

Ormond Uniting Church



Rublev's Icon of the TRINITY

Trinity Sunday

June 15, 2025

Minister: Rev Ron Townsend
Chair of Council: Dr Mardie Townsend
Music: Peter Hurley

CALL TO WORSHIP:

God, who created the fields of Eden,
takes delight in all things, including us!
**God of glory, God of grace,
your name is exalted in all the earth!**
Christ, who walked the streets of our world,
gives hope to all people, including us!
**God of glory, God of grace,
your Son is Savior of all creation!**
God's Spirit, who stays in our hearts,
bears truth and peace to us!
**God of glory, God of grace,
your love surrounds our every moment.**

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HYMN TIS 160: 'Father all loving...' *Patrick Appleford (1925-2018)*

PRAYERS OF ADORATION/CONFESSION/FORGIVENESS:

ADORATION

Let us glorify and adore the one true God:
Let us pray
Glory to you
Father, Son and Holy Spirit
Loving God in three persons.
We gladly proclaim your majesty and power,
Your greatness and sovereignty,
Always, now and forever,
And to the end of the ages.

SILENT PRAYER

CONFESSION

Lord,
Forgive our foolishness in rejecting all the ways in which you have reached out to us and touched our lives.
Forgive us for rejecting all the good gifts of creation you have made available to us.
Forgive us for rejecting the 'foolishness' of the gospel in favour of our own 'wisdom.'
Forgive us for rejecting your presence in our midst through the Holy Spirit.
Forgive us God of Creation and re-creation,
forgive us God, who redeems and gives new life,
forgive us God, who stirs our hearts, minds, and souls with the fire of your Spirit.
In the name of the Trinity; Father, Son and Holy Spirit
Amen

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

My friends, you have opened your hearts to God in confession;
may they remain open
to receive God's forgiveness and peace,
as I declare to you

that you are released from all sins,
in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit,
to whom be glory for ever and ever.

Your sins are forgiven

Thanks be to God

THE PEACE:

The peace of the Lord be with you.

And also with you!

We share the Peace

READINGS:

PROVERBS 8:1-4, 22-31

Does not wisdom call,
and does not understanding raise her voice?

² On the heights, beside the way,
at the crossroads she takes her stand;

³ beside the gates in front of the town,
at the entrance of the portals she cries out:

⁴ 'To you, O people, I call,
and my cry is to all that live.

²² The Lord created me at the beginning of his work,^b
the first of his acts of long ago.

²³ Ages ago I was set up,
at the first, before the beginning of the earth.

²⁴ When there were no depths I was brought forth,
when there were no springs abounding with water.

²⁵ Before the mountains had been shaped,
before the hills, I was brought forth—

²⁶ when he had not yet made earth and fields,^c
or the world's first bits of soil.

²⁷ When he established the heavens, I was there,
when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,

²⁸ when he made firm the skies above,
when he established the fountains of the deep,

²⁹ when he assigned to the sea its limit,
so that the waters might not transgress his command,
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,

³⁰ then I was beside him, like a master worker;^d
and I was daily his^e delight,

rejoicing before him always,

³¹ rejoicing in his inhabited world
and delighting in the human race.

ROMANS 5:1-5

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. ³And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

JOHN 16:12-15

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³When 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. ¹⁴He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

HYMN TIS 413: 'Holy Spirit Come Confirm us..'

William Brian Foley 1919-

SERMON: The problem of three in one!

We have a problem! A seemingly impossible problem!
It's called the Trinity!

So, what happens when we humans have an impossible problem to solve?

I recall one such apparently impossible problem that urgently needed to be solved. In April 1970 as the Apollo 13 mission was heading home from the moon their air filtration system collapsed, and astronaut Jack Swigert dryly radioed NASA HQ, stating: 'Houston, we have a problem!' In fact, the three astronauts were dead men flying, unless they could solve an impossible problem. However, between the astronauts up there and ground control, they Gerry-rigged a temporary solution to the air filtering system and famously made it home safely.

Well, what has this got to do with the impossible problem of the Trinity?

Another way of saying we have an impossible problem is the adage: 'That just does not add up!'

Which means: something isn't logical and rational – it doesn't make any sense? It's not rational!

A couple of examples, with apologies in advance to Suzie and Neville

'Why would Suzie disappear the day before her long-awaited vacation? It just doesn't add up.'
'Neville never takes chances in life, he's a low-risk taker, he's the very definition of careful, and here he is at 80 odd BUNJEE Jumping? It just doesn't add up?'

Here it that saying in Mandarin, I think! But its impossible for me to 'solve' because I don't speak a word of Mandarin

說不通, 不合情理...

I'll get Ji or XiXi to confirm it!

So, let's do a little bit of Mathematical problem solving?
What does $1+1+1$ equal?

THREE, I agree,

But, and it's a BIG BUT, - the Christian faith, declares $1+1+1=1$!! But that's impossible! 'That just doesn't add up!?'

So, on this day when we celebrate the Holy Trinity in the Christian Faith the proposition is:

Father+Son+Holy Spirit – the Holy threesome = ONE! ONE entity!

But that is preposterous, impossible says our rational, logical, grounded brains!!!

Father+Son+Holy Spirit – the Holy threesome = ONE GOD!

Father+Son+Holy Spirit=ONE indivisible or ONE undivided GOD!!!

Oh blimey – now it is really getting irrational, stupid, ludicrous! I don't know about you, but my head is reeling! It, sure as DOES NOT ADD UP!

If something does not add up, like this, then don't we normally think it's not TRUE!? Yes?
No!!!!!!

Here's one way of dealing with this triple-split personality conundrum.

It doesn't really matter!

It doesn't really matter for our everyday life, if the Godhead is actually three heads! Is it really an issue of monumental significance *in* the future of the world, *in* the future of the church or indeed, *in* the future of the Ormond congregation and in our individual lives of faith?

I suspect most of us would answer, yes, to that! It doesn't really matter.

Well, this afternoon, let me be the devil's advocate and put the YES case.

That in fact – it does really matter! It matters that we tackle this seemingly impossible theological conundrum of the Trinity.

One strong reason for doing so is because a whole lot of both the Hebrew and New Testaments allude to and develop understandings of God as Father/Creator, Saviour/Redeemer and Spirit. I challenge you to read virtually any of the 66 books of the Biblical and not discover many direct references to or allusions being made to God as Father/Creator, God as redeemer/saviour and God as Spirit. This is one of the main reasons which led to the development of the theology of the Trinity in the early church.

As impossible as it is to exhaustively explain the trinitarian understanding of God, it is extremely important to engage with the reality of God, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in faithfully shaping us as individuals, as communities and in the world at large.

Thus, let me suggest three areas for consideration.

The first one is 'closeness verses distance or otherness.'

None of us would argue with the idea of God as the 'Wholly Other,' that is, the one who created all things, the one who stands at the head of the universe, the one who existed before the beginning of the universe and will exist at the end of time.

But what the Trinity affirms is that the 'Wholly Other' is also the 'Holy Intimate' one. The 'Holy Close One.' The Trinity is about connection – within the three persons of the Godhead and astonishingly beyond the “three persons” of the Trinity. As extra-ordinary as it may seem, we, all of us, by faith, are invited into that intimate connectedness, that family, that association, that community – where we discover the fullness of what it means to be truly human. In fact, that is the ONLY place where we can know the fullness of what it means to be human.

Our second consideration is how we get there, how we are joined to the Godhead? How do we get there? How do we become daughters and sons of the Most-High?

Through the Most-High's Son: ie, Jesus: his life, his death and his resurrection.

The one man who lived in faithful obedience to his Father (loves the Father unconditionally) and yet meets with death at the hands of men who spurn God's way of love to develop their own self-serving designs. Particularly the religious men, but ALL! All have sinned and fallen short! Thus, God dies – God dies with the pain and grief of such catastrophic loss, that of his own son, while at the same time God the Father shouts God's acclamation to the whole of creation, that there has been ONE, ONE who has stood firm in the faith and so, and so, - the Father pours out gifts of new life for all, for all creation, beginning with his own Son.

WHY??? Why reward beyond imagining the very humanity who chose to destroy the Son!?

Love, inexpressible love beyond any of our wildest imagining!

And so, in response, the whole cosmos claps it's hands in thunderous, joyous applause and acclamation of the Father and the Son!

This is the love which truly sustains. The love which the world so desperately needs to recognise at the heart of its very being. There is no other way!

Let me finish with the third reason we need to grapple with the TRINITY conundrum

How is our membership of the family of the Godhead sustained. St John says:

...he (the Spirit of truth) will take what is mine and declare it to you.

The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, does God's work now - by relating and enabling the life-making, the life-saving and the life re-making, love of God the Father, to FLOURISH in every soul who has ever and will ever live, and in the church, past, present and future and in the whole created order and in each individual life. The task of the believer is to accept such love and grace and freedom and live the life of that Spirit-filled gift.

I'd like to conclude with a quotation from Walter Brueggemann on the Romans passage.

The members of what would later be called the Trinity provide the basis for Christian existence. Christians live in peace with God because of Jesus Christ. Christians know the love of God because the Holy Spirit has poured out that love for them and in them. Christians boast in God's glory, which they know through Christ and the Spirit. If Christians today find talk about the Trinity abstract and remote, for Paul it is as close as life itself.

But, of course, in the end analysis we must acknowledge that we are in the presence of the most astonishing, amazing and life-giving mystery of all time.

The mystery of the Trinity calls forth our trust and faith and inspires unfathomable awe and wonder. For, after all, in the presence of the Creator of all things in heaven and on earth, we stand before one who chooses, out of pure love, to become one of us, to die and rise to new life for us and then sends the comforter, to show us God's truth and love and be with us always.

This is the glorious life of faith the holy Godhead of Father, Son and Holy Spirit calls us into, as her own!
Amen.

DECLARATION of FAITH:

TE DEUM

**We praise you, O God,
we acclaim you as Lord;
all creation worships you,
the Father everlasting.**

**To you all angels, all the powers of heaven,
the cherubim and seraphim, sing in endless praise:**

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

The glorious company of apostles praise you.

the noble fellowship of prophets praise you.

The white-robed army of martyrs praise you.

Throughout the world the holy church acclaims you:

**Father, of majesty unbounded,
your true and only Son, worthy of all praise,**

the Holy Spirit, advocate and guide.

You, Christ, are the king of glory,
the eternal Son of the Father.
When you took our flesh to set us free
you humbly chose the Virgin's womb.
You overcame the sting of death
and opened the Kingdom of heaven to all believers.
You are seated at God's right hand in glory.
We believe that you will come to be our judge.
Come then, Lord, and help your people,
bought with the price of your own blood,
and bring us with your saints
to glory everlasting.

SONG: 'Sing the praise ...'

1. Sing the praise of God our maker!
From your womb all life is born.
For your sake, we tend creation,
in your image we are formed.
Blessings flow
where you go;
may our lives your goodness show.
2. Sing the praise of God our lover!
trusting, testing till the end,
body, soul and mind delighting,
close as breathing, constant friend.
May we taste
all your grace,
see your beauty face to face
3. Sing the praise of God the Spirit!
Gift of peace who sets us free,
cleansing water, voice of wisdom,
wind and fire and mystery.
Love at play,
help us pray,
keep us in the living way.
4. Praise the Three in One most holy,
God beyond all human speech!
Keep us longing for your glory,
learning all that faith can teach.
All is well
where you dwell;
earth and heaven your praises tell.

Elizabeth J Smith

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE: David Northwood

We light the candle to remember those who are not at worship with us today

Our prayer today is partly based on the old Irish Catholic prayer called the Breastplate of St Patrick.

The prayer invokes the concept of the Trinity which is one of the themes for today.

Let us pray.

I arise today

**Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,
Through belief in the Threeness,
Through confession of the Oneness
of the Creator of creation.**

**I arise today, through
God's strength to pilot me,
God's might to uphold me,
God's wisdom to guide me,
God's eye to look before me,**

**I arise today, through
The strength of heaven,
The light of the sun,
The radiance of the moon,
The splendour of fire,**

**Christ within me,
Christ before me,
Christ behind me,
Christ beneath me,**

**Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.**

Loving God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we bring to you our prayers for your children and creation.

We give thanks for all the blessings you have bestowed on us: the communities and families to which we belong and in which we feel supported and nurtured; the prosperous and peaceful nation in which we live and in which we can go about our daily lives without threat of harm. We give thanks for this amazing earth on which we live and for the way in which it sustains us.

Yet we are aware Lord that this is not true for all your children or all the parts of your creation, nor can we just assume that it will continue to be true for us no matter what we do.

We pray for communities which are divided by race, creed, class or other issues, where people exploit others or are exploited, abuse others or are abused, where people simply lack any sense of belonging,

support or nurture. Through your Spirit, inspire and enable us to be instruments of your loving care, so that all communities and families will come to be sources of nurture and support through which your people may come to know your loving kindness.

We pray for nations and states which are gripped by poverty, division and war, where people face each day not knowing from where their next meal will come, where tribal, ethnic, religious or national conflicts force people to flee their homelands and live in abject poverty and insecure housing for decades. Help those behind these divisions to come to their senses, Lord, and to realise that prosperity and peace come not from fighting but from recognition and respect of the needs of all.

Lord, as we face the realities of:

- repression and neglect of our own First Peoples,
- the abandonment of the homeless,
- the desperation of the unemployed,
- those seeking asylum,

help us to think beyond our own prejudices and desires to the needs of others.

Enable and inspire us in our daily lives, to remember and act on your second great commandment – that we should truly love one another as you have loved us.

These prayers we pray in the name of the One God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, through whom, and in whom, all people and all things are made new.

And now we pray together the prayer the Son taught us:

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory
are yours, now and forever. Amen.**

HYMN TiS 179: ‘Praise with joy...’ *John Bell 1949- and Graham Maule 1958-*

DISMISSAL:

Go now with wind in your sails.

**We will journey with God
across the wide seas of grace.**

Go now with fire in your soul.

**We will go out into our communities
to speak and serve in love with Jesus.**

Go now to be the Beloved Community.

**We will go with the whispers
of the Spirit in our hearts, turning
them into words all people understand.**

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BENEDICTION:

God the Holy Trinity make you strong
In faith, hope and love,
defend you on every side,
and guide you in truth and peace;
and the blessing of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit
be with you and remain with you always.

Amen

WORD OF MISSION:

Go into the world in the power of the Holy Spirit
to fulfill your high calling as servants of Christ
In the name of God, the Father. Amen

You can find a copy of today's sermon along with other congregational information on the church website.

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