

## Note

If you've come looking for three-legged milking stools, three-leafed clovers, or helpful explanations involving ice, water, and steam, I should probably warn you early on: you won't find them here. I'm sure these things are on offer elsewhere. They've all done sterling service over the years. They've helped generations of ministers survive Trinity Sunday. But they've also quietly suggested that the Trinity is either a clever diagram or a problem to be solved if only we find the right metaphor. Today I want to start somewhere else. I've become increasingly convinced that the Trinity matters not because it explains God neatly, but because it stops us imagining God badly. Today we will be thinking about the Trinity not as a game of theological 3-D chess, but as a vision of God whose life is shared, relational, and resistant to domination. A God who is not solitary power, not constant surveillance, not controlled anger, and not distant management. A God whose very being is community. And if that is who God is, then being made in God's image has consequences for how we live, how we lead, how we disagree, and how we resist fear-driven or authoritarian ways of organising the world. Strap yourself in!

*Phil Nevard*

Resist the temptation to complain that the lot of Trinity Sunday has fallen to you due to some unspecified moral failing. Resist the temptation to say the Trinity is difficult or complicated. Follow Phil's ideas, don't complain, but rejoice in the nature of our Three-in-One God!

*Andy Braunston*

## Call to Worship

Come, worship the God who is not alone.  
Come, worship the God whose life is shared love.  
Come, worship the God who makes room,  
who calls us into community,  
and who meets us here.  
Let us worship God together.

## Prayer of Approach

Loving God,  
you are not distant or alone.  
You are a God of relationship and shared life.

We come to you tired of loud voices  
and weary of noisy dominance.  
We come looking for a better way to live.  
Draw us closer to you.  
Root us in your love.  
Shape us by your Spirit,  
so that our worship, and our lives,  
may reflect who you truly are. Amen.

## Prayer of Confession

God of shared life,  
we confess that we often imagine you badly.  
We turn you into a watcher rather than a companion,  
a ruler rather than a presence,  
an echo of our anger rather than the source of love.  
We confess that we cling to control,  
we seek certainty over compassion,  
and we mistake dominance for strength.  
We confess our fear of difference,  
our temptation to choose sides,  
our habit of turning faith into a badge instead of a way of life.  
Forgive us when we shrink you  
to fit our anxieties and our anger.  
Forgive us, and remake us  
in the image of your generous, relational love. Amen.

## Assurance of Forgiveness

Hear the good news.  
The God we meet in Christ does not seek to shame us or abandon us.  
The love of God restores us.  
The grace of Christ meets us.  
The fellowship of the Spirit renews us.  
In God's shared life, we are forgiven, we are welcomed, we are made new.  
Thanks be to God. Amen.

## Readings

*Genesis 1:1–2:4a | Psalm 8 | 2 Corinthians 13:11–13*

## All-Age Idea

What you need: One chair, then three chairs.

Start with one chair maybe facing a wall, maybe pointing directly at a congregation – whatever you think might feel most awkward.

Ask

- “Who could sit here, rather than where you are now?”
- “Would this be comfortable for a long time?”

Sit in it yourself. Make it look lonely. Slightly awkward. Maybe too much eye contact. Then bring out three chairs and arrange them in a small circle. Ask

- “What changes when there’s more than one?”
- “What can you do now that you couldn’t do before?”

Get three volunteers to sit. Let them talk. Laugh. Notice how conversation happens naturally. We often imagine God like the single chair. The Trinity says God’s life looks more like shared space. And we’re made for that too, in the image of God.

## Sermon Notes

*Idea 1: Trinity as the Shape of Creation and Humanity*

Readings: Genesis 1:1–2:4a & Psalm 8

The Trinity is not introduced as a later theological add-on, but as something hinted at in creation itself. God’s life is relational, spacious, and generative, and humanity reflects that shape.

1. Creation begins in relationship, not isolation

- Genesis opens with God’s Spirit hovering, God speaking, God creating through word and breath. Emphasise movement, interaction, and responsiveness.
- Draw attention to Genesis 1:26: “Let us make humankind in our image.” Briefly note the plural without over-explaining. Stress that the text resists imagining God as solitary.

2. Difference without division

- Light/dark, land/sea, male/female: difference is named and blessed.
- The Trinity helps us see that unity does not require sameness.

2. Psalm 8: Humanity as shared vocation

- Humanity is small, yet entrusted with care.
- Image-bearing is communal and vocational, not individual achievement.
- Link “crowned with glory and honour” to responsibility, not dominance.

## Trinity focus

- God's being is relational.
- Humanity reflects God most fully together, not alone.
- The Trinity undermines hierarchies that place power, control, or isolation at the centre.

## Questions for preachers

- How do our churches mirror or distort this relational image of God?
- Where do we confuse dominion with domination?
- What does "image of God" look like in shared life, not individual success?

## *Idea 2: Trinity as Lived Experience and Community Practice*

Readings: 2 Corinthians 13:11–13 & Psalm 8

The Trinity appears not as theory, but as a blessing spoken over a real, fragile community. God's inner life becomes the pattern for how the church lives together.

### 1. The Trinity as a blessing, not an explanation

- Paul doesn't explain the Trinity. He invokes it.
- Grace, love, and fellowship are not ideas but experiences the church is invited into.
- This matters for congregations tired of abstract theology.

### 2. Relational faith in a fractured community

- Corinthians were divided, argumentative, status-conscious.
- Paul's answer is not tighter rules but deeper communion.
- The Trinity is offered as a way of living, not a concept to master.

### 2. Psalm 8: dignity without ego

- Humanity's worth is grounded in God's attention, not self-importance.
- Helps guard against churches becoming tribal, arrogant, or inward-looking.

## Trinity focus

- God's life spills outward into grace, love, and fellowship.
- Church becomes a lived reflection of God's relational being.
- Trinity challenges authoritarian leadership and fear-based belonging.

## Questions for preachers

- What would it mean to take Paul's blessing seriously as a way of life?
- Where do our churches prioritise agreement or control over fellowship?
- How does Trinitarian faith resist both isolation and uniformity?

### *Idea 3: Trinity as Mission, Presence, and Power Redefined*

Readings: Matthew 28:16–20 & 2 Corinthians 13:11–13

The Trinity reframes authority, mission, and presence. God sends not as domination, but as shared life extended into the world.

#### 1. Authority redefined

- “All authority... therefore go” is often misheard as power-over.
- Read it through a Trinitarian lens: authority expressed as sending, teaching, accompanying.
- Contrast coercive authority with relational authority.

#### 2. “In the name of” as participation, not label

- Baptism into Father, Son, and Spirit is not branding.
- It is entry into God’s relational life.
- Mission is invitation into communion, not recruitment.

#### 3. “I am with you always”

- God’s presence is the anchor of mission.
- Trinity resists the idea of God as distant manager.
- Link to 2 Corinthians: presence expressed as grace, love, fellowship.

#### Trinity focus

- God sends as a community, not a solitary ruler.
- Mission flows from God’s being, not from anxiety or control.
- Trinity stands against imperial, colonial, or coercive models of mission.

#### Questions for preachers

- How has “authority” been misunderstood in the church’s mission?
- What would mission look like if it were genuinely relational?
- How does the promise of presence reshape fear about the future?

## **Affirmation of Faith**

**We believe in God,  
who is not alone,  
but lives as shared love in living relationship.**

**We believe in Jesus Christ,  
who shows us a God who gives,  
forgives, and refuses domination.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
who gathers, sustains,  
and draws us into communion.**

**We believe that we are made in God's image  
to live together, to share power,  
and to resist fear with love.**

**We trust in the God of grace, love and fellowship. Amen.**

## **Prayers of Intercession**

God of relationship,  
we pray for a world fractured by fear and power.  
Where voices are silenced,  
teach us to listen.  
Where leaders rule by anger and force,  
raise up communities shaped by shared wisdom and humility.  
Where difference is treated as threat,  
teach us the courage of hospitality.  
We pray for the Church:  
when we hoard power, soften us;  
when we fear disagreement, steady us;  
when we forget love, remind us who you are.  
We pray for those who feel isolated,  
those pushed to the margins,  
those told they do not belong.  
Draw them into circles of care,  
and draw us outward to meet them.  
God of grace, love, and fellowship,  
hold us all in your shared life. Amen.

## **Blessing**

Go now in the shared life of God.  
Resist fear with love. Resist domination with relationship.  
Resist loneliness with community.  
And may God, Source, Word, and Spirit, or Father, Son, and Holy Spirit  
hold you, guide you, and send you,  
today and always. Amen.

Hymn Suggestions				
	RS	CH4	StF	MP
I Bind Unto Myself This Day	36(i)	639		
Today I Awake		211	139	
Source and Sovereign, Rock and Cloud		133		
Our God Saves				1192
Praise to the Living God	118		87	
Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty	34	111	11	237
How Excellent in All the Earth (Psalm 8)		4		
O Lord, Our Lord, throughout the earth (Psalm 8)		5	112	
Mothering God You Gave Me Birth		117		
Sent By the Lord Am I		250	239	
Go in Grace and Make Disciples		682		
Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing	360		494	
O Worship the King	47	127	113	528
Praise to the Lord, the Almighty	74	124	88	564
God of Grace and God of Glory	344		682	
The Servant King	522	374	272	162
Father, I Place Into Your Hands	518		519	133

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

This setting of the ancient Trisagion would be good to listen to.

[https://youtu.be/Ad9fZ72IbVg?si=AWtNWC1\\_Oe7PABUh](https://youtu.be/Ad9fZ72IbVg?si=AWtNWC1_Oe7PABUh)

