

# Glastonbury Together in prayer

A news sheet for members of Glastonbury churches during the crisis caused by Covid 19



## The mystery of Trinity

How do you understand or explain the mystery of the Trinity, three persons indivisible in one God. Over the years many symbols have been used to try and explain the concept symbols like the equilateral triangle with three equal sides but being one whole. Aspects used in various symbols include interlocking and continuity with lines that go on forever, like a circle, to show that God is one and is infinite, without end. St Patrick is reported to have used the shamrock with its three lobed leaves to try and explain the concept to the pagan Irish. Perhaps we can also look at ourselves, how many ways can you describe yourself, probably many more than three but you are still yourself. So whilst the Father, Son and Spirit might sound different they are different ways of seeing our one God who manifests in many ways. With our limited nature we may seek to confine God, to try to create an understanding, but you cannot constrain infinity and is not God infinite? His wonder cannot be contained.

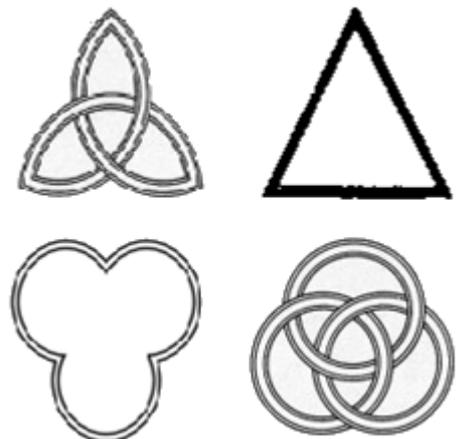
If it is difficult for us to understand how will others understand our belief. Some Jews and Muslims might think Christians are polytheistic because of the Trinity whilst we know that we are monotheistic worshipping the same God that they acknowledge.

## The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit whilst always with us does not feature often in the Christian calendar yet with Pentecost and Trinity we have two successive weeks where the Holy Spirit plays an important part. Having taken human form it is easier for us to acknowledge Jesus, and with a human term used for The Father we can feel comfortable but what about the Spirit—how do we understand this important aspect of the Trinity? The word spirit in one of its forms comes from the Latin spiritus which means breath. This means that the Spiritus Dei translates as the Breath of God. Breath is something that we can understand, whilst we breathe we live, when we stop breathing we die. This leads to the concept you may find in a dictionary definition of spirit as being an animating or vital principle or immaterial part of man. It is not clear that knowing the origin of the words we use tells us much about the Holy Spirit, it tells how we get the name we use but little else. Perhaps we need to fall back on the feast of Pentecost and the gifts of the Spirit we are given by God. Much of our Christian Faith is just that, Faith—we cannot fully comprehend many things and one of these is perhaps the Holy Spirit but we can through our Faith know how the Spirit moves within us to help us in our lives and to help us know and follow the will of God.

## Phased Reopening?

Church leaders are calling for a phased reopening of places of worship. In an address at Pentecost Cardinal Nichols is reported as saying churches should not be at the back of the queue, opening for private prayer is important for the Christian community. There is no consistency he said if the bookshop opposite his cathedral is allowed to open but the doors of the church have to remain locked. In a similar vein the Anglican Archbishop of Southwark has written to the Prime Minister saying that the ongoing closure of churches for private prayer is “an infringement of both religious freedom and equality”. Now is the time for local plans to be made and risk assessments conducted so that Glastonbury's churches can reopen when allowed to do so.



# A time of divergence

## Pentecost lectionaries differ or do they?

For much of the year the three lectionaries follow very similar extracts from the bible, generally the Gospel reading is almost the same and there is an Epistle reading that covers the same topic although often with slight variations in the verses used. From Trinity Sunday there is more divergence for a while. For Trinity and the following Sunday the Roman Catholic lectionary uses John's Gospel whilst the Revised Common and Episcopal lectionaries use Matthew—is there perhaps a link of some sort? The Catholic reading for Trinity Sunday is John 3 16:18 in which we are told that God sent his Son to save the world. How can this happen after the Ascension when Jesus in person has gone back to the Father? The answer comes in the Matthew reading 28 16:20 when Jesus' followers are told to make disciples of all nations baptising them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit which in turn brings us back to the Trinity the theme for the Sunday. If you look at the two readings you can judge for yourself if there is a significant divergence between the denominations.

## A look at 2 Corinthians 13

The second lectionary reading for Trinity Sunday comes from the end second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians. (2 Corinthians 13, 11-13). The last chapter of this Epistle has Paul preparing the faithful in Corinth for his third visit to them. He exhorts them to prepare, reminding them of what he told them on his second visit. The Corinthians have questioned whether Christ is speaking through Paul and he tells them to examine their faith. The lectionary reading takes the final verses where Paul closes his letter with greetings and a blessing. His readers are told to agree with one another, live in peace and greet each other with a holy kiss. In some translations there are 14 verses with a very short verse 13 in which Paul tells readers that the Saints send greetings. In others this short phrase is combined into verse 12 and there are only 13 verses. The last verse however numbered in your translation is a prayer that will be familiar as it is used widely in Christian Gatherings, particularly to close an event before people disperse. We know of this verse as "The Grace" *May the Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all* to this we often add *now and forever Amen*. As a prayer it is particularly relevant for Trinity Sunday being a trinitarian prayer.

## The trinity in hymns

When hymn writers compose hymns to the Trinity we find some who provide a separate verse each for the Father Son and Holy Spirit. Others seek to praise the Father Son and Holy Spirit in a single phrase. If you search for a hymn using the word Trinity in the Hymnary you will find thousands of hymns, some more well known than others, that contain the word. Of course not all hymns that refer to the Trinity actually mention the word itself. A well known hymn written in the 16th century "*All people that on earth do dwell*" might not at first seem a Trinity hymn but the last verse seeks praise and glory evermore for the Father Son and Holy Ghost. One well known hymn that does mention the Trinity is *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty* by Reginald Heber. The first and last verses emphasise the Trinity as both finish with the words "*God in three Persons blessed Trinity*"

### Amazing Amazing Grace!

In this period of worldwide concern caused by the Covid crisis a worldwide multilanguage version of the hymn Amazing Grace has been put together and released on You Tube. It features people from around the world singing the hymn in their own language cut together to form a whole. It is amazing to watch and listen to, a link has been placed on the worshipping together page of the Churches Together in Glastonbury web site. If you have not seen it take a look.

## Actions in prayer speak louder than words

Jesus after his resurrection tells Peter to feed his lambs and look after his flock. In this way he tells him that actions of love in looking after others are stronger than words. This is a lesson that we need to remember as we bring the message of Christ to those around us—preaching the message in words needs to be backed up by actions. In Glastonbury this means that Christians need to be seen living a Christian life and helping others, this can be our strongest message to those around us who need to learn the love of God. Are there any new ways that we can proclaim Christ through our work when the current crisis ends and we can work more in the community? We are already good with the ministry of food, we have proclaimed peace in silent prayer and at Christmas we use song to bring joy. Churches together in Glastonbury would be pleased to hear from you any ideas for new ways to spread the message of Jesus.

