

**WESTMINSTER CHURCH
THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA
Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario P6A 3B5**

**“Trusting God, nurturing disciples for Christ,
being empowered by the Holy Spirit”**

**June 12th, 2022
Pentecost Sunday**

...We Gather to Worship God...

Call to Worship

The words God speaks are the life and sustenance of all that exists.

The life Jesus gives is the re-creation and renewed birth of all that is broken and worn.

The Spirit's stirring in our souls is the inspiration for creativity, compassion, joy, and community.

May our whole lives be worship. In all things, may we seek to connect with and to reflect God's power, God's love and God's hope.

Choir: Praise God, Praise God

Announcements: We are glad you are with us today and welcome your online voices joining with us. It is communion Sunday. If you wish to participate with us, please do by getting your wine or juice and bread at home.

Birthdays: We have one birthday this week. Matthew Buchan has his birthday tomorrow. May you be blessed with many good wishes on your birthday.

Offerings and Tithes: Our Session would like to encourage our members and friends to prayerfully consider your contributions to our ongoing ministry here at Westminster. Contributions may be made in person, by mail, or by e-transfer to office@westminsterchurch.ca. We thank you for your continued support and prayers.

Hymn: 290 - Immortal, Invisible, God only wise

Opening Prayer

Almighty God: from the beginning of time to the end of eternity, you have chosen to use your power and majesty to love us, to redeem us, to shape us as your people.

King of Kings and Lord of Lords: you became weak so you could confront the strength of sin and death, confounding their ridicule with your resurrection.

Spirit of God, resting upon us: may your power enflame us with your peace; may your peace touch us with your grace; may your grace fill us with your hope; may your hope lead us into your Kingdom.

God in Community, Holy in One, may your word be on our lips, as we pray together as Jesus has taught us, saying, (The Lord's Prayer)

...We Listen to God's Word...

Word of God:

New Testament: Romans 5:1-11, John 16:12-15, Jude 17-25

Hymn: 358 - There is a Redeemer

Message:

Did you ever open a gift and say, "What is this?" I have done that a few times in my life. I think the most recent one was an instant pot. It might have been a gift or it might have just been brought home - either way I know my response to it was 'what is this?' In case you don't know what an instant pot is, I will describe it. It is a pressure cooker and a slow cooker put together in one device. It works well. What I need you to know is that my question when it came home was not really 'what is it?' I knew what it was. My real question was 'why'. Why did I so desperately need another appliance on my counter? What I said was 'what is it?'

This is the Sunday after Pentecost. This is the Sunday that the church calendar focuses on the Trinity. A gift that is given to us but we often ask 'What is this?' I know that I found myself struggling with the topic. I had to laugh when I said this to John. His first response was to tell me that I should feel free to pick a different topic. Then we both agreed that the Trinity is really important to our faith and so I should tackle this topic even if I am finding this difficult.

I think I find preaching about the trinity somewhat challenging because it is doctrine. There is a great deal written about the 'what' of the trinity. The trinity is three in one and one in three. It is like three rings, an egg, water and many other illustrations. The trinity is three persons creating a Godhead. The discussion is always over how separate or how similar these three persons of the Trinity are. Basically, it is a very large discussion over the question 'What is the trinity' which is difficult because there

is a great deal of speculation and mystery. However, the answer to what is the trinity seems easier sometimes than creating an answer to 'why do we need a trinity?' This however maybe the more important question.

Someone asked me this question a few years ago and I found it a much more difficult question to answer than I thought it should be. I speak about part of the trinity all the time. My faith is based on the trinity. Why am I not able to answer a question that seems so basic? If I am struggling to answer this question, is it really that important?

I am going to answer this last question first. Yes, the concept of the trinity is really important to me. The fact that God is not simply one God but a three in one God head is important to me. It is important to me and it is important to the Christian faith. God in three persons, blessed trinity. I am also going to tell you that Jesus did not seem to think it necessary to explain how the trinity worked to the disciples. He told them the 'why'. They needed to know that God could be with them in various forms. There was not just one but three.

I remember watching a movie entitled 'The power of One' many years ago. It was a 1992 film about a Dutch, white boy who grew up in a remote village in the black community in South Africa. The movie and book focused on how this one person changed other people's views because of his early life. I remember loving the title but now I am wondering if it was really that clever. This was not a story about one person but a story about many people who envisioned a different way of living. Unfortunately, one person gets all the attention.

I have been thinking of this power of one. I wonder if we sometimes want to make the Biblical story about the power of one. There is the story of God. There is the story of Jesus Christ. There is the story of the Holy Spirit. Then we have a difficult time putting them together as a trinity.

Sometimes, I think we would be happier if there was just God. So much easier to understand.

So when we decide to write about God as the power of one - we put together a hymn like Immortal, Invisible, God only wise. It is a beautiful hymn. It is packed full of images of God. I am sure that the images have been chosen to remind us to be filled with the awe and wonder at God. However, the final picture from the hymn is a rather distant God. There is nothing relational about the words immortal, invisible, God only wise. I am not sure that these characteristics make God unique among other Gods. Those are words that could be said about most gods, am I right?

I put those words, immortal, invisible, God only wise with the words that are found in the book of Jonah and God becomes different. In that book, Jonah says to God, 'you are gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.' This is not a solitary God. This is a God who is in relationships with people.

I see this again in the gospel of John as Jesus is attempting to tell the disciples all of the last minute things that they will need to know at the last supper. Then he tells them that when he leaves the Spirit will come to guide them and make sense out all that has happened. Jesus is very clear that the Spirit will not contradict him or the Father. Jesus is not so concerned about making a doctrinal statement in this sixteenth chapter of John. Jesus is trying to assure the disciples that just because they will witness his death does not mean that they have been abandoned. He knows that they will feel this way. Jesus is assuring them that he will be with them but in a different way. They will have the Spirit which only does what the Son does who only does what the Father does. The disciples were to be assured that they were not left alone.

When I started studying systematic theology, the starting point was often God and the first three words that were attributed to God were omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. Present everywhere, all knowing and all powerful. These were the beginning words for God. If you learned nothing else this was most important. The first words about God were not God is three in one and one in three. It seemed that some were wanting to set God up as the power of one.

Yet again this is in contract to what Paul is writing in the book of Romans. He describes our faith in the book of Romans chapter five and it is nothing like these three omni words. He does not try to set God apart from them. He tries to explain how God has been with them in all of their endeavours. It is interesting to note that Paul writes about him being part of a group 'we' interacting with this God who is triune. Each part of this triune God has played a role in their lives so that they would know that they have an amazing, friendly relationship with God. Again the trinity is used to explain God's relationship with people. When Eugene Peterson translates this section it is a wonderful, joyous passage - READ in The MESSAGE.

I will continue to let systematic theologians do their work of trying to figure out what is unique to God, what is unique to Jesus Christ and what is unique to the Holy Spirit. It is worth pondering. However, if the conclusions do not bring to bear how we are in relationship to God and how we are in with relationship with those around us then it is not that relevant. Jesus Christ was 'God with us'. We know who God is by

knowing Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is named the comforter or companion, though we see in Acts that there is interesting power as well. We will never know all there is to know about God - the triune God is still mystery. However, we are assured that in this form, we will know that God is with us in all that we endeavour to do. And really, what could be more important than that? Amen

...We Respond in Service...

Choir: Think of me, and Remember

Apostles Creed

Communion

Hymn: 556 - Now let us from this table rise

Benediction

So now we leave this space of worship
And while so much of the road ahead is uncertain,
the path constantly changing,
we know some things that are as solid and sure
as the ground beneath our feet,
and the sky above our heads.

We know God is love.

We know Christ's light endures.

We know the Holy Spirit is there,
found in the space between all things,
closer to us than our next breath,
binding us to each other,
until we meet again,

Go in peace.

Prayers – Wednesday June 1, 2022

Thank you Lord that your word tells us in Matthew 18:20 “where two or three are gathered in your name, you are in the midst”. Because of that promise, we know you hear our prayers.

Praise reports

Melinda is having a great vacation with her sister in B.C. She says ‘hi’ to everyone.

Fran’s surgery went well. Frank’s shoulder surgery went well.

Emily’s ankle as progressed to the stage where she does not have to wear the boot constantly and she is able to go back to her part time work. It is healing very well.

The couple who were struggling after 50 years of marriage have booked a trip to the east coast and are looking forward to it. Lord, we pray for your healing, forgiving presence to continue to be with this couple.

Birthdays this week.

Thank you Lord for the gift of friends made through a congregation. This evening we pray for Robert Cameron who had his birthday on Sunday and Gordon Hoffman, Nicolene’s husband, who is celebrating today.

Prayers

Lord we are mindful of the world beyond here where we live so peacefully in Sault Ste. Marie, we are grateful for our community and are so aware of those who are facing a life in war torn countries, in places where terrible tragedy has occurred such as the recent mass murders of innocent people. Help us not to forget as we pray for others. Give them hope and comfort Lord we ask.

We pray for Josie who has now fallen breaking her wrist and hip. She was just doing well in her rehabilitation and now she is back to a stage of recovering from surgery. Lord be with her and may she heal quickly. Be with the family who have been concerned for Josie for a while. May they lean on You for strength and patience.

We lift up a fellow who is struggling with depression and feelings of negative self worth. Lord we pray he will seek you and hear you whispering in his heart and mind

that he is loved because you first loved him. Give this fellow hope Lord, bring people alongside to offer support and encouragement.

Lord we lift up those dealing with cancer. We think of Melinda's, Uncle Ronny, who has moved to ARCH. We pray Lord for Ronny and his wife and family to know your comfort and peace on this journey. Lord please make this a precious time for their family, a time where their love for one another is evident and your love for them is revealed.

We pray for a young girl Charlotte, who was diagnosed with multiple cancers a year ago now. She is currently on a maintenance program which is a miracle in itself, however the demand on the family financially and emotionally and logistically is a challenge due to travelling to London ON every month for her chemo treatments. We pray Lord for your ongoing watchcare and encouragement over Charlotte and her family. We pray for a young man Grayson, and for Peter's sister-in-law, as each have been battling cancer for some time. Lord, please help them to know your presence and please give them and their loved ones hope as treatment plans continue. We pray for the medical leaders overseeing their care, give them wisdom.

We pray for Sharon's friend, Patsy, who is recovery from surgery for her cancer. Lord, may this surgery be successful and may she find that she is cancer free.

Lord we lift up Susan's friend's husband who has just received a terminal diagnosis of lung cancer. Be with them as he begins a treatment plan. May they find ways to enjoy the time that they still have together. May they know your strength and power at this time.

We pray once again for Charity who has reached out for prayer. She recently had spinal surgery and now must have more intervention because the incision became infected. She is scared and discouraged and asks for our prayers as she returns for more surgery. Lord please put your healing hand upon her. May she know that your Spirit is with her in all that she faces.

We pray for Mary Anne, whose husband has to have open heart surgery in Sudbury. Be with them as they continue to await this surgery.

We lift up Les Dool and pray for complete healing from shingles around his neck. It has been several months of extreme pain and is persisting. Help Les not to lose heart, to know your loving presence with him and assure him, healing will come.

We pray for Jackie in his ongoing health struggles.

We pray for Emily's friend who still needs an apartment. I thank you for the temporary place that she has but Lord, I pray for something more permanent as well.

We also pray for Gene Monin and his wife as they look for a different apartment. Help them to find something is adequate and is suitable.

We pray for Carol and Adam Lord. Help Carol to know how to relate to her son in such a way that she can engage him and inspire him to grow. Lord, by the power of the Holy Spirit we ask for your intervention in this situation. Give Adam insight from You Lord.

We pray for Beth's friend's son, Jakeb, who was in a bad accident on the highway yesterday. We pray that the surgery on his spine went well and they will be able to continue with the surgery that is needed for his head and face. Lord, we pray that you will heal Jakeb of his multiple injuries. We pray that you will be with his family who I am sure are very worried about him. May they put their trust and hope in you as they wait for the outcomes. Lord, may they know your loving care.

We pray for Neal Mather's daughter, Irene, who has just be diagnosed with rapid onset ms. This would have been a difficult thing to hear during the same week that she graduated from university. Allow them to celebrate this wonderful event even as this diagnosis is in the background. May they know your presence and care, your strength and your love.

We pray for Carol Jean who broke her arm. May she have a speedy recovery from this.

We pray for Susan and Penny as they travel to Ottawa this week. May they have a very uneventful drive and enjoy their time in the city.

Lastly Lord, we lift up our brothers and sisters at St. Paul's and Victoria churches as they face a time of change again. May they put their trust in you and experience your presence with them in all that they do.

Amen.