

We spend our lives trying to make meaning of our existence, trying to understand how all of *this* came to be. As the top of our understanding we have placed God, because how else can all of this be explained? For years humans have attempted to explain and understand the idea and image of God that we have placed there. Before we understood science as we do today, people assumed it was God who made weather. Today we understand that it is prevailing winds, the rotation of the Earth, gravitational pull, and so much more.

In our Christian calendar we celebrate the Sunday after Pentecost as Trinity Sunday. It is yet another attempt to wrap our brains around the concept of God. The understanding that God is actually three – Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit, working as one. But we can't even seem to come to any agreement on what those three need to be called. A brief list of titles:

Father	Son	Holy Ghost
Creator	Redeemer	Sanctifier or Sustainer
Love	Grace	Communion or Fellowship (2 Cor 11:13)
Lover	Beloved	Love
Mother	Child	Womb
Rock	Redeemer	Friend
Overflowing Font	Living Water	Flowing River
Rock	Cornerstone	Temple
Creator	Word	Spirit
The Fire that Consumes	The Hammer that Breaks	The Storm that Melts Mountains
The One To Whom	The One By Whom	The One In Whom

God is three yet God is One. Clear as mud, right?

The Trinity is not found word for word in the Bible; it was formulated and codified at Councils (Nicaea in 325 and Constantinople in 381) by men who poured over the Bible pulling pieces from here and there. It is the foundation of our understanding of the Triune, or Three-in-One, God.

Lest you think it was just accepted – the question of the Trinity continued for a long time. Not everyone thought, or thinks, that Jesus was or is God. Some people believe that Jesus was inspired by God in his moral teachings, and he is a savior, but he was not a deity.

Even 1500 years after those Councils it was the cause of a split right here in Massachusetts, where a theological battle erupted between members of Congregational churches in Boston. Eventually William Ellery Channing, long-time Pastor of the Federal Street Church, became the leader of the Unitarian movement, and in 1825 the American Unitarian Association was born.

Here we sit in the United Church of Christ, with Trinity as one of our sort of “givens”. Even our décor reflects it – look at the cut out on the end of your pew. It is a representation of the image of the Trinity. Looks like the fidget spinner, right? The whirling sets a tone.

The Eastern church understands Trinity as perichoresis, literally “dancing around.” The Trinity as a dance between the parts helps us to understand it. It will never be easy to understand or explain, but at least it is part of our best efforts to explain our experiences of God.

And that is key, I think. Whether the Trinity is truth or not doesn't matter. What matters is that it offers us language to share our experiences of God, because in the end, nothing matters except our interactions with, connection to, and faith in the God who models how we are to live.

How are we to live? Dancing together. The triune God is a joyous, dancing God who pours out overflowing gifts to humanity with gladness.¹ God's joyful dancing created the world, so can ours. Trinity living is creative.

Trinity living is a playful stance. It is lighthearted, just as God is lighthearted in giving grace, "an ever-flowing stream filling us with all good things." (Bruce Epperly). Trinity living is like dancing around the Maypole, lifting our arms to allow others to gracefully flow under and ducking under them at the same time. Offering and receiving God's grace, which means everything to God (according to Romans 5:2). Trinity is reciprocity.

Trinity living is an attentive stance. Attentiveness is wisdom. Wisdom, as explained in the Proverbs reading, calls us to attentiveness. I love The Message version of that reading:

Do you hear Lady Wisdom calling?

Can you hear Madame Insight raising her voice?

She's taken her stand at First and Main,
at the busiest intersection.

Right in the city square

where the traffic is thickest, she shouts,

"You—I'm talking to all of you,
everyone out here on the streets!

Listen, you idiots—learn good sense!

You blockheads—shape up!

Don't miss a word of this—I'm telling you how to live well,

I'm telling you how to live at your best.

She calls from the public square to "all who live," (in the Common English Bible) and that means everyone here, all humans. Notice that homo sapiens (human) and sapientia (wisdom) share the same Latin root. Humans are called to identify with wisdom.

Wisdom is a spiritual practice. Paying attention to creation and the world around us helps to deepen our relationship with God. It helps us to join in the dance. John Philip Newell, in speaking about entering attentively the depths of the present moment, says that it is there we will find God, wherever we may be and whatever we may be doing (The Book of Creation). Wisdom is a spirituality and ethic of joyful attentiveness.

Trinitarian living is joyous laughter, dance, and play rejoicing in humanity. And to top it off, Wisdom rejoices in us, in humanity.² Trinitarian living is wise, attending to the world around us, in a loving manner.

God as a community of persons (Trinity) assures us that we can love and be loved under exceptional conditions. We know how dearly God loves us, and we feel this warm love within us because God has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with God's love. [That's why Paul was writing to the church in Rome], to give assurance that God's promises are fulfilled through Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection, as well as the Holy Spirit.³ God, Jesus, Holy Spirit. Trinity.

Trinitarian life is communal, lived out in our churches.

¹Bartlett, David L.. Feasting on the Word: Year C, Volume 3: Pentecost and Season after Pentecost 1 (Prophets 3-16) . Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Kindle Edition.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

A Trinitarian community looks outward, rather than inward or upward. We are called to live out the horizontal beam of the cross. We are not called to face inward for survival, but to bear witness to the peace of God in Christ that responds to the needs of our neighbor.

We are not called to look upward. Jesus' work on the cross lived out the vertical beam of the cross. God does not need our good works. Our neighbors do.

When we look outward and focus our swirling, dancing energy and joyfully work together, that's trinity living. It's significant.

The life we live—with families and friends and strangers, amid gossip and good news and bills to pay—is rich in eternal significance. God does not forgive us our misdemeanors and sins as we sit among the clouds, but while we go about the business of ordinary life⁴, in the public square, on First and Main at the busiest intersection. That forgiveness leads to peace.

Real peace with God is a verb. It is more often a sweat-blood-and-tears process that requires of us an active cultivation of our relationship with God. It means having constant contact with God; thus, each person has to construct how she or he will build, maintain, and sustain her or his relationship with God. Do you hear the idea of attentiveness?

For those in church leadership, it may entail attempting to negotiate peace between warring parishioners over the direction of the congregation's mission. Such courageous leaders within Christian communities may help to resolve genuine fears and distrust that has been festering between parishioners over generations.⁵

And this is when Paul's words become valuable. When we hold each other to living the trinitarian life – a dancing, joyous, creative life – we inevitably come across some who step on our toes. And it hurts. But there is gain to be had.

“Don't Waste the Pain!” Peter L. Steinke says, “We ‘waste’ suffering if we gloss over, deny, avoid, or neglect its message. . . . If, however, we can learn from pain it is not wasted but a source of life and health.”⁶

Romans 5:1-5 is Paul's call to persevere and to know God's peace through Jesus Christ. The early Christians had to suffer much, and Paul encouraged the Christians in Rome to know that in their suffering they also had hope, a hope that would not disappoint them, because God's love was made known to them in the Holy Spirit.

Jesus tells the disciples in John 16:12-15 that they will continue to hear the truth through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will guide and lead them forward. In this time, right before Jesus' betrayal and death, the disciples were not ready to receive and accept what Jesus was telling them, but after the resurrection, the Holy Spirit would continue to speak to them the truth of God.⁷

In our Christian life, we are baptized using the Trinitarian formula: in the name of the Father [love], the Son [grace personified], and the Holy Spirit [the vessel from whom love is poured]. That means we claim no less than this: We are washed, cleansed, in fire water, and henceforth we drip the holy stuff wherever we go. We

⁴ Bartlett, David L.. Feasting on the Word: Year C, Volume 3: Pentecost and Season after Pentecost 1 (Propers 3-16) . Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Kindle Edition.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ <http://rev-o-lution.org/2016/05/13/worship-resources-for-may-22nd-2016-first-sunday-after-pentecost-trinity-sunday/>

track it into every room of our lives and out into the world.⁸ We carry the Trinity with us; let us live into that truth.

Let us remember to live trinitarian-ly: dancing, joyful, creative, hopeful, attentive, dripping the holy stuff everywhere we go, tracking it in the city square, in the office, in the workplace, on grandma's plastic-covered sofa, and here in the church. Amen.

⁸ Bartlett, David L.. Feasting on the Word: Year C, Volume 3: Pentecost and Season after Pentecost 1 (Propers 3-16) . Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Kindle Edition.