burley Methodist Church Online - YouTube](#) or [Burley in Wharfedale Methodist Church | Facebook](#)

### **Circuit Website**

The Circuit website is a great place to look for resources to help you worship and for news and events from around the circuit. The address for the website is: [www.wandamethodists.org.uk](http://www.wandamethodists.org.uk)

**“Climate Change Emergency: Resources for a Green Church Conference.”**

This will take place via zoom on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> June from 9.30am – 3.00pm. As we approach the Global Climate Summit to be held in Glasgow in the autumn, this conference is a great opportunity for us to engage in some key issues for how we as Christians respond to our climate crisis. To register for the conference please contact Sue Cutting at [sue.cutting1209@gmail.com](mailto:sue.cutting1209@gmail.com)

We are promised: “Inspiring keynote speakers to stimulate your imagination, develop your understanding of the Bible and reinvigorate your worship life. Engaging workshops with pioneers who are already bringing together faith and action for a better world. Topics covered include:

- Biblical Theology for a Green Church
- Climate change as an existential crisis
- Liturgy & Prayer for a Green Church
- COP26: what are we doing to campaign?
- Craftivism for COP26
- The Church as a Prophetic Community
- Green Church and Evangelism
- The God Plot – The city allotment and Green Church