

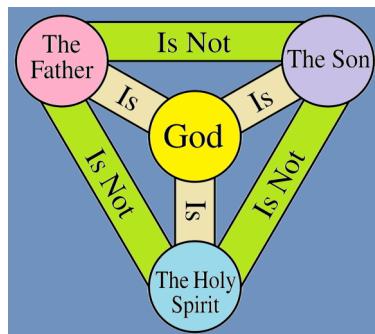


William
Lambe
450th
anniversary

ST JAMES' CHURCH, ISLINGTON N1 8PF 7 June 2020 TRINITY SUNDAY Year A 20/23

Jesus, during your ministry on earth you showed your power and caring by healing people of all ages and stations of life from physical, mental, and spiritual ailments. Be present now to people who need your loving touch because of COVID-19. May they feel your power of healing through the care of doctors and nurses. Take away the fear, anxiety and feelings of isolation from people receiving treatment or under quarantine. Give them a sense of purpose in keeping healthy and protecting others from exposure to the disease. Protect their families and friends and bring peace to all who love them; for the sake of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Collect: Eternal and glorious God, you sent Jesus to bring us truth and the Spirit to make us holy: draw us more deeply into your divine life, that we may serve you before all things through the undying love of your Son and in the power and unity of the Comforter; for you are God, now and for ever. Amen.



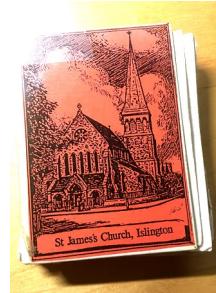
TRINITY SUNDAY "God is three and God is one". We all know what the Church believes but because it is hard to get our head around, we tend to let the idea wash over our heads! But should we? Probably not! So while we are still having to stage virtual services via YouTube, I am going to see if we can get a little closer to what this paradoxical statement is driving at. We will have to do a little bit of digging into Church history too but I do hope that by the end, we will see why the doctrine of the Trinity is actually good news for our times!



NAZANIN ZAGHARI-RADCLIFFE Ever since her arrest in 2016 and her subsequent secret trial we at St James', like so many around the world, have been praying for the release of Nazanin from jail in Iran. Accused of plotting to overthrow the regime in Tehran, it is hard not to accept the view that she has been a pawn in an international game to get the UK government to repay over £400million which was paid by the

Shah of Iran for military tanks and other hardware which were never delivered because the Shah was overthrown. The government say it is unable to repay the money because it breaks UN sanctions; the Iranians feel aggrieved that the west does nothing to break the log jam. In the middle is a mother of a young child who has no influence over the case whatever. Worst still, as a dual-national, the UK government can't exert the same pressure to get her released as it could if she were purely British. It is only because of Covid-19 that she is not still incarcerated in the notorious Evin Jail where so many dual nationals languish for years on end. Her husband Richard has done everything possible to keep her name in the public eye while also having responsibility for their daughter Gabriella who flew back to the UK so that she could start her schooling (just as schools were closing because of the pandemic). This is a tragic situation; please pray that it can be resolved before this window of opportunity closes - or other charges are laid.

St James' Islington: discovering how to live like Jesus in the 21st century



BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES None of us is too old to appreciate being remembered on our birthdays! Equally there are some significant days when we want to recall those who have died. The 'little red book' sits on my desk and I try to make sure it is kept up to date with all these dates - but I can't mind-read! Please let me have your significant anniversaries so that we can hold each other in mind – an even more important thing to do while we can't physically be together because of the Covid-19 pandemic. I have also asked Adam our administrator to email you to ask for up to date photographs for the back noticeboard. Please respond to him by sending in good quality pictures of you and your family (individual ones please) for him to organise so that when we are back in Church the display will have been brought up to date at last.

GEORGE FLOYD Our international link partner in Texas, Suzanne Smith, says the atmosphere there is simply horrible with rioting spreading from one city to another. Please remember Travis and Suzanne Smith and their churches, along with Christian congregations calling for justice for the black community throughout the US.

MERRY GO ROUND

is still very grateful for good quality children's clothes and books. Any offers of help readily received by Júlia Maile at www.merrygoroundUK.org

PRAYER BOARD/NOTICES Requests for prayer welcome

BIRTHDAY Belated birthday wishes to Nylah Lawrence who was 3 on Saturday 30th; this week best wishes to Second Sunday Choir member and coffee host Ros Ford whose special day is on Monday.

SICK Annie Bryan, Chou Seng Joo, Nieve Goodwin (recovering from Coronavirus), Emily Grainger, Kris Hyde, Hayley Jenkins, John, Klenan, Kingsley Lewis, John Scott, Charlie Sharpe, Rene, Vera Taggart, Melanie Toogood and Angela Vinnicombe.

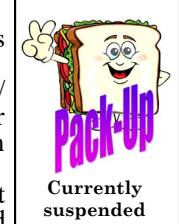
DEPARTED We pray for the souls of Barbara Fox (Canalside Square), to be laid to rest on Monday at 2.45pm; and for Mark Brown (Midway House, EC1) to be laid to rest at Islington Crematorium on Tuesday at 4.15pm.

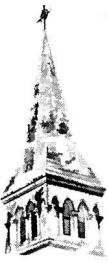
ANNIVERSARIES Today: Bernard Awoonor-Renner (1981); 10th: Charles Parks, Trevor Ginger (1987); 12th: Fr Ivor Scott-Oldfield.

INTERNATIONAL CHURCH LINKS US: Fr Travis and Suzanne Smith, Angleton/Alvin, Texas, especially during the current period of unrest after the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Japan: Fr Sebastian and Yuki Naniwa, serving in a parish in Ehime near Hiroshima.

PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE We continue to pray for the urgent release of **Nazanin Zaghari-Radcliffe** and also for her husband Richard and their daughter Gabriella in London. Sadly we have still heard nothing about **Kylie Moore-Gilbert** (left), a British-Australian academic, who seems to have disappeared from view. We also pray for **Anoosheh Ashoori**, a businessman sentenced to ten years and for **Aras Amiri**, an Iranian employee of the British Council, currently studying philosophy at Kingston University. Nazanin and Aras had become good friends in Evin jail.

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A SERVICE OF THE WORD

for Trinity Sunday 2020

as streamed from St James' Church, Prebend Street, London N1

SERVICE OF THE WORD FOR TRINITY SUNDAY

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Peace be with you. **And also with you.**

Words of welcome and introduction follow

Welcome to St James', Islington, for this Service of the Word for Trinity Sunday.

I can't pretend that the theme for today isn't hard! Understanding God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit has tested the ingenuity of the Church for two thousand years.

Lots of preachers today will try to talk about the Holy Trinity using analogies - the Trinity is like ... well, shamrock in the case of St Patrick. Here is a snippet of the shamrock that currently grows all over the Vicarage garden. It came originally from Knock in Ireland. When Pope John Paul II visited in September 1979 he blessed a bed of shamrock as he passed into the Basilica. Needless to say there wasn't a blade left the next morning! Here is a bit of the evidence!

But I am not sure how far that takes us so, fearless to the end, I am going to attempt to do the very hard thing of describing how the Nicene Creed we often use on a Sunday morning came to be written in the way that it was.

And all to point out how difficult it was for Jesus to give a clear understanding of who he was to the disciples, starting with today's first reading - the key question Jesus posed to Peter: 'Who do people say that am?'

Because behind the scenes, there was always a constant level of agitation: who does this preacher man think he is? We know his home town, we know his family, we know all too well the kinds of people he mixes with. What makes him think he can talk about himself as the Son of Man, the Son of God or even the Messiah?

In St Mark's Gospel the evangelist puts the big question right at the very centre of his story. It is slightly differently arranged in Matthew and Luke but the importance is not to be missed:

1st reading: (St Matthew 16: 13-17 CEV) After Jesus had warned the disciples to be careful about the tricky questions that the Pharisees and the Sadducees were asking, he took them out to the coastal area near Caesarea Philippi.

The Word of God

As they sat down together he asked them, 'Tell me, who do people say that I am?' They replied, 'some say you are John the Baptist come back to life; others say you are you are a returned Elijah, or that you are Jeremiah or one of the other great prophets.'

Jesus listened to them carefully and then he said, 'But what about you? Who do you say that I am? It was Simon Peter who answered first. 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'

Hymn: **AM634ii Firmly I believe and truly** [t Shipston]

*Firmly I believe and truly
God is Three and God is One;
and I next acknowledge duly
manhood taken by the Son.*

*And I trust and hope most fully
in that manhood crucified;
and each thought and deed unruly
do to death, as he has died.*

*Adoration ay be given,
with and through the angelic host,
to the God of earth and heaven,
Father, Son and Holy Ghost.* (Words: J H Newman)

Not surprisingly Jesus congratulates Peter, telling him that this was far too great a statement to have been passed on by another human; he must have had this truth revealed to him by his Father in heaven.

But what do these words mean - 'Father' and 'Son of the Living God'? Just what is the relationship between Jesus and Yahweh, the God of the Jews, who was known to have no equal, no beginning and no end?

But before we tackle all that, let us call to mind the presence of God - wherever we are - thanking him for all that he has given us this week; thanking him too for the fellowship of the Church which links us not just with other members of St James' but also with our fellow Christians around the world. Let us start with the special prayer for today, Trinity Sunday:

Collect

Eternal and glorious God, you sent Jesus to bring us truth and the Spirit to make us holy: draw us more deeply into your divine life, that we may serve you before all things through the undying love of your Son and in the power and unity of the Comforter; for you are one God, now and for ever. Amen.

In St John's Gospel, we read about Jesus teaching in the Temple at the Feast of Tabernacles. It is written so clearly we can feel, even now, the heady atmosphere whenever Jesus met with his critics:

Gospel Acclamation:

Alleluia, alleluia. Glory to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Alleluia

(St John 7: 14-18, 37-41 CEV) Not until half way through the Feast did Jesus go up to the Temple to teach. Those who heard him were amazed at the scope of his knowledge and the depth of his insight: 'How did this man get such learning without having studied?' they asked.

Jesus answered, 'My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. If anyone chooses to do God's will they will find out whether what I say is from God or whether I have invented it myself. He who speaks on his own authority does so to make himself sound important. But those who speak on behalf of God speak only the truth'.

On the last and greatest day of the Feast Jesus said, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Streams of living water will flow from within all those who believe in me'. By this he spoke of those who would later receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given since Jesus had not yet been glorified. When some heard this they said 'Surely this man is a prophet' while others said 'He is the Christ'.

SERMON FOR TRINITY SUNDAY | 07.06.2020

Acts Isaiah 40: 12-17, 27-end; 2 Corinthians 17: 11-end; St John 7: 14-18, 37-41

There used to be a time when people would openly ask what newspaper you read as a way of trying to discover where your political loyalties lay. But so few read newspapers these days that this approach won't work anymore; we get our news from a huge range of TV channels, websites and blogs. Equally in the 'old days' Anglican Christians would be asked what hymn book they used in Church to find out if they were high church, broad church or low! Of course that has all gone too as local parish service booklets have replaced the need to juggle printed prayer books and hymn books.

More serious is our choice of Bible translation; the selection of particular words has a huge, often subliminal, influence on what we think we believe. While some find the old King James version they were brought up with comforting and others prefer translations with more clarity and simplicity the key question is: which is more accurate to the original? Whatever version we prefer it is vital that the basic meaning isn't changed – which is sometimes easier said than done.

As many people have pointed out, the result of all this picking and mixing can lead us down the road marked ‘relativism’: there are no absolute truths any more. Everything needs to be understood in the light of present experience. Adjusting the facts to suit current opinions has always been around but it has come under particular scrutiny recently after Tweets from the White House started to be put through the equivalent of the ‘spell checker’!

In the face of so many conflicting ideas, then, where can we find ‘the truth’ – and then learn to live with it - not alter it?

Today, Trinity Sunday, takes us into one of the hardest topics in the Christian faith. I start each sermon by asking God’s blessing on what is to follow – and I do it by saying: + In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit – and making the sign of the Cross as I do it. But can I take you to a Bible and show you a clear explanation of this three-fold name? No I can’t.

Not even if I took a pencil and altered the words of the Bible itself. But I leave that trick to the Jehovah’s Witnesses who, in various places in the New Testament – especially in the first chapter of St John’s Gospel, have simply re-written the words to make them fit what they want to believe. But we will come back to that later.

Because, as we said last week when we were thinking about the use of language, even an apparently insignificant change in a translation can affect a whole series of other issues. For example: were the women mentioned by St Paul in the New Testament ordained deacons or just servants... ? Some read the Greek one way, others in a completely opposite direction. And translate the verses to fit whatever conclusion they reached.

So when the Early Church tried to put together a coherent statements about God - a kind of Creed or statement of faith for the newly baptised - they found themselves saying ‘we know what we believe – but we can’t find all the evidence we need in the Bible’. They picked endlessly over the Gospels and the writings of St Paul, and they found hints here and hints there of the way the three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – related to one another. But there was no definitive guide anywhere; and so they had to try to write one.

Which is where language let them down. There, in 2 Corinthians 13: 14 is one of the most familiar lines of the Bible: *May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.* But as Jews they could not get their heads around the fact that three names must mean three physical bodies or entities. How could they reconcile that with the truth that God is one AND that Jesus his Son was equally God?

Towards the end of the 2nd century there was a definite shift in the Church from Jewish to Greek ways of understanding ‘being’. Instead of talking about ‘bodies’ (three beings, taking up three physical spaces), the Greek way of thinking about God was more ‘metaphysical’ ie it talked about ‘identities’ in ways that overcame or were ‘above’ physical matter.

It was Justin Martyr (who was the first to write down what an Early Church Mass was like) who had the first attempt - but he ended up describing Jesus as ‘another God’.

Clearly that was a step too far: for Jewish Christians there simply couldn’t be two (or even three) Gods. So a group called the Monarchists (named from the belief that God the Father was the supremely divine ‘monarch’) preached that Jesus was not equal to God at all – that he had only ‘come from’ or ‘been derived from’ God. While his ‘mode of appearance’ gave him the appearance of God, in reality, they said, he had only been ‘adopted’ by God the Father so that we humans could experience something of the love of God for ourselves through this divinely inspired human being.

In the opposite direction, another group called the Docetists came up with the idea that Jesus was only ever just a spirit and that he abandoned his ghostly, phantom human body before the Crucifixion.

A century later the pendulum swung back again. Bishop Arius (who died in 336) developed the theory that Jesus was not equal to God the Father but was created by him before time began. Jesus was therefore ‘the perfect creature’, the being on whom divinity was bestowed by God. Arians said that Jesus could never fully ‘know God’ because he is less than God. They quoted St John 14: 28 where Jesus says, for the *Father is greater than I.*

Arianism became hugely influential in the 4th century. In Arius’ model, God the Father is all knowing and all powerful. Jesus was less important because he had been made by God the Father although he was still perfect and had been given a human body so that in the incarnation he could show us as much of God as we could cope with. The Holy Spirit was then a bit lower still: as Jesus’ advocate or spokesperson he was the one called to channel the power of Jesus into the hearts of those who believe. Which is pretty similar to what the Jehovah’s Witnesses teach today (although they don’t really rate the Holy Spirit at all). And they have re-written the opening lines of St John’s Gospel to make it all fit: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was A God.* In their version Jesus is a creature sometimes identified with the Archangel Michael, who only became the Messiah after his Baptism. JW’s are really latter-day Arians – with a few modern (bad and mad) theories about blood transfusions which are all their own.

But back to the Early Church: once the Roman Emperor Constantine had been converted to Christianity in 312, he was keen to reconcile all the rival theories of the Monarchists, the Docetists, and the Arians once and for all. Rival bishops disputing who Jesus was stopped the Empire being strong.

So Constantine ordered all the bishops to meet him at a place called Nicea in the year 325ad.

And there the Catholic bishops, led by St Athanasius, managed to concentrate minds – not on St John 14: 28 (*the Father is greater than I*) but on the Trinitarian St John 10: 30 (*I and the Father are one*) which finally got written up as the Creed we are so familiar with today. But HOW are they one? How can individual identities, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be one AND yet be identified separately?

The only way of answering that was to bandy about a series of complicated Greek technical terms – words that, in translation, we have become familiar with whenever we say the Nicene Creed on Sundays in Church: *God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father through whom all things were made...* The original Greek words are ‘Homoousios’ (they came from the same substance) and ‘hypostasis’ (yet they have a defined individuality): and it is these technical words which the great theologians have, since Nicea, used to ‘define’ the Three-fold nature of God – ‘filling in’ where the New Testament only gives a few clues.

But hang on: these technical words might help the bishops and the scholars - but are they of any use to you and to me?! St Augustine wrote 15 books on the Holy Trinity. It took him 20 years between 399 and 419ad; and he still ended his last book with a prayer which asked for forgiveness if he hadn’t got it all quite right!

So when we reply to Jesus’ question with which we started this service, ‘Who do people say that I am?’, we too can say with St Peter, ‘You are the Son of God’. But in a way we know that is just a convenient phrase for a paradox and a mystery that has challenged Christian believers since the very first words of the New Testament were being written. So can I end with a few thoughts – and a favourite Bible passage - which have helped me over the years?

Whatever the set words of the Creed, they are just pointers to something so very much greater. I actually know God in a million and one different ways! I experience him in the natural world, in my prayer life and when I read the Bible, in the love of those around me and when he takes over and achieves things that I could never have done on my own.

While, like St Augustine, I find myself having a deep, gut awareness of him as Father and Creator, as Son and teacher, and as Spirit and source of power, I also know that these things are just the tip of the iceberg. I know him as these things but, like those early scholars, as so much else too. It is just that my words fail me.

But perhaps that doesn’t matter because God doesn’t need our words: wherever and however, he is still knowable, always there – but only if we wait.

As one of today’s readings reminds us: *Those who trust in the Lord shall renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles, they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.* (Isaiah 40: 31).

That is the God the Creed is pointing to.

As members of the universal Church, we affirm our faith by using the words of the Nicene Creed.

Creed

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father.**

**God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

**We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.**

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

In the light of those words, let us call to mind our sins:

Confession

**Almighty God, long suffering and of great goodness,
we confess to you our neglect of your commandments.
We repent of our wrong doing, thinking and speaking,
the hurts we have done to others
and the good we have left undone.
Forgive us O God, for all our selfishness:
send your Holy Spirit that he may renew our hearts and minds;
through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.**

May the Father forgive us by the death of his Son
and strengthen us to live in the power of the Holy Spirit,
now and for ever. **Amen.**

The Prayers

We seek to know you, our Lord and our God,
only too aware that you are reaching out to us,
loving us so that we can see the world with your eyes.

But how can we know you, Lord,
when the words we use to describe you are so limited?
How can we escape from the definitions
which close down our understandings
of who you are and what you are doing?

Lord, may we discover that the words Father, Son and Spirit
are just pointers to something greater, truer and more revealing.
Help us to expand our vision
so that we can be drawn
into the mystery of 'Trinity':
there to feel both totally at one and at peace with you
while also being ourselves,
part of the long journey of discovery
that we can never be truly ourselves
unless we are learning to be shaped
by what you have to teach us.

You in us; we in you; totally identified with you,
yet challenged and changed through the gifts of the One God:
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Father God, creator and sustainer of the universe:
we thank you for the world in which we live,
for its beauty and all the resources which you have provided for us.
We pray for better management of those areas under particular stress:
for those affected by the cyclone in the Bay of Bengal,
for those whose livelihoods are destroyed by deforestation
in the Amazon,
for those threatened by rising seas due to global warming,
and for nations deeply affected by drought, among them China, Australia, India, Somalia, Brazil and Syria.
Lord, in your mercy; **hear our prayer.**

Jesus our Saviour, Lord of peace and reconciliation:
we pray for all places of conflict -
for Israel/Palestine, especially in the disputed occupied territories;
for Hong Kong and the challenge to the 'one country, two systems'
agreement;
for Nigeria in the face of assassinations and abductions by Boko Haram;
for the cities and towns in the US after the death of George Floyd.
Lord, in your mercy; **hear our prayer.**

Holy Spirit, source of truth and inspiration:
guide all those charged with the control of Covid-19
and those dedicated to the care of those affected.
We pray for the scientists on whose advice we rely; for politicians
whose decisions affect us all and for those in front line services.

We pray to for the Church and for the courage to speak 'truth to
power'. We ask for guidance as we prepare to use our churches again.
Lord, in your mercy; **hear our prayer.**

In a moment of silence we remember all those who need our prayers
today:
the sick, the lonely and all those in difficulty of any kind:
Lord, in your mercy; **hear our prayer.**

And we commend to the love of God all those who have died, especially
those who have died alone.

We commit to God's mercy those to be laid to rest this coming week: Barbara Fox and Mark Brown; and those whose anniversaries fall this week: Bernard Awoonor-Renner, Charles Parks, Trevor Ginger and Ivor Scott-Oldfield.

Let us join with Christians the world over as we say together:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Hymn: **AM276** Holy, holy, holy [t Nicaea]

*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!
early in the morning our song shall rise to thee;
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!*

*Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
which wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.*

*Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,
though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see,
only thou art holy, there is none beside thee
perfect in power, in love and purity.*

*Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy name, in earth and sky and sea.
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!* (Words: Reginald Heber)

Lord Jesus, Shepherd and friend,
you understand our need for security
and our longing for reassurance that all will be well.
As we understand our own vulnerability
and our need to be loved,
may it deepen our capacity to feel for others.
Enlarge our souls, expand our minds
and soften our hearts,
that with compassion and empathy
we may do your work in the world.
We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Community Notices

Blessing

May God the Holy Trinity make you strong in faith and love,
defend you on every side and guide you in truth and peace;
and may the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be with you and all those who you love and pray for,
now and for ever. **Amen.**

This compilation © Rite Aid, June 2020



May God bless
every £1 we give
so that St James'
will be here, not
just for today and
for tomorrow, but
for the future he
wants to create.