

Trinity: Reciprocal and Rippling Love

(Sermon by Cheryl Williams, preached at Footscray Baptist on Pentecost Sunday, May 31st, 2026 – Matthew 28:16-20 & 2 Cor 13: 11-13)

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Apples, eggs, triangles, clover leaves, water – you name it, all have been used to try and explain what is meant by the Trinity, what is meant by God is one and yet God is three. The idea, concept, doctrine of the Trinity came about in the 4th century when church leaders were trying to formulate what they believed about God. It came in the midst of discussions about how Jesus was both human and divine. It split the church – the Eastern Church (Orthodox) and Western Church (us) went their separate ways for centuries. Last century as liberation and feminist theology began to be developed, they were drawn back to the work of the Cappadocian Fathers (theologians from the Eastern Orthodox Church, from modern day Turkiye) and there was a resurgence of interest in Trinitarian theology – of which I was a part.

You will not find a doctrine of the Trinity in the bible, but you will find illusions to it everywhere – in both of our readings today, in the stories of Creation, at Jesus' baptism, for example.

An Australian theologian, Anne Hunt¹, said the Trinity is not a puzzle to be solved, rather it is a mystery to be pondered.

Welcome to Trinity Sunday.

In our reading from Matthew today we are told to go and make disciples and baptise them in the name of the Trinity. Paul in his letter, offers the readers or listeners a blessing, a blessing in the name of that same Trinity.

This morning, I want to just look a few things we see in the relationship between all members in the Trinity, and explore how that might inform our living out of the great commission in our time.

The picture on your screen is one I have shown you before. It is known as Rublev's icon, it is actually, a picture of the three angels/visitors/ strangers, who visited Abraham and Sarah and told them they would have a child in their old age. Later it became to be a representation of God as Trinity.

Just take a moment to look at the image



I see a lot in this image, and as you know I could talk about it for hours. I want though, this morning to concentrate on three things I see in this image.

1. Reciprocal Love & Interdependence – as you look at the image the three figures are almost in a circle, there is no one at the head, no hierarchy, they are all equal

¹ Anne Hunt (FaithGuide – The Trinity)

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around the table. They are almost gazing at each other; there is love shared amongst them. It is as though they are consulting each other about everything, making mutual decisions. The love here seems reciprocal, going both ways.

2. Unity in Diversity – as you look at the image you will see the three figures are similar yet different. They have the same faces, they each wear blue, they each carry a staff. However, there are differences too – they each wear a different colour as well. They look toward the next person; they almost lean into the next person in the circle. There is individuality yet communion and unity, unified diversity!
3. Hospitality – as you look at the image, it appears there is an empty seat at the table, it is almost as if we are invited in to be part of the conversation, part of community gathered. God is inviting us to participate. A community of hospitality.

These are some of the attributes of the God in whose name we baptise others. These are some of the attributes of the God in whose image we and others are made.

I think these three ideas provide us with some guidance about how we should go about the 'Great Commission'.

As we go out into the world in the name of the triune God, our attitude should be like God's. Showing mutual love and respect. Being inclined toward the other. Willing to work with others in the mission.

As we go out into the world in the name of the triune God, our attitude should be like God's. We should be celebrating that which unifies us, but also our differences, individuality as we work toward a common goal.

As we go out into the world in the name of the triune God, our attitude should be like God's. Welcoming strangers and those we don't really have anything in common with. We must always leave a place at the table for others.

We are mid-way through National Reconciliation Week at the moment, it's theme this year is 'All In' – now that sounds like the Trinity to me. I came across a story this week on Facebook, I think, which I think demonstrates reciprocal love.

A woman walked into a prison to visit her brother — and never really left. For the next four decades, she became the mother of hundreds she had never met, changed Australia's justice system from the inside, and the authorities who once questioned her never dared to again.

Born in 1924 in Cowra, New South Wales, but because she had epilepsy she never really went to school, instead her grandfather taught her all she needed to know. Her family moved to Sydney in the 1930's.

Visiting her brother in prison regularly, other prisoners enjoyed her visits too, because she listened, she cared and she was there faithfully. When her brother

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was released, he couldn't visit his friends in prison, as he wasn't allowed, so she did instead.

Every time a guard asked, "What is your relation to the prisoner?" she gave the same calm answer: "I'm his mum." She said it so many times, to so many guards, about so many men, that it stopped being a strategy and became the truth. She was 'Mum Shirl' now — and that name would follow her for the rest of her life. Eventually they stopped asking and just let her in.

She helped children without families find homes. She was a driving force behind the establishment of the Aboriginal Legal Service. She had personally raised 60 children.

She died in 1998 — but the families she built, the doors she opened, and the dignity she restored have outlasted every barrier that was ever placed in front of her.

'Mum Shirl' lived her life quietly showing mutual love and hospitality.

So, brothers and sisters, when you bless one another with your actions let them be actions of mutuality, of reciprocal love and respect. When you go out into the world making disciples respect their differences and welcome all. This is trinitarian life, may the ripples of this reciprocal love spread throughout the world as you go out sharing the love of God with all. Amen.