

**Bangor & Holyhead Methodist Circuit**  
**Sunday Worship Sheet for Trinity Sunday May 26th 2024**

Our worship for this week was written by the Rev'd Nick Sissons. You may wish to have your Bible to hand. Please note the hymns are now at the back of the sheet for ease of printing.  
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**Theme:** Trinity Sunday is one of the few feasts in the Christian calendar that celebrates a doctrine rather than an event. The doctrine of the Trinity is referred to as a mystery so we shouldn't worry too much if we don't really grasp it with our intellect. In this service we shall use one of the most famous images of the Trinity to guide us in our reflections.

**Call to worship:** Ever-loving God, you have disclosed yourself to us as God beyond us, God beside us and God within us; We have named you Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As we worship you today, please continue to guide us by your light, that we may walk your way without stumbling, to the praise and glory of your holy name. Amen.

**Introduction to our opening hymn:** One of the ways of thinking about the Trinity is to think of a series of gifts and givers: God the Father gives us the gift of his Son; God the Son gives us the gift of his Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit gives us the many spiritual gifts by which we are able to know, love and serve God. One of the hymns that celebrates the generosity of the Trinity in this way was written by the Sri Lankan Methodist minister D.T. Niles, who once famously said that 'Evangelism is just one beggar telling another beggar where to find the bread.' Only someone who really appreciates God's gifts could say that!

#### **STF 4 Father in heaven**

##### **Opening prayers**

God our Father, you are our Loving Maker, You are our Way of Freedom,  
You are our Gentle Parent.

God in Jesus, you are the One who bears our Sorrows; You are our faithful brother,  
You are our the One who calls us to follow.

God the Holy Spirit, it is you who recreates us; you, who is the light of all lights,  
You who is with us through all the ages.

God of heaven and earth, before the beginning of time you are the triune God:  
the Author of creation, the eternal Word of salvation, and the life-giving voice of wisdom.  
Guide us into all truth by your Spirit, that we may proclaim the good news to the very ends  
of the earth. Glory and praise to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

##### **The Lord's Prayer**

**Introduction to the reading:** The Orthodox Church uses icons as a way of focusing on some deep truths undergirding our faith without getting caught up in words, relying instead on colour, shape and form to show us what we cannot express easily in ideas. 'The Trinity' is an icon created by the 15<sup>th</sup> century Russian Andrei Rublev. It is the most famous of all Russian icons. Its theme is 'The Hospitality of Abraham,' a story found in the Book of Genesis. I invite you to read the short opening verses to this story now and afterwards to sing or read through the prayer which is 157 in our current hymn book.

Bible reading: Genesis 18:1-8

## STF 157 God has spoken by his prophets

**Reflection:** Today I would like to use some words of the Russian art historian, Aleksander Boguslawski, to help us interpret Rublev's famous icon. This is only one view of course, but, as we ponder God's beauty and mystery, I find it helpful and I hope you do too.

*'This icon takes as its subject the mysterious story where Abraham receives three visitors and serves them a meal. As the conversation progresses he seems to be talking straight to God, as if these 'angels' were in some way a metaphor for the three persons of the Trinity. In Rublev's representation of the scene, the three gold-winged figures are seated around a white table on which a golden, chalice-like bowl contains a roasted lamb. In the background of the picture, a house can be seen at the top left and a tree in the centre. Less distinctly, a rocky hill lies in the upper right corner. The composition is a great circle around the table, focusing attention on the bowl at the centre, reminding us inescapably of Holy Communion.*

*'On one level this picture shows three angels seated under Abraham's tree, but on another it is a visual expression of the nature of God. The three angels show a paradoxical equality and dissimilarity; most people agree that, reading the picture from left to right, we see the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*

*'On the right, the Holy Spirit has a garment, clear blue as the sky, wrapped over with a robe of green. So the Spirit of creation moves in sky and water, breathes in heaven and earth. All living things owe their freshness to his touch. The Son has the deepest colours: a thick heavy garment of reddish-brown like the earth and a cloak of heavenly blue. In his person he unites heaven and earth, the two natures are united in him. The Father seems to wear all the colours in a kind of fabric that changes with the light and that cannot be easily described. And this is how it should be: no-one has seen the Father.*

*'The wings of the angels are gold. Their seats are gold. The chalice in the centre is gold. The light that shines around their heads is white, pure light. Gold is not enough to express the glory of God. Only light will do, and that same white becomes the holy table, the place of offering. God is revealed and disclosed here, at the heart, in the whiteness of untouchable light. The Father looks forward, raising his hand in blessing to the Son: 'This is my Son, listen to him.' The hand of the Son points on, around the circle, to the Spirit. In this simple array we see the movement of life towards us, The Father sends the Son, the Son sends the Spirit. The life flows around the circle. And we complete the circle: for there is a space left for us and we are invited to complete the circle of the Godhead with our response.*

*'The Spirit touches us, even though we do not know who it is that is touching us. He leads us by ways we may not be aware of, up the hill of prayer. It may be steep and rocky, but the journeying God goes before us along the path. It leads to Jesus, the Son of God, and it leads to a tree. A great tree in the heat of the day spreads its shade. It is a place of security, a place of peace, a place where we begin to find out the possibilities of who we can be. It is no ordinary tree. It stands above the Son in the picture, and stands above the altar-table where the lamb lies within the chalice. Because of the sacrifice this tree grows. The tree of death has been transformed into a tree of life for us. The tree is on the way to the house. Over the head*

*of the Father is the Father's house. It is the goal of our journey. It is the beginning and end of our lives. Its roof is golden. Its door is always open for the traveller. It has a tower, and its window is always open so that the Father can incessantly scan the roads for a glimpse of a returning prodigal.'*

Henri Nouwen once wrote that it is through the contemplation of this icon that we can come to see with our inner eye that all that we say and do in our lives can only bear fruit when they take place within this divine circle. And so it is that God beckons us all, saying: 'Join us. Join us in the circle of true love, where there is joy for evermore.' Amen.

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Let us begin with a moment's silence, inviting God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, to breathe through our prayers and touch the lives of all for whom we pray this day....

On the peoples of the world divided by suspicion and prejudice

*Gracious God pour out your Spirit*

On the leaders of the nations driven so often by short term goals and selfish ambition

*Gracious God pour out your Spirit*

On your church struggling to be a community of welcome and open-hearted generosity

*Gracious God pour out your Spirit*

On families trying to pass on to their children the very best they have to give

*Gracious God pour out your Spirit*

On our own families with all the joys and sorrows they bring us

*Gracious God pour out your Spirit*

On those we know suffering pain and hardship of any kind

*Gracious God pour out your Spirit*

On those who are mourning the death of loved ones

*Gracious God pour out your Spirit*

On each of us that we might see others as you see them

*Gracious God pour out your Spirit*

On each of us that we might see you at work in our own lives

*Gracious God pour out your Spirit*

Remember O Lord what you have already done in us and not what we deserve; and as you have called us to follow you in our lives so make us worthy of our calling through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **STF 106 God whose almighty word**

#### **Final Blessing**

Wherever we go and whatever we do this week:

May the joy of God, the Giver, be with us.

May the face of Christ, the Kindly, be with us.

May the presence of the Spirit, our Helper, be with us .

Wherever we go and whatever we do,

May the presence of the Trinity of Love be around us

to bless us and keep us. Amen.

## Hymns for today:

### STF 4 Father in heaven

- 1 Father in heaven,  
grant to your children  
mercy and blessing,  
songs never ceasing,  
love to unite us,  
grace to redeem us —  
Father in heaven,  
Father our God.
- 2 Jesus, Redeemer,  
may we remember  
your gracious passion,  
your resurrection.  
Worship we bring you,  
praise we shall sing you —  
Jesus, Redeemer,  
Jesus our Lord.
- 3 Spirit descending,  
whose is the blessing,  
strength for the weary,  
help for the needy,  
sealed in our kinship  
yours be our worship —  
Spirit descending,  
Spirit adored.

Daniel Thambyrajah Niles (1908–1970)

### STF 157 God has spoken by his prophets

- 1 God has spoken — by his prophets,  
spoken his unchanging word ;  
each from age to age proclaiming  
God, the one, the righteous Lord.  
'Mid the world's despair and turmoil  
one firm anchor holding fast :  
God eternal reigns forever,  
God the first, and God the last.
- 2 God has spoken — by Christ Jesus,  
Christ, the everlasting Son,  
brightness of the Father's glory,  
with the Father ever one ;  
spoken by the Word incarnate,  
God from God, ere time was born ;

Light from Light, to earth descending,  
Christ, revealing God to all.

- 3 God is speaking — by the Spirit,  
speaking to our hearts again,  
in the age-long word expounding  
God's own message, now as then.  
Through the rise and fall of nations  
one sure faith is standing fast ;  
God still speaks, the Word unchanging,  
God the first, and God the last.

George Wallace Briggs (1875–1959)

**STF 106 God, whose almighty word**

- 1 God, 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 Christ, you have come to bring  
on your redeeming wing  
healing and sight,  
health to the sick in mind,  
sight to the inly blind,  
O to all humankind  
let there be light !
- 3 Spirit of truth and love,  
life-giving, holy Dove,  
speed forth your flight ;  
move on the waters' 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 !

John Marriott (1780–1825)

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## Genesis 18:1-8

18:1 The LORD appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day.

18:2 He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground.

18:3 He said, "My lord, if I find favour with you, do not pass by your servant.

18:4 Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree.

18:5 Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on--since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said."

18:6 And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes."

18:7 Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it.

18:8 Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

