

Today, the first Sunday after Pentecost, is also known as Trinity Sunday. It is the only Sunday on our church calendar that is named for a doctrine. It is the Sunday from which we get our name and therefore it is one we celebrate – just like St. Luke celebrates on November 18, St. Stephen celebrates on December 26, Transfiguration celebrates on August 6, the Feast of the Transfiguration, or Epiphany on January 6. Names matter as they ground us in the past while defining who we are in the present and will be in the future. But more about that in a minute.

From the beginning of time as we know it as understood in the first chapters of Genesis, God as Spirit breathes life into all of creation. Paul writes his second letter to the Corinthians sometime around 55-57 AD, a mere twenty or so years after the death and resurrection of Jesus, ending with “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.” And Matthew’s gospel, written some 20 years later at the most, includes Jesus’ commissioning of the apostles to baptize “them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

So, the earliest Christians somehow appreciated the complexity of God’s being as trinitarian – one person, three beings. This was important because the God of the Israelites, their root and heritage, made it clear in the first of the ten commandments that God was the one and only God whom they were to worship.

Sometimes we humans over think things. While we had the Apostles’ Creed in the second century, by the fourth century a controversy was brewing about the nature of Jesus as related to God. Many Christians understood God as one being in three co-equal, co-eternal persons. Others, following Arius, believed Jesus was distinct, created by and subordinate to, God the Father – rather than God incarnate in the person Jesus.

The Church can be very contentious and it was then, so that Constantine, the emperor of Rome, called three-hundred bishops together at Nicaea, locked them in room and told them to come to agreement about the nature of Christ. Arianism was rejected. The fully human and fully divine nature of Jesus was affirmed and has been the Christian understanding ever since.

So, when we recite the Nicæan Creed in a few minutes, that statement of understanding that came out of this Council of Nicaea in the summer of 325, we will appreciate all the more the prayer, the tenacity, and the faithfulness of our early church fathers who found ways limited by our language to speak about the awesome and ultimately indescribable and fully knowable God that we gather each week to worship and praise.

The Trinity, ultimately, describes how we are meant to be in relationship; with God and with each other. There is a wonderful icon, an image by Rublev that draws us in to this divine relationship, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, leaving space at the table for us. God created us for relationship and then makes a place for us through this divine trinity of persons, one God. It’s what makes God so utterly complicated and yet so worthy of worship all at the same time. Three in one. One God.

As Trinity Church today we are invited to consider the three ways we have been in the past, are today, and are meant to BE in the future – in relationship with God; in relationship with each other; and in relationship with the wider world.

First, we gather in this historic and sacred space, in the presence of God, to pray, to praise, to learn, to share in communion as we have for generations. This is a place – but more than that it is the people, of yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Second, we are one body in this place, formed by the body of Christ. We love one another, care for one another, because we share a sacred bond. Whether you have been at Trinity Church for your lifetime or joined sometime along the way, we are on a journey of faith together – all are welcome, no exceptions.

And then, fed with the spiritual food, bolstered by our prayers, and by each other, we go out into the world to love our neighbor as Jesus taught, as Jesus loves us. We share space with other non-profits, gather food for the ecumenical food closet, support these ministries with our presence and our means, and show a weary and divided world the power of God’s love. How will we continue to do this in the future?

None of this do we do alone. Jesus reminds us, “I am with you always, to the end of the age.” The Spirit draws us into communion with all the saints who have gone before and who are to come, forming us as Trinity, now and into the future. Something worth celebrating on this Trinity Sunday.