

worship notes



from the United Reformed Church

Sunday 26th May
Trinity Sunday
The Revd Dr Sarah Hall

Editor's Note

Many preachers tend to complain, often in the service, about having to lead worship on Trinity Sunday. Please don't! It is always a privilege to lead worship, there are many resources to help you prepare, the people are not fed, and God is not honoured when we complain. Leading worship should both a duty and a joy.

Call to Worship

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts!

Prayers of Approach

Creator, we come to you in awe,
marvelling at the mysteries of the universe,
and delighting in the world you have made.
Christ, we come to you in gratitude,
wondering at God's love
revealed in your face, and in your arms stretched wide on the cross.
Holy Spirit, we come to you in expectation,
opening our lives, hearts and minds to your wind of change.
God, Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit,
make us holy, make us strong, draw us into the unity of your love,
creating, redeeming and sustaining us,
now and for ever. Amen.

Prayers of Confession

Dear and loving God,
we know what we think of you.
We may tell our friends at church, if they agree.
We may keep our thoughts to ourselves, in case they might offend.
But we are happy with how we think of you.
We have worked it out over the years. We know we are right.
We do not need to rethink our position.

Dear and loving God,

we do not want to change our ideas about you.
What would happen if we had got it wrong all these years,
about who you are, or how you would have us be and do?
Would you be angry with us?
Would we have to admit we were wrong?
Would we have to change our lives as well as our minds?

Dear and loving God,
help us to keep a little corner of our minds open
Just in case we ever have to rethink our faith
in the face of a God more wonderful than we could have imagined.

Declaration of Forgiveness

Listen: here is good news. Christ Jesus came into the world
to forgive us in our failure, to accept us as we are,
to set us free from evil's power and make us what we were meant to be.
Through him God says to each of us:
You are accepted. You are forgiven. I will set you free.
Amen. Thanks be to God.

*Adapted from Green, B. (ed.) (1991)
Baptist Patterns and Prayers for Christian Worship*

Prayer of Inspiration

Guide us, O God, by your Word and Spirit,
that in your light we may see light,
in your truth find wisdom,
and in your will discover peace,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Taken from Andy Braunston,
previous DD service*

Readings

Isaiah 6:1-8 | St John 3:1-17 | Romans 8:12-17

Psalm 29 (said responsively)

Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
**Ascribe to the LORD the glory of his name;
worship the LORD in holy splendour.**

The voice of the LORD is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,

the LORD, over mighty waters.
The voice of the LORD is powerful;
the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.

**The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;
the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon.
He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
and Sirion like a young wild ox.**

The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire.
The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;
the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

**The voice of the LORD causes the oaks to whirl,
and strips the forest bare;
and in his temple all say, 'Glory!'**

The LORD sits enthroned over the flood;
the LORD sits enthroned as king for ever.

**May the LORD give strength to his people!
May the LORD bless his people with peace!**

All Age Activity

Consider this list of names for God, all taken from the Bible. Which ones help you? Which ones surprise you? Discuss it in the group. You could also make a picture inspired by any of them, and share it with the church.

- Bread (John 6:35)
- Breath (Genesis 2:7)
- Creator (Genesis 1:1)
- Dove (Matthew 3:16)
- Father (Malachi 2:10)
- Flame (Acts 2:3)
- Human being (John 1:14)
- Judge (Psalm 82:8)
- King (Psalm 145:1)
- Life (John 14:6)
- Love (1 John 4:16)
- Midwife (Psalm 71:6)
- Mother bird (Matthew 23:37)
- Potter (Isaiah 64:8)
- Rock (Psalm 91:5)
- Truth (John 14:6)
- Vine (John 15:1)
- Way (John 14:6)
- Warrior (Deuteronomy 3:22)
- Water (Jeremiah 2:13)
- Weaver (Psalm 139:13-15)
- Worker (John 5:17)

Sermon Notes

Isaiah 6:1-8

Our reading from Isaiah's prophecy is a narrative of the prophet's call. Like the stories elsewhere in the Bible of Samuel, Jonah, Jeremiah, in this passage we hear about the beginning of Isaiah's vocation. And like these others, initially he hesitates. Yet God takes the initiative and transforms him into someone with the courage to pass on God's words to others. Isaiah went on to advise the kings of Judah to rely on God for justice and for freedom from the threat of international geopolitics rather than on the nation's own political or military strength, though he was also warned that his message might not be heeded. Such unpopular advice may still go unheeded by political leaders today, even those invoking religion to aid their cause.

John 3:1-17

This well-known passage includes one of the most frequently quoted and best loved verses of the New Testament, John 3:16: *For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.* This great promise of rescue, alongside the final sentence of the whole passage, emphasising God's determination to save rather than to condemn, comes as the climax of a dense passage of theology. Though the passage can be used to argue that the experience of being 'born again', a conscious conversion, is necessary for all followers of Jesus, the Greek word translated as 'born again' can also mean 'born from above', ie from heaven, so those Christians who have not undergone a specific moment of conversion are not thereby condemned. The obscure reference to Moses and the serpent in v14 comes from the story of a plague of poisonous snakes among the Israelites to be found in Numbers 21:1-9.

Psalms 29

In days before modern materials and technologies when the power of nature could not be contained by human beings, the power of God's voice could convincingly be likened to the force of floods, earthquakes, wildfire and hurricanes over the natural world. And though since the Industrial Revolution humanity has been tempted to define itself against nature, with us as masters, the extreme weather conditions attendant on climate change have reminded us of our weakness in the face of forces too strong for us to contain or deflect. Yet the Creator is greater even than creation. May God bless us now with the wisdom to make decisions to mend what we have damaged, decisions that will tend to peace!

Romans 8:12-17

Paul makes a clear distinction in this passage between the flesh - human weakness and impurity - and the Spirit - God's power working within us. A misunderstanding of this

distinction may lead us towards contempt for our bodies in favour of a spiritual asceticism. Yet as Paul writes elsewhere, in 1 Corinthians 13, love must be the guiding impulse behind all we do, for *'If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.'* Writing in this passage to the church in Rome, Paul reminds them that, unlike Jewish Christians, those who have come into Christianity from other traditions are adopted into God's people through God's initiative rather than being there because of inheritance or achievement. And the God who has chosen us may continue to choose others beyond our own tradition, so we can call out to God together, inspired by the Spirit: *Abba! Father!*

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

God our life, we thank you for the gifts of your creation.
Teach us to treat earth and sea, air and water with reverence and respect.
Renew those places where earth's beauty is desecrated,
its wealth exploited and its climate disrupted.
Strengthen and call to account all those whose humanity is degraded
by the exercise of power and greed;
may corporations and their shareholders make responsible decisions
about the people and resources under their control.

Lord, in your mercy **hear our prayer.**

God our hope and consolation,
we thank you for sending your Son to show us the human face of your love.
Help us and all Christians to know that love in our hearts
and respond to it in our lives.
Show us how to share your love with those who are unloved or unwanted,
and with those who live in pain and the shadow of despair.

Lord, in your mercy **hear our prayer.**

God our wisdom and inspiration,
we thank you for sending your Spirit to lead us in the way of faith.
Keep us awake to your presence in the world and in those we meet day by day.
Free us from the easy assumptions that limit our understanding,
and make us eager to grow in understanding and in love for you.
Bless all who preach and teach in your Church, all spiritual guides,
and those engaged in training others for ministry.

Lord, in your mercy **hear our prayer.**

God our creator, redeemer and guide,
one God, ever-living Trinity,
bring unity to your Church,

peace and justice to the nations,
harmony in our homes, and wholeness in our hearts.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Offertory Prayer

God loves a generous giver.
So let us pray for a spirit of generosity
as we offer back to God our money, our time, and ourselves.

Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory,
the splendour and the majesty,
for everything in heaven and on earth is yours.
All things come from you, and of your own do we give you. Amen.

From Common Worship

Blessing

The blessing of God and the Lord be ours;
the blessing of the perfect Spirit be ours;
the blessing of the Three be pouring for us, mildly and generously.
And the blessing of God,
Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit,
is with us and all people,
now and always. Amen.

Hymn Suggestions				
	RS	CH4	StF	MP
Holy, holy, holy!	34	111		237
Father, we adore you	29			139
Eternal God, your love's tremendous story	33			822
God is unique and one	35			
Santo, santo, santo (holy, holy, holy)		769		
I bind unto myself today	36	639		
Thou whose almighty word	38	112		699
Womb of life and source of being		118		
Jesus calls us here to meet him		510		
Jesus calls us o'er the tumult	355	509		359
To Abraham and Sarah	553			
I to the hills will lift mine eyes	726	81		
Amazing grace	92	555		31
Will you come and follow me	558	533		
One more step along the world I go	549			1346
Be still, for the presence of the Lord,			20	50
God the Father of Creation		113		
Love is the Touch of Intangible Joy				
May the Sending One Sing In You				

RS – Rejoice & Sing | CH4 – Church Hymnary 4 | StF – Singing the Faith | MP – Mission Praise

Other Ideas...

Sarah suggests *They Were Really Nothing Special* from John Campbell's *Songs To Shake Us*

Andy suggests: Many congregations struggle with the tune for *I bind unto myself this day* yet it's a beautiful, and ancient, song. You might like to play this recording before worship to focus people. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqzWs6KPoE>