

# THE SERMON

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Trinity Sunday  
Sunday, May 31, 2026

Faithful Then – Faithful Now  
*God Is Faithful Now*

Matthew 28:16-20

Beloved Church, early in my ministry among you, I learned that Charlton was a church ***“where faith meets life.”*** Over these almost six years, I have had a daily reminder of that, because in the conference room, directly facing the pastor’s office, there are large letters on the wall that say, ***“Where Faith Meets Life.”*** Therefore, there is no chance I will miss it. Even though this is a daily reminder, there is a difference between learning a motto and living it.

We can learn many things in life, but not all that we learn do we put into practice. To meditate on the practice of Charlton’s motto, I have included the question ***“Where does faith meet life?”*** in several of my sermons, as a prompt for us to reflect on what it truly means to be a place where our faith meets our daily life.

**Why do I say that?** Because putting into practice what we say and are means being a community that grows in faith, serves with joy, and embodies Christ's love. In other words, it is communion, mission, and love.

These three ideas flow directly from the life of the **Triune God**, who is **communion, mission, and love**. The **Trinity** is not an abstract doctrine but the pattern of the church's identity and purpose.

**Father, Son, and Holy Spirit** exist in perfect unity, mutuality, and shared life. This divine communion becomes the model for the church's life together.

When we say that Charlton Church is a place "**where faith meets life**," we are not referring to a slogan. We are describing the very heartbeat of the Triune God.

So let me take a moment to share with you some thoughts about the relationship of **the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit**, with our slogan "**Where Faith Meets Life**."

**The first person of the Trinity is the Father — where faith meets life in belonging.**

During my pastoral visits over these years, I have usually tried to learn what brought people to Charlton. Many of you have probably shared with me the reasons you ended up here, becoming part of this congregation. We even spent time sharing our stories in our last sermon

series, ***“Stories that matter,”*** when some of you expressed your connection with Charlton and how this faith community is part of your lives.

Most of you end up at Charlton because you feel a sense of **belonging**. You find room for yourself, feel welcomed, and loved by the people of this congregation.

I have heard stories like these:

A member of our congregation began attending Charlton after meeting someone at Karns who attended this church and invited her to join; since then, she has become part of this community.

Another story shared with me said that someone had Sunday morning shifts at her work and could not attend church until a co-worker invited her to attend church in Charlton because we had an early service.

Do you see? In these two examples, we see the power of the **Father welcoming us to** a place where faith meets life in belonging.

**A sense of belonging is a fundamental need—a core part of what makes us all human. It gives us deep, meaningful connections with others, supports our physical and emotional health, and helps us to better cope with the inevitable ups and downs of life...**

In Trinity, the Father is the source of life, love, and identity. God the Father creates us, calls us, and welcomes us.

Whenever someone walks into Charlton Church and discovers they are loved, seen, and valued, that is the life of the Father meeting their life. Faith meets life in the moment a person realizes: ***"I belong because God has made room for me."***

Now, don't get so excited, though, because perceptions of belonging can be different sometimes. There are many times when this doesn't happen. Churches tend to believe that they are welcoming congregations, and yes, they are, but among their peers.

I have done the exercise of observing when new people visit us, and we are not always welcoming; we keep our conversation groups, and without thinking, we exclude the visitor. We exclude the one who has been attending but doesn't fit in the "normal behavior" of the congregation.

The question for us here is ***what we need to do to be a truly welcoming congregation without exclusion. Or perhaps, what are we not doing to make it possible?*** – Think and meditate on it.

Second, ***The Son — Where faith meets life in the everyday.***

One of the things I value about Charlton's prayer life is what happens during the worship service. We do name those on our prayer list; some are people we know well, and others are people we only know by name, but they are presented to the Lord in prayer.

I have been in congregations where people are not named because there is a sense that this moment of saying names breaks the liturgy of the service. But you know, I have learned that as we name people, we are not only bringing them to God's attentive ear, but we are also remembering His words in **Isaiah 43:1** - "***I have called you by name; you are mine.***"

When we do that, Jesus joins us in our daily walk, right where we are. It is God stepping into real human life.

At the right moment, Charlton Church becomes a place ***where faith meets life*** as we follow Jesus into the real world—into kitchens, workplaces, schools, and into grief, joy, and struggle. Jesus shows us that faith is not an escape from life; it is God entering life with us.

Third, **The Spirit — *Where faith meets life in transformation.***

My friends, this past Sunday we celebrated Pentecost and the Holy Spirit's presence in the early Church. We also remembered how that same Spirit has been with Charlton Church for these 220 years.

The Holy Spirit transforms, empowers, guides, comforts, and renews us. The Spirit turns belief into courage, compassion, and change.

Every time someone at Charlton Church grows, forgives, serves, or discovers new strength, the Spirit is at work. ***Faith meets life*** when the Spirit turns ordinary people into disciples who reflect Christ and do extraordinary things.

As you know, this is my final sermon series before I begin my new appointment at Middlesex UMC. I named it "***Faithful then, Faithful Now.***" Why?

Because God was faithful at the beginning of this church. When those first people, under the leadership of Leonard Crum, began the faithful journey of being a class, ***where faith meets life*** in their own reality, in their own context, in their own needs.

Because God is faithful at this very moment, after all these 220 years, we can still feel God's presence and know that this place is ***where faith meets life***. Perhaps not in the same way as before, but in our own reality, in our own context, in our own needs.

And because God will continue to be faithful, bringing new leadership, new challenges, and new opportunities for the church of tomorrow. So the new generation can continue to be a church where faith meets life.

Over the past few weeks, I have heard some of you ask me, "*Who is the new pastor?*" I know the church council leaders have received the same question. It shows your love for your church, and it is part of your concern to know who your spiritual leader will be.

Let me share two things: one, a personal experience, and second, God's Word for this season.

Middlesex Church has been without a pastor for several months, and during this season of waiting, they were praying together in every worship service the following prayer, which I want to share with you:

***"Heavenly Father, we thank you for your unwavering love and guidance. As our church goes through a leadership transition, we seek your wisdom, comfort, and direction. Help us approach change with patience and understanding so we can embrace new opportunities while remaining true to the core values of our faith. Keep us united through compassion and mutual support.***

***We ask that you bring us a pastor whose abilities and vision are a good match for our community, and grant discernment to those making this crucial decision. Lead all our leaders to serve with humility and insight. Shield our congregation from discouragement or division and fill us with hope. In***

***this time of change, help us trust in you, stay together, and be refreshed by your Spirit. In Jesus' name, amen. "***

Let us unite our prayers and continue to feel the presence of the Trinitarian God in our midst as we pray for the incoming pastor for Charlton.

Second and last. Let me remind you of the words of the apostle Paul to the Philippians, as we are in this process of transition.

***"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*** (Philippians 4:6-7)

My siblings in Christ, God has been faithful to us. Let us put our faith into practice and work together, just as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one. Let us keep praying so that God can once again remind us that He has been faithful, is faithful, and will be faithful, so that we can continue to be a place ***where faith meets life.***  
AMEN.