

Sources and Thanks

Call to Worship from the Church of England's *New Patterns of Worship*.
Affirmation of Faith from the Reformed Church of France (translated by Andy Braunston)
Offertory introduction and prayer written by Andy Braunston.
All other liturgical material from Neil Thorogood.

Thanks to the choir of Barrhead URC, Myra Rose, Kathleen Hayes and Carol Tubbs for spoken parts of the service.

Organ Pieces Opening: *Ein Feste Burg* ("A mighty fortress") by Max Reger (organ of Basilica Santo Spirito, Florence, Italy – 2016), Closing: *Wir Glauben all' an Einen Gott* ("We all believe in one God") by Johann Sebastian Bach (organ of St Thomas-on-The Bourne, Farnham – 2001). Both played by Brian Cotterill. <http://briancotterill.webs.com>

Music

I Bind Unto Myself This Day – Down Cathedral Choir recorded for Songs of Praise

Today I Awake by John Bell © Wild Goose Resource Worship Group, The Iona Community sung by the Cathedral Singers.

Many and Great, a traditional Native American chant, sung by the Wild Goose Worship Resource Group of the Iona Community.

Thou Whose Almighty Word sung by the Scottish Festival Singers Love Divine, All Loves Excelling, recorded for *Songs of Praise*.

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United Reformed Church Daily Devotions Sunday Service for Trinity Sunday Service, 7th June 2020



The Rev'd Neil Thorogood

Introduction

Introit *I Bind Unto Myself This Day*
St Patrick

I bind unto myself today the strong name of the Trinity;
by invocation of the same, the Three in One, and One in Three.

2 I bind this day to me for ever, by power of faith, Christ's incarnation,
his baptism in the Jordan river, his death on cross for my salvation.
His bursting from the spiced tomb, his riding up the heavenly way,
his coming at the day of doom, I bind unto myself today. Amen

Call To Worship

We meet in the name of God, the Holy Trinity of Love

who knows our needs, hears our cries, feels our pain, and heals our wounds.

God is our light and our salvation. In God's name we light this candle and are reminded of Jesus, the Light of the World, God's own Voice who came to live with us.

May our hearts be open to you, O God, now and always. Amen

Hymn: *Today I Awake*
John Bell

Today I awake
and God is before me.
At night, as I dreamt,
God summoned the day;
for God never sleeps
but patterns the morning
with slithers of gold
or glory in grey.

2: Today I arise
and Christ is beside me.
He walked through the dark
to scatter new light.
Yes, Christ is alive,
and beckons His people
to hope and to heal,
resist and invite.

3: Today I affirm
the Spirit within me
at worship and work,
in struggle and rest.
The Spirit inspires
all life which is changing
from fearing to faith,
from broken to blest.

4: Today I enjoy
the Trinity round me,
above and beneath,
before and behind;
the Maker, the Son,
the Spirit together
they called me to life
and call me their friend.

Hymn: *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*
Charles Wesley 1747

Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven to earth come down:
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown:
Jesu, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter every trembling heart.

2: Come, Almighty to deliver,
let us all thy life receive;
suddenly return, and never,
nevermore thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray & praise thee without ceasing
glory in thy perfect love.

3: Finish, then, thy new creation; pure and spotless let us be:
let us see thy great salvation perfectly restored in thee;
changed from glory into glory, 'til in heaven we take our place,
'til we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise.

Blessing

Father and Mother to us,
Son and Saviour to us,
Spirit and Encourager to us;
bless us this day and in the days to come,
with bright hopes and deep joy,
with willing hearts and open minds,
to glimpse you at work,
and to follow where you take us.
May we know you and rejoice. Amen.

Prayer of Approach, Confession and Assurance of Forgiveness

Almighty and eternal God, from the depths of mystery you reveal yourself through the wonders of your creation. As the generations have sung, we too look to the stars and listen to the ocean's roar, we too relish the greening of creation and the intricacy of the butterfly's wing. We too wonder at the works you have made and the life you have given. Creating God, we worship you. We give you thanks.

As the generations have sung, we too look to Jesus and discover you walking amongst us, your word alive to heal and teach, to challenge and to bless. We too wonder at his sacrifice for us upon the Cross and his rising from the tomb. Risen and ascended Lord, we worship you. We give you thanks.

As the generations have sung, we too come in confession, owning and admitting all within us that draws us away from you and from your purposes. You long for creation's restoration and humanity's safety where we destroy and demean. You teach us ways to be and we, so often, prefer our own ways and ignore the havoc that we shape. Forgive us.

As the generations have sung, we too discover the power of your Holy Spirit's presence even as we falter. You have redeemed and healed us through the love of Jesus Christ. You assure us that we are forgiven and made new. In the power of your Spirit we find our hope and rest and restoration. To you be the thanks and the praise, for ever and ever. Amen.

Prayer of Illumination

Open your holy Word to us, God of comfort and challenge. Let it be a word of life and hope, a word that inspires us and guides us, a word that dances in our hearts and lifts our minds.

Bless us with your Spirit, that what we read now from scripture might become food for our souls and rations for our pilgrimage. Bless us with new courage and renewed hope, that as we read our Bibles, we might know again that Jesus listens with us and all creation is hushed to hear its maker's word. Amen.

Readings

Psalm 8: 1-9

O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens.
Out of the mouths of babes and infants
you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,
to silence 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 God,
and crowned them with glory and honour.
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 Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

In silence, we remember them:

[silence is kept for personal prayer]

Create in us a renewal of hope, a deepening of trust, a strengthening of faith as we seek to follow you, our Sovereign, Saviour and Sustainer, to whom be glory now and for ever. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Offertory

Giving is part of our faith - as much as prayer, reading the Bible, singing hymns or the various other things we do to show our Christianity. In these days of lockdown we can't get along to church to give in the collection - some of us have changed to standing orders, some have sent a cheque or made a direct bank transfer to church and other charities we support. Some of us are storing our envelopes until they can be safely collected. However, we're doing it, we're still giving. Let us pray.

You, O God, give us everything that is good, and out of gratitude we give: we give of our time, our love, our presence, we give of our talents, our tears and our treasure, bless our gifts that, through them, You may change our world. Amen.

Hear us as we bring to you the longings and the needs of humanity.

We pray for individuals, communities and nations still living amidst coronavirus and its aftermath.

We remember those caring for the sick and dying, those seeking cures, those filling shelves and clearing rubbish.

We remember those who have lost loved ones and those who are afraid.

We pray for those making hard choices and those whose livelihoods have vanished.

Create in us a deeper sense of solidarity and community, that we might emerge into a future that is transformed for the better rather than more of the same.

Hear us as we pray for the Church across the world and the congregations that are dear to us.

We remember all who have guided us in faith and all whose faith might be touched by our goodness.

We pray for sisters and brothers in Christ who are struggling, for those whose resources are at an end, for those whose gatherings are fearful. We pray for the familiar churches of our own journeys and the people we treasure as friends in the family of Christ.

Create in us a greater thankfulness for the Church and all of its traditions, and a greater longing to share good news across the world and where we are.

Hear us as we pray for those people, places and circumstances most upon our hearts today.

St Matthew 28: 16-20

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

Pause for Reflection – *Many and Great* – The Dakota Hymn

Many and great,
O God, are your works,
Maker of earth and sky;
Your hands have set
the heavens with stars;
Your fingers spread
the mountains and plains.
Your merely spoke
and waters were formed;
deep seas obey Your voice.

2: Grant us communion
with You our God,
though you transcend the stars;
Come close to us
and stay by our side;
with You are found
the true gifts that last.
Bless us with life
that never shall end,
eternal life with You.

Sermon

Let us pray:

God of mystery and wonder, giver of life and giver of the Word, open our hearts and minds to receive your word to us today, in the name of Jesus Christ and through the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Over these past weeks in which the world has locked so much of itself away from an invisible threat, we have heard much about science and

scientists. Thank God for those who have the skill, experience and intuition to help us grope towards a time when COVID-19 will be but one more infection added to the list of those that we have learnt to control and even eradicate, just as, eventually, smallpox was declared eradicated in 1980.

With all our might, and with the depth of our longing, we surely pray for something equally magnificent to be achieved by those working so hard across the world, and down our streets, to help us and heal us and protect us from this new infection. And we fervently pray that, this time, human skill and science will make haste to help us.

How right it is that we listen so attentively to what the science says, even as we try to understand where the scientist disagree and do not have answers. Layered onto that come all the twists and turns of our politics and economics, our personal fears and our shared uncertainties. We live in the risky turbulence of history that has not yet been written.

But we need to set another story alongside the familiar one of science. Humanity has encountered wider wisdom. Put it a better way: greater wisdom has encountered us.

The Bible makes a claim upon all our stories. It weaves a thread of faithfulness through the tapestry of human history. It gifts us with perspectives through which we can better see the truth.

The Church has cherished the Bible in many ways. One of them is through letting the biblical story play out across the unfolding seasons of the Christian year. Today, we reach one of the great culmination Sundays of that story. For today is Trinity Sunday. Today, we are urged to dwell deeply upon the very nature of God. We do so in the company of a Psalm and with the concluding words in Matthew's gospel.

so that all would be happy in life.

Despite the limitations of our reason and the revolts of our hearts, we believe in God.

We believe in Jesus Christ.

Despite the centuries which separate us from the time when he came to earth, we believe in His word.

Despite our incomprehension and our doubt, we believe in His resurrection.

Despite his weakness and poverty, we believe in His reign.

We believe in the Holy Spirit.

Despite appearances we believe He guides the Church;

despite death we believe in eternal life;

despite ignorance and disbelief,

we believe that the Kingdom of God is promised to all. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

In your intimate care, living God, hear our prayers for your creation.

Hear us as we bring to you the wounds and hurts of your world.

We pray for ecosystems in peril and habitats facing destruction, for species driven to extinction and the loss of nature that we have not even yet discovered.

We pray for those who research and shape policy, for all with power as law-makers and as consumers.

Create in us a deeper sense of your creation's wonders, and our calling to protect and nurture them all that all might flourish.

And this knowledge of God is no neat theological conjuring trick. It is the truth that sets us free to understand who we are and what it is for us, now, in our ways, to go into all the world and share good news. For now we may be doing that in ways more constrained than ever. The time will come when we can do it afresh, having been tried and tested and taught by this time of crisis and loss. But we will do it. And God will be with us, creating, saving, empowering.

It is Trinity Sunday. So to God be the glory, for ever. Amen.

Hymn: *Thou Whose Almighty Word*
John Marriott, 1813

Thou, whose almighty Word
chaos and darkness heard,
and took their flight;
hear us, we humbly pray,
and, where the Gospel day
sheds not its glorious ray,
let there be light!

2: Thou, who didst come to bring
on Thy redeeming wing
healing and sight,
health to the sick in mind,
sight to the inly blind,
O now, to humankind,
let there be light!

3: Spirit of truth and love,
life giving, holy Dove,
speed forth Thy flight;
move on the water's face
bearing the lamp of grace,
and, in earth's darkest place,
let there be light!

4: Blessèd and holy Three,
glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, Love, Might!
Boundless as ocean's tide,
rolling in fullest pride,
through the world far and wide,
let there be light!

Affirmation of Faith

We believe in God.

Despite His silence and His secrets we believe that He lives.

Despite evil and suffering we believe that He made the world

Why even try to have such a special moment in the Church's year? Surely God is so utterly beyond us, so hidden in mystery, so outside our feeble theories and the capacity of our language that there is too little we can say and too little we can know? Isn't it presumptuous and foolish to contemplate such things? And besides, in the face of global pandemic, personal tragedies and locked-down torments, redundancies and economic collapse, fear and isolation, loneliness and mourning, who cares about the nature of God?

Why might it matter what we know about God and how we say something about what we know? I suggest it matters because, alongside all of the world's science, all of the world's political and economic theories, all of the world's ideologies and movements, all of the world's religions, all of the world's hopes and all of the world's fears, the Church has something to say, something to offer, something to share and something to demonstrate in the daily acts of every Christian. We have something to share not because of our greatness but because of God's great goodness and mercy. We dare to say and believe that we know something amazing and wonderful about God because of what God has revealed to us.

We find it ringing in the ancient praises of the Psalms, and Psalm 8 especially. We are rooted in this tradition as are the Jews to this day. The psalmist looks around, takes in the sweeping grandeur of creation, and believes that this is not the random outworking of unknown forces but the beautiful work of a creator who delights in creating:

"O Lord, our Sovereign, How majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens."

Here is God as both intimately connected to creation and yet utterly unlimited by anything in creation. The Hebrew we translate as "Lord" and "Sovereign" speak of God's greatness, reign and rule. God is our leader beyond all leaders. God is the one to whom all loyalty is owed, all

allegiance, all devotion. Yet God is the one whose creative touch is seen around us as the stars circle and the Earth breathes.

Boldly, with a beauty that lingers and a poignancy that haunts, the psalmist dares to suggest this God to be the one who shapes humanity, draws close to us, and gifts us with immense power and responsibility:

“...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 God, and crowned them with glory and honour. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet...”

Psalm 8's word is that God revels in relationships; God chooses to be involved, to participate. God is not aloof, not some divine watch-maker setting creation's intricate machinery of life ticking and then sitting back to play no further part; a creator divorced from creation. God chooses to give us a vocation and then join us as we live our vocation. So God also takes the most staggering risks with you and with me and with everyone ever born.

We can, and do, reject our vocation. Part of what our current crisis reveals is both the scope of human ingenuity and the scale of human mistake. We are reminded constantly that the virus is bringing some of its greatest harm to those left most vulnerable by the choices and forces we have unleashed across generations and around the globe. Many are highlighting things they had not noticed before: a view of distant mountains across the city when the lack of traffic clears the smog from the air; birdsong which before was drowned out by our noise. When we get back to whatever our new “normal” will be, it is urgent that Christians are loud in proclaiming and demonstrating that God wants us to steward creation, and care for all humanity, far, far better than we ever did before COVID-19. We now appreciate a host of servants in healthcare, care homes, in supermarkets, in fields, in our neighbourhoods, in refugee camps with renewed intensity. We must not

let that learning go. It must linger across the generations as driving force for justice and renewal of our common life.

Trinity Sunday lets us acknowledge these gifts of God as creator, sustainer and companion through Psalm 8. But, of course, there is even more that Christians can bring thanks to a text like Matthew 28.

We are in resurrection territory. Matthew concludes the gospel with a final encounter between the risen Christ and his friends. They are back in Galilee. And we hear more of the very nature of God in the great commission that Jesus gives:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

To this day some of our widest ecumenical agreement is that, for a baptism to be recognised across the traditions of the Church, it must involve water and a Trinitarian blessing. What Jesus says here is what makes the Church and welcomes everyone in to the Church as the children of God.

This is one of the very few notes in the Bible that hints at the reality of God as one in three and three in one. Psalm 8 alerts us to the profound readiness of God as creator to enter in to relationships with creation and with us. Now, on the lips of Jesus, we hear that relationship between the three is of the very essence of God. God is the creator. But God is also the Son who has been born as one of us, has lived and taught and shown the love of God and gone to the cross to die for sin and risen to defeat sin and death for ever. And God is also the Spirit alive and active and at work in us and through us and in creation and through creation tirelessly building and blessing and shaping the will of God into tangible things.