

ORDER OF SERVICE

Trinity Sunday, 7 June 2020
Arusha Community Church



It has been a difficult week, in Arusha and around the world. We long to gather as a body, to uphold one another in the apostles' teaching and sharing, in the breaking of bread and prayer.

On the traditional church calendar, today is Trinity Sunday. Let us use this opportunity to embrace our unity. Those of us in Tanzania are kindly asked to begin worship at 10:30 am. Gather outside on your verandas if possible, that we might feel each others' presence. From Ilboru down to Olasiti, Ngaramtoni across to Moshono, let our songs ring out as one. All of us together, we shall overcome.

Scripture, hymns and rites for this celebration are provided below. For those with internet access, videos with music, vocals and lyrics can be viewed by clicking on the blue hyperlinks. Bread and wine, or grape juice, are needed for communion. If you wish, sit in comfortable chairs around a coffee table.

Offerings can be contributed to the ACC M-PESA number (+255 755 992 394) at any time, in the name of our church administrator, Nasieku Mollel. We continue to support urgent needs with these funds.

GATHERING

Unity Hymn: Mission Praise No. 1227, "How Great Is Our God"

We praise God in union with believers throughout the world this morning, one voice in many tongues. Select either of the YouTube hyperlinks below. The first contains imagery from around the globe.

A: World Edition in multiple languages <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vq5qDljEw7Q> **OR**

B: Lyrics in English only, plus chords <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KBD18rsVJHk>

(English)

The splendor of a King, clothed in majesty;
Let all the earth rejoice, all the earth rejoice.

(Indonesian)

He wraps Himself in light,
and darkness tries to hide,
And trembles at His voice, trembles at His voice.

(Russian)

*How great is our God, sing with me:
How great is our God, and all will see
How great, how great is our God.*

(English)

Age to age He stands, and time is in His hands;
Beginning and the end, beginning and the end.

(Spanish)

The Godhead, Three in One:
Father, Spirit and Son,
The Lion and the Lamb, Lion and the Lamb.

(Portuguese and Spanish)

How great is our God, sing with me...

(English with Zulu descant)

Name above all names, worthy of all praise;
My heart will sing: how great is our God.

You're the name above all names,
You are worthy of all praise;
And my heart will sing: how great is our God.

How great is our God, sing with me...

How great is our God; how great is our God;
How great... how great... is our God!

The whole world sings, the whole world sings:

How great is our God; how great is our God;
How great... how great... is our God!

(Zulu descant – on World Edition)

(In Mandarin – on World Edition)

*How great is our God, sing with me:
How great is our God, and all will see
How great, how great is our God.*

Penitential Rite: Led by service leader

We begin in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

ALL: **Amen.**

May the love of our Creator, grace of our Redeemer and fellowship of our Sanctifier be with you.

ALL: **And also with you.**

To prepare ourselves for today's celebration, let us call to mind our sins and seek God's forgiveness.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit: for the times we have failed to recognize you in our midst, we pray:

ALL: **Lord have mercy.**

For the times we have not loved you with all our hearts, all our souls and all our minds, we pray:

ALL: **Christ have mercy.**

For the times we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves, we pray:

ALL: **Lord have mercy.**

May almighty God hear these pleas, forgive our sins, and bring us to life everlasting.

ALL: **Amen.**

Opening Prayer: Led by service leader

God, whose fingers sculpt the sun and moon; Spirit, brooding over chaos before the naming of day; Savior, sending us to earth's ends with water and words: startle us with the grace, love, and communion of your unity in diversity, that we may live to praise your majestic name.

ALL: **Amen.**

Apostles Creed: Read aloud by all

In preparation for the Word, we declare the truth of our salvation. Today, we use this Nicene version.

ALL: **We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen.**

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven. By the power of the Holy Spirit, he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary and was made man. For our sake, he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered, died and was buried. On the third day, he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy universal and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.



Trinity Hymn: Mission Praise No. 237, “Holy, Holy, Holy”

Christians all over the world will proclaim this song today. We join them in considering the mystery of God in three Persons, blessed Trinity.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwuDSw-9cUQ>

1. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty!
early in the morning
our song shall rise to Thee;
Holy, holy, holy! – merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!
2. Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee,
casting down their golden crowns
around the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim
falling down before Thee,
which wert, and art, and evermore shall be.
3. Holy, holy, holy! –
though the darkness hide Thee,
though the eye of sinful man
Thy glory may not see;
only Thou art holy, there is none beside Thee,
perfect in power, in love, and purity.
4. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty!
all Thy works shall praise Thy name,
in earth, and sky, and sea:
Holy, holy, holy! – merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!
God in three Persons blessed Trinity!

THE WORD

We hear the Word of God from Paul, Daniel and our preacher, the Reverend Doctor Mark Rich.

Epistle Reading: 2 Corinthians 13:11-14 read aloud by participant

Final Greetings

¹¹ Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

¹² Greet one another with a holy kiss. ¹³ All God’s people here send their greetings.

¹⁴ May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

This is the Word of our Lord.

ALL: **Thanks be to God.**

Responsorial: Daniel 3:52-56 led by service leader

Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our fathers, praiseworthy and exalted above all forever; and blessed is your holy and glorious name, praiseworthy and exalted above all for all ages.

ALL: **Glory and praise for ever!**

Blessed are you in the temple of your holy glory, praiseworthy and glorious above all forever.

ALL: **Glory and praise for ever!**

Blessed are you on the throne of your kingdom, praiseworthy and exalted above all forever.

ALL: **Glory and praise for ever!**

Blessed are you who look into the depths from your throne upon the cherubim, praiseworthy and exalted above all forever.

ALL: **Glory and praise for ever!**

Sermon: Presented by Pastor Mark in MP3 audio file format, or read aloud by participant

Good morning, sisters and brothers! Rather than focusing directly on biblical passages, I will focus for this sermon directly on the theological concept of the Trinity – in the way we typically do in Systematic Theology. (If I were to use a biblical passage though, it would be from 2 Corinthians 13:11-13.)

The Trinity is how we Christians talk about the unity of God. So I will begin by discussing briefly the importance of God's unity, and then I'll go on to discuss the importance of the Trinitarian way of talking about that unity. In Islam there is a specific word they use for discussing God's unity – tawhid – and it's the foundation of all their theological discussions. The unity of God is also very important for us Christians. The first five words of the Nicene Creed, the most widespread faith statement among Christians, are "We believe in one God..." The concept of the Trinity is not a denial of God's unity, but rather a particular way of talking about and insisting upon that unity.

The unity of God is a genuinely exciting concept for a couple reasons. One is that it radically distinguishes God from everything and everyone else that is not God, and that has been a very important step in the cultural development of humanity. This distinction enables us to investigate and research humanity and the universe without any fear of engaging in blasphemy, because we know that whatever we are researching – stars or cows or even viruses – are **not** God. But more importantly, we know that God's unity gives rise to at least three other unities: the unity of the whole universe or of reality; the unity of humanity; and the unity of what I will call for now reason. That is to say that God's unity gives rise to and is expressed in other unities within what God creates. Those three unities – the universe, humanity, and reason – are of course one thing, different dimensions of one single reality. But it is nonetheless helpful to distinguish them.

None of those three unities can be or should be taken for granted. For example, it is not at all clear to the wealthy and powerful of this world that there is one humanity and one earth. If you look at a world map, most of them show the earth cut up and multi-colored like a patchwork quilt made by a crazy person. That's neither God's doing nor God's will. That's the doing of the rulers of this world, under the old imperial Roman principle of "Divide and conquer." Both humanity and the earth itself are divided up and weakened by the rulers of this world so that we common, unwealthy and unpowerful humans will not see our true God-given unity and therefore become powerful and throw off our servitude to the wealthy and powerful few.

Likewise, the concept of the 'universe' – a word which literally means "combined into one" – is itself a consequence of the unity of God. Many earlier, pre-Christian worldviews didn't see this, and they also tended not to think that there was only one God, or that if there were only one, it was not powerful enough to have created the universe. This belief that there is one universe is a politically very potent belief, particularly when it is combined with the belief in one humanity. These two beliefs lead very directly to a powerfully stunning conclusion: that God **owns** all of the earth **and** that God has given **possession** and **use** of this earth to all of humanity in common. That's what Genesis 1:28 says. God, speaking to all humanity (not just two individuals, by the way!), commands us: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and settle it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." That is a statement of **joint** possession and use of the earth by **all** humanity under God's sole ownership, NOT private possession and use by the few wealthy and powerful.

God is one, and from God's unity come the connected unities of the universe and of humanity. This very understanding and statement of these connected unities is itself the further unity of God's Logos or Reason. (This also goes by the names of Torah and Gospel and Qur'an.) All of these are ways that we humans are expressing the unity of God and God's gracious act of expressing that unity. These expressions are themselves part of God's unity because they come from God.

Now it so happens that there are at least two different concepts of unity. Those are **singularity** and **community**. The concept of divine unity that is stressed by Muslims is that God is a singularity, stressing God's utter uniqueness and even aloneness. This is quite true – God is unique and singular. But there is more about God that the Christian concept of divine unity is trying to express. The trinity is God's unity which is made up of God's complete community of divine sharing among the persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The three divine persons are one God because they share all the attributes of divinity – eternity, majesty, power, and immeasurability – and they are all working together to accomplish the redemption of humanity and the earth. The three persons do not possess these attributes separately, but jointly – and they do not act separately, but jointly. This is an understanding of God that comes from the early churches that shared all things among themselves, as it says in Acts 2:42, 44f: ⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and sharing, to the breaking of bread and the prayers... ⁴⁴ All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵ they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need." This complete sharing of the early believers profoundly affected their view of the unity of God, as the unity of a community of persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The reason that we Christians alone of all religions take time to gather money (and other things) as an essential part of our worship is that we must not only pay our bills but also actually share our possessions, which we then follow by sharing food. This sharing is itself the essential expression of God's presence and being among us and with us, for this is what God does always with us - share! Thanks be to God!! By sharing our possessions given to us by God we are fundamentally expressing the divine being, presence, and activity – the gospel itself – and we are displaying God's gracious, loving, and faithful communal unity. Amen!

Celebration Hymn: "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"

Remarkably, this well-known song written by Martin Luther in 1529 is not included in our hymnal.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bONV_YZCKdg

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| <p>1. A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing;
Our helper He, amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing:
For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great,
And, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.</p> | <p>3. And though this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us:
The Prince of Darkness grim,
We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure,
For lo, his doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him.</p> |
| <p>2. Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side,
The Man of God's own choosing:
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth, His name,
From age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.</p> | <p>4. That word above all earthly powers,
No thanks to them, abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours
Through Him who with us sideth:
Let goods and kindred go,
This mortal life also;
The body they may kill:
God's truth abideth still,
His kingdom is forever.</p> |

SHARING

Communal Prayer: Lead by service leader and shared by all

Holy, holy, holy God, in calling forth creation from the void, revealing yourself in human flesh, in pouring forth your wisdom to guide us, you manifest concern for your whole universe. You invite us as your children to gather the world's needs into our hearts and bring them before you.

If speaking aloud, conclude with "Lord in your mercy," so that others can add "hear our prayer."



Pray in your own words:

- *for a rapid end to the spread of Coronavirus COVID-19*
- *for all who are sick and the many who serve them*
- *for those who grieve, especially the Kenyi family*
- *for ACC family members and friends far away*
- *for peace and justice around the world*
- *for any other concerns on your heart*

Holy, holy, holy God, fill us with strength and courage, with discernment and compassion, that we may be your instruments of justice and love in this world, that it may be on earth as it is in heaven.

ALL: **Amen.**

Thanksgiving Hymn: Mission Praise No. 54, "Bind Us Together"

Let us sing this long-time favorite loud enough for all our beloved to hear, however far away.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emCaGJfM0gs>

*Bind us together, Lord, bind us together
with cords that cannot be broken;
bind us together, Lord, bind us together,
O bind us together with love.*

1. There is only one God,
there is only one King,
there is only one body –
that is why we sing:

Bind us together, Lord, bind us together...

2. Made for the glory of God,
purchased by His precious Son.
Born with the right to be clean,
for Jesus the victory has won.

Bind us together, Lord, bind us together...

3. You are the family of God,
You are the promise divine,
You are God's chosen desire,
You are the glorious new wine.

Bind us together, Lord, bind us together...

Bind us together with love.

Peace Exchange: Led by service leader and shared by all

The peace of the Lord be with you.

ALL: **And also with you.**

Let us turn now to one another and offer a sign of God's peace.

COMMUNION

Holy Communion: Led by service leader

Let us pray. Blessed are you, Lord of heaven and earth. In mercy for our fallen world, you gave your only Son, that all those who believe in him should not perish but have eternal life. We give thanks to you for the salvation you have prepared for us through Jesus Christ. Send now your Holy Spirit into our hearts, that we may receive our Lord with a living faith as he comes to us in his Holy Supper.

ALL: **Amen. Come Lord Jesus.**

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord took bread and gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat: this is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." Again, after supper, he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in remembrance of me."

ALL: **Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name; your kingdom come; your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

Distribution of bread and wine

May the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and keep you in his grace.

ALL: **Amen.**

Let us pray:

ALL: **We give thanks, Almighty God, that you have refreshed us through the healing power of this gift of life; and we pray that in your mercy you would strengthen us, through this gift, in faith toward you and in fervent love toward one another; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Affirmation Hymn: MP 1291, "Jesus Paid It All"

This version includes a breathtaking chant at the bridge between second refrain and third verse.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Htiug1xe4v8>

1. I hear the Savior say,
'Thy strength indeed is small.
Child of weakness, watch and pray;
find in Me thine all in all.'

*Jesus paid it all,
all to Him I owe.
Sin had left a crimson stain;
He washed it white as snow.*

2. Lord, now indeed I find
Thy power and Thine alone
can change the leper's spots
and melt the heart of stone.

Jesus paid it all...

*Oh praise the One
Who paid my debt,
And raised this life
Up from the dead.*

*Oh praise the One...
Oh praise the One...
Oh praise the One...
Oh praise the One...
Oh praise the One...*

3. And when before the throne
I stand in Him complete,
'Jesus died my soul to save,'
my lips shall still repeat.

SENDING

Gospel Acclamation: Led by service leader

Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit;
to God who is, who was, and who is to come.

ALL: **Alleluia, alleluia.**



Gospel Reading: Matthew 28:16-20 read by participant

The Great Commission

¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.

¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

This is the Word of our Lord.

ALL: **Thanks be to God.**

Closing Prayer: Led by service leader

God of delight, your Wisdom sings at the crossroads of humanity and divinity. Bring us into your joyful being, where you know and are known in each beginning, in all sustenance, and in every redemption. May we may manifest your unity in the diverse ministries you entrust to us, reflecting your triune majesty in faith that acts, in hope that does not disappoint, and in love that endures forever.

ALL: **Amen.**

Benediction Hymn: "The Blessing" (Zimbabwe)

Released just ten weeks ago, this song has already been recorded in over seventy languages.

The moving Zimbabwe version is sung mostly in English, with some Shona, Ndebele and Xhosa.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OA1tVs7VNcY>

The Lord bless you, and keep you

Make His face shine upon you

and be gracious to you

The Lord turn His Face toward you

and give you peace

The Lord bless you, and keep you...

Amen, amen, amen; amen, amen, amen

The Lord bless you, and keep you...

Amen, amen, amen; amen, amen, amen

Amen, amen, amen; amen, amen, amen

May His favor be upon you

And a thousand generations

And your family, and your children

And their children, and their children

May His presence go before you

And behind you, and beside you

All around you, and within you

He is with you, He is with you

May His presence go before you...

May His favor be upon you...

In the morning, in the evening

In your coming, and your going

In your weeping, and rejoicing

He is for you, He is for you

He is for you, He is for you

He is for you, He is for you

He is for you, He is for you...

Amen, amen, amen; amen, amen, amen

He will never leave you, nor forsake you

He will raise you, from the ashes

He is with you, He is with you

You're victorious, He is glorious

Amen, amen, amen; amen, amen, amen

All of us together, we shall overcome