

“Home Church Worship” for Sunday June 7, 2020
Holy Trinity Sunday
Written and prepared by Pastor Joanna Miller*
Prayers of Intercession prepared by Pastor Janaki Bandara

Gathering:

We worship as we live – in the name of the Father, and the + Son, and the Hy Spirit. Amen.

Conversation with Kids:

There has been a lot of stuff on the news lately about racism... do you know what that is? Racism is when one person thinks they're better than another person, or treats another person badly – based on the colour of their skin. If that makes you sad or angry, it should. You're right to think that's a terrible thing to do to someone. But the truth is that it does happen. As children of God, who believe that God created all of us and loves all of us, it's our job to treat every person we meet like another child of God. I know that's not always easy... But, no matter what, it's what God asks us to do.

[If the topic of racism is new in your family, it bears talking about. For some resources to help you talk to your kids about racism, get in touch with Pastor Joanna.]

Scripture:

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 worshiped 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."

The Dance of Trinity

This is a bit of a peculiar day on the church calendar; it's the only Sunday of the whole year dedicated to a church doctrine, rather than a Biblical event. Let me tell you, for preachers far and wide, there is a great temptation to do a deep dive into doctrinal explanations on this day. And I promise you it is a temptation to which I have succumbed, in the past. But (you may be glad to hear), I'm over it. Here's all we need to know. God is one – only one. At the same time, God is three – complete and separate – three. But, only one. In the end, I have made peace that I just *will not* understand how this works. Instead of trying, perhaps our faith can help us to accept that God's nature is a mystery bigger than we can comprehend; which might allow us to dwell in its beauty without needing to understand it.

And resigning ourselves to incomplete understanding doesn't take anything away. I don't have to understand how three can equal one and three all at the same time, to understand that this three in one is only possible if the three exist in relationship to the one – and the one to the three. I think that what we believe about the Trinity is the best, most harmonious model of community we have. It is a demonstrated relationship that includes love, trust, and selflessness.

Imagine a relationship where your partners are always, totally and completely invested in your well-being. They look out for you, take care of you, at all costs. In return, you spend your whole life doing the same for them. The trinity shows us what it can look like to live in perfect community.

As we hear in Genesis, we are all created in the image of God. I believe that means we are intended to live in community, just like the Trinity. In fact, the risks of loneliness are well documented. Lonely people are more likely to suffer from depression, they're more than twice as likely to develop symptoms of dementia, more likely to have sleep dysfunctions, or have thoughts of suicide. There's also a host of data that shows that loneliness affects our immune system – meaning that living in healthy community means we'll very likely also be healthier physically.¹

So, we do well to make community a priority. But, God's vision of community includes all of God's created children. People of every colour, creed, sexual orientation, and ability. In God's vision, all people are equal and live in harmony – men and women, gay and straight, rich and poor (not that I really think poverty is in God's vision), but you know what I'm getting at.

Trouble is, we are not living out God's vision of community, friends. Not even close. The abuses are many, but this week we have no choice but to name the sin of racism and how it betrays God's vision. Racism behaves like a virus – and viruses are something many of us have learned a lot about lately. Like a virus, racism often lives within a host, almost asymptotically, only to rear its ugly head under the right conditions. Of course, it's easy to remain asymptomatic when everyone around you, looks like you. Too often, we say 'I'm not racist, I believe that everyone is equal' without really looking inside to see the ways in which we, too, harbour unfair assumptions and believe in stereotypes. It is these things, which reside deep within us, unchecked, that become dangerous – even life threatening to our Siblings of Colour.

Racism proved deadly to George Floyd and Ahmaud Arbery. Racism risked the life of Christian Cooper when he asked a White woman to leash her dog and she subsequently called the police and informed them that a Black man was attacking her.

Now, if you're thinking that these are all examples from our southern neighbours, then I'd ask you to wait a moment before you finish that thought. Because, you need to know is that racism IS in Canada, even if we hide it better or mask it in politeness. In Canada, our worst racism statistics are not about people of African descent (though those ones certainly aren't good) but the worst is for those of Indigenous heritage. When the CBC sought to compile a database of every person who died during a police intervention from the year 2000 to 2017 the numbers were clear. In the city of Winnipeg, Indigenous people made up about 10.6% of the city's population, but made up more than 60% of those who died in police encounters. In Toronto, Black people accounted for 37% of the victims, while only representing about 8% of

¹ From the Journal of Clinical & Diagnostic Research <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4225959/>
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the population. And last fall, a report out of Montreal showed Indigenous and Black people to be 4 and 5 times more likely to be stopped for street checks by Montreal police.

Racism in Canada is well documented; but the statistics can't tell the stories of people who become accustomed to being followed by suspicious salespeople through stores, the stories of people who are told by strangers in parking lots to 'go back to where they came from' (even though their families have lived in Canada longer than many of ours), or the stories of people who still today bear the negative effects of residential schools. I, personally, know People of Colour who have experienced all of these things.

While we shake our heads in dismay and say 'that's awful', we, as people of God need to realize that nothing will change unless we do more than shake our heads and wring our hands. We have to decide to show up for our Siblings of Colour, to decide to stand shoulder to shoulder with them, to do the hard work of examining our own biases and prejudices. Let me be honest, the work of seeking racial justice is not easy, it is a long road, littered with potholes of unchecked bias and tripping hazards of privilege. There is no sugar-coating it, friends, it's hard work.

But it's also necessary.

If we join our voices together and sing 'come, join the dance of Trinity', and then don't do everything we can to bring about God's vision for community, then we're saying we're ok if not everyone is welcome to dance with us. If we claim identity as Children of God, but do not seek to lift up every voice of every person who has been silenced, if we do not actively use our privilege to try to destroy White privilege, then we do not honour the beautiful example of Trinity's relationship.

Now, I understand the feeling of overwhelm that often visits us when we seek to begin this work. And I'm sorry to tell you, there is no prescription for what you can do to become a racial justice seeker and ally. Though, I can tell you that a very good place to begin is within – to do some honest and hearty self-examination and to pledge to learn more. After that, your work depends on who you are and where you are – what I will say is that no matter who or where, there is work to be done.

For decades now (perhaps centuries), people have been trying to get us all closer to God's vision for community. Martin Luther King Jr. described his dream in words that have been memorialized since 1963. I have a dream too. But none of our dreams for getting closer to the kin-dom of God will happen without the collective work of the faithful. Each of us is called to love God and love neighbour; to look to the dance of the Trinity and know, deep inside of us, that the dance won't be complete until all are truly welcome.

God created each one of us, a beloved child of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. May God's love, Jesus' example, and the Spirit's fire unite us in seeking to dance the dance of equality, justice, and love – together.

Amen.

Song:

Come, Join the Dance of Trinity

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GstpXOo0Mck>

Prayers of Intercession:

In this past week of COVID-19 lockdown, and Black Lives Matter protests, we come before God remembering that all of us are loved, and children of God. We ask God to dwell with us and hear our prayers.

All-powerful God,
Throughout creation, your diversity is demonstrated:
In each face, in every life form,
In each sunrise, in every snowflake.
All the diversity in all your church are, but a sampling of your creative power.
Help us to trust in the innate order of all you have made.
Help us to restore your order, where systems of prejudice prevail
God, dwell with us,
and hear our prayer.

Jesus, our brother and fellow traveller,
You intimately know the violence of human encounter with differences.
You know what George Floyd experienced in his dying minutes.
With your body on the cross, these differences were broken:
Jew and Greek, Slave and free.
Every shade made precious in your sight.
Help us to honour your sacrifice by doing the work of your body:
Help us to dismantle the use of difference for disprivilege.
God, dwell with us,
and hear our prayer.

Holy Spirit of Pentecostal fire,
You used different tongues to spread the gospel truth.
Diversity was your vehicle, diversity was your canvas.
May we trust in your power knit throughout our differences.
Fill us with your capacity for making common the message of love.
Let our differences be your chalk and chalkboard.
Be our guiding presence in this holy work,
God, dwell with us, and hear our prayer.
In all our hearts, holy One, you place the nudge of your calls.
You move us in all kinds of ways, with all kinds of concerns.
Whether for creation, climate or individuals ...
Whether for the church, the world or local situations ...
We call out our concerns to you here ... out loud or in the silence of our hearts.
God, dwell with us,
and hear our prayer.

All these things, Lord, we entrust to your care, knowing that you hear all of our prayers.

And we pray in the way that Jesus taught us to pray:

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,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. AMEN.

Blessing:

May God bless us and keep us,
May God's face shine on us and be gracious to us,
May God look upon us with favour, and give us peace.
Amen.