

All Access

INTRODUCTION

The doors are open. That's what Pentecost has done. In this moment, in this event, we are empowered to realize the promise that was offered at Easter. We all know that the curtain in the temple was torn in two, and God's heart was opened on Good Friday. We know that the gift was sealed on Resurrection morning. But closed and locked doors were still keeping the followers from living into the new reality. Fear reigned in too many hearts until the wind and the fire of Pentecost. Now, there is access and accessibility. Now, there is a way to approach. Now, there is openness that keeps no one away. In this short series, we embrace openness and claim the gift given to us. Let us celebrate these high and holy days by living into the all-access pass we've been given.

Day of Pentecost – *Spirit of Adoption*

June 8, 2025

[Acts 2:1-21](#), [Psalm 104:24-34, 35b](#), [Romans 8:14-17](#)

Color - Red

PLANNING NOTES

Is it possible to go overboard on Pentecost? To do too much? Probably, but push the limits where you can. Pull out the stops. Let there be color and light and flame and wind. It could be real; or use images or suggestions—something that points to the world beyond the walls, beyond the horizon we can see. Pentecost is about catching people off guard. It's about surprise. "Suddenly," Luke writes, suddenly there was wind and there was fire. Maybe surprise is too much to go for with a group that has been worshiping for years. But how about wonder or joy? There is something to celebrate on this opening of doors kind of day. There are opportunities being offered when the Spirit shows up.

Maybe those opportunities should guide planning this week. How do we carry the experience of the Holy Spirit out into the world or beyond the worship experience? What doors can be opened that allow the outpouring of grace to be shared with the wider community? What invitations can be issued that remind the gathered community of ongoing ways to connect, learn, share, and enjoy one another's company throughout the week?

As we worship, however, we understand *access* to mean *access to God*. How might we approach the chancel on this non-Communion Sunday (unless it is!)? Might there be an opportunity for prayer stations or anointing on this Pentecost Sunday? As God moves toward us in this outpouring of Spirit, so we move toward God in response and acceptance.

This day is a celebration; it's inclusion and invitation and permission and commission. It is a time to bless the workers in your midst, the missionaries who share their faith. It is a time for testimony, for telling the story, the personal witness of faith in each life. Often, we don't know how, or where, or even why. This day is a day for talking about the *how* and *where* and *why*. Find examples of those who share their faith as a matter of course. Let those whose faith is an example to the whole community tell their stories and give their *why*. In Acts 2, the story leaks out, and those passing by hear it. How can we keep letting the story leak out into the world around us in ways that bring hope and change lives? The Spirit still moves.

PREACHING NOTES

It wouldn't be Pentecost without at least reading the Acts 2 text. So, we'll listen to that again this year, but we'll also listen to the psalmist describe the movement of the Spirit in Psalm 104:24-34 and 35b. As a bonus, we'll even give a brief nod to the Romans 8:14-17 passage. So, buckle up!

"There go the ships" (Psalm 104:26 NRSV)—a great Pentecost opening line, don't you think? "There go the ships." A follow up from the Memorial weekend event in Indianapolis, "Start your engines!" A taste of the summer to come with the kiddos shouting, "Look-it, mom, look-it!" "There go the ships," writes the psalmist. And our breath is taken away as a whale breaches and splashes down in the waves – "the Leviathan that you formed to sport in it!" "Look-it! Did you see it?"

Maybe that should be the watchword for Pentecost this year: "Did you see it?" When the Spirit blows, all kinds of things happen. Maybe we're so conditioned to look for what's wrong that we miss the activity of the Spirit in the world around us. We miss the movement of nature, the sporting of creatures almost impossibly huge playing like puppies in the rolling waves. They owe their existence and this exuberance to the Creator. And the psalmist implies that this expression of joy and the very life and breath in their bodies are expressions of praise. We get confused as we read the final verses. Is it the psalmist praising, or is it the Leviathan? Or both? Or does life itself bring forth such praise? Surely, it is the human voice here. But does the human voice join a chorus of already singing voices lifted in praise? Is this the new language that we learn?

Acts 2 introduces language into the story. After quickly dispensing with a description of the event - only four verses of a struggle to describe what happened – we are moved to the effects. We can't describe the coming of the Spirit. "A sound like," Luke writes; "*as of fire*," he mutters. It was wind but not exactly; it was fire but not quite. It's as if this Spirit stuff is beyond words.

Except words are what carried the day. Luke moves on past the event, as indescribable as it might have been, to talk about the result. Something happened, and then words exploded from each of them. Words, not of confusion or of uncertainty. Words that were unfamiliar to those who spoke but the sounds of home to those passing by. They were words of welcome, of acknowledgment. They said, "You matter. You are important, in the quintessential you. The contextual you. The native you." "They were words," Paul says in Romans, "of adoption."

But wait, aren't these words about God? That's what Luke says. "We hear them speaking about God's deeds of power" (Acts 2:11 NRSV). They weren't words about the hearers; they weren't words about our issues, our concerns, or our hopes and dreams. They were words about God. But the very act of translation says that we care about those who hear. Learning a new language is a form of hospitality. And the disciples didn't use Babel to teach them how to speak to the multitude passing by in the street. It was a divine approach. We might even argue that it is the reverse Babel (see what I did there?) by using language to connect rather than confuse. The effort was God's in this instance, a clear sign that we are invited to use whatever tools we have to cross the divides. We are invited, as Paul tells us, to adopt even those who are different from us. Those who speak differently, think differently, or live differently. Pentecost is a call for the crossing of boundaries, for acknowledging differences with grace and hospitality, and for being interested enough in people to learn something new about them.

Some read the “we” in the text from Romans to be an insider word. And it certainly can be read that way. It is descriptive of the life we who have claimed Christ live in community. We are heirs, and we know suffering and glory both. When we lay this text alongside the Pentecost story, however, we need to reevaluate the “we.” The family is bigger than we realized. The Spirit is leading us to places and people we might never have imagined before.

Whom do you see around you? Where is the Spirit moving in your community? Those are the questions that our texts and the celebration of Pentecost ask us. Where are your ships sailing? The psalmist is asking us to raise our horizons. Who has been adopted with you? Paul wants us to see connections. To whom can you speak of the great deeds of God? Luke says go beyond your limits. This Pentecost, let’s be the church at work in the world.

LITURGICAL RESOURCES

Call to Worship

Beloved, pay attention! The Holy Spirit sweeps among us, binding us together as family in Christ.

We are children of God, heirs of grace.

Beloved, have you noticed? The Holy Spirit moves among us, creating and renewing the whole of creation, inspiring us to co-create with God and one another.

We are children of God, co-creators in grace.

Beloved, be encouraged. The Holy Spirit lives among us, surrounding us with mercy and grace, witnessing to us about God’s steadfast love for God’s people.

We are children of God, witnesses to grace.

Beloved, pay attention! Whether in a rushing wind or a gentle breath, the Holy Spirit welcomes you here, for we are all children of God, brought together by grace.

We are children of God, knit together by the Spirit. Thanks be to God! Amen.

Written by Dr. Lisa Hancock, Discipleship Ministries, October 2024.

Opening Prayer

May we feel your presence this day, Holy Spirit, like the people gathered on that Day of Pentecost. May you rush into our hearts and inebriate our souls. May we be empowered by your Spirit to live a life more faithful to God. Amen.

Written by Ciona D. Rouse, *The Africana Worship Book, Year C* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2008), 123.

Prayer of Confession

O God, You who are always doing a new thing,
we confess that we sometimes close windows
against the fresh air of new ideas,
against the noise of other people's worries,
against the winds of change.

God of every place and time,
we confess that we often draw the curtains
against people who are different,
against world news or community concerns.

Forgive us our insulation in our locked homes,
our shuttered churches,
the security systems on our hearts.
Open up our lives,
and let your Spirit blow through. Amen.

Written by Teri on the RevGalBlogPals, **A Place for Prayer** blog, <http://revgalprayerpals.blogspot.ca/>. Re-posted on the re:Worship blog at <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2013/04/prayer-opening-windows.html>.

Benediction

May God, who gives us a spirit of adoption, bless you today, carrying you on the winds of the Spirit into the world to share the love, grace, and family that have been so lavishly given to each and every one of us. Amen.

Written by Dr. Lisa Hancock, Discipleship Ministries, October 2024.

Trinity Sunday – *Crowned with Glory and Honor*

June 15, 2025

[Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31](#), [Psalm 8](#), [Romans 5:1-5](#)

Color - White

PLANNING NOTES

The celebration continues. Perhaps it is hard to see much to celebrate in what is essentially a doctrinal observance. Yet, the writer of Psalm 8 finds much to enjoy in the contemplation of who God is. And the writer even manages to find reasons to feel good about the human condition in the light of this God with the majestic name. In worship, we celebrate God who makes Godself known to us in myriad ways. In the end, that is the joy of the doctrine of the Trinity. Whether we can fully grasp the nuanced theological understanding of what Trinity means, we can acknowledge that, in part, it means that God wants to be known and experienced by those who claim the majestic name of God as sovereign. We give thanks for an accessible God.

We also bask in the blessings that have been bestowed upon all creation and upon the human beings given honor and responsibility for creation. We don't claim this as a special gift that only we partake but see it as our opportunity to lift others into a new knowledge of their status and opportunities within human community. Our intercessions include the hope that the world might know that they are loved and claimed and given a home in the fellowship of believers. This is the wisdom Proverbs 8 speaks of and has been the intention of God from the beginning of creation.

In Romans 5, Paul invites us to see this blessing as the means to thrive in a complicated world. Even in the midst of suffering, we might find ways to grow, to be shaped and strengthened in transformative ways. Of course, we continue to pray for suffering to end for us and for people everywhere. No one seeks suffering. But we also pray, in the face of suffering, for an awareness of the presence of the Triune God and, through that presence, to know grace and to grow character and hope. Again, those among us with a story to tell of endurance should be given space to testify to the power of God at work in their lives. Through this testimony, we can acknowledge and give thanks for the continued journey to discipleship as we grow in grace with God.

Trinity Sunday is about God. But the God we worship is a God who chooses to be known in relationship, and therefore, it is about us as well. Trinity Sunday is not about the concept of God, but the experience of God. For that, we give thanks and praise.

PREACHING NOTES

This Trinity Sunday, we suggest that you start with the Psalm. Psalm 8 is a hymn of praise that reminds us of the majesty of God. We'll also look in on Romans 5 and the reminder that we share in the glory of God in some powerful ways. And then we also invite a glance at Proverbs 8 as a way to flesh out the Triune God in our understanding.

Full confession, however, I haven't always been a big fan of Trinity Sunday. One reason is that it causes us to change colors from the dramatic red of Pentecost back to the white of majesty. White is used at Christmas and Easter and the seasons that follow and on Trinity Sunday. It is about authority, about

purity, about Lordship. It's a powerful color, appropriate for these occasions. But we have just gone from a white season – Eastertide— and are teased with red for one Sunday and then it is back to white again. Technically, the tradition is that after Trinity Sunday, we switch to green for the whole summer - or Ordinary Time, as the old calendars had it. We call this time "Sundays after Pentecost" in our tradition today.

Trinity Sunday bumps the red off the chancel, and I've never liked that. (I did sneak some red back in for the early part of Ordinary Time, just to keep the excitement up. Yeah, I'm easily amused.) So, I would usually give Trinity Sunday a passing reference, but not much attention. But Trinity Sunday deserves our attention. And Psalm 8 is an appropriate way to launch into the experience of Trinity.

O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! (Psalm 8:9 NRSV).

"How majestic is your name." That's the line that stands out, maybe because the psalm begins and ends with those same words. "How majestic is your name." That sounds wonderful. You can't read those words without hearing the Michael W. Smith song in your head, "O Lord, Our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth." It is one of those 7/11 songs that people complain about: "Seven words you repeat eleven times." You've heard that, I'm sure. Yet sometimes, it works. Sometimes it is the repetition that carries the meaning. It is only in saying it over and over and over that it makes any sense at all. Like the seraphs flying around the temple in Isaiah 6, and they *kept singing*, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory." Over and over, they sang those words. And it was in the singing and in the repetition that it began to make sense.

Or did it? What was that sense? What do these words mean? "How majestic is your name." Does it mean that God's name is kind of cool? Well, sort of. But in an Old Testament sense, not in a modern day, "Hey I like that name!" kind of sense.

In the Old Testament, knowing a name was a way of having power. That is why it is so incredible that God would give away the divine name. That's why that burning bush is such a singular moment. And the people of God knew that, so they were reluctant to say the name of God. The letters YHWH form the name of God in the Hebrew text. We would pronounce it *Yahweh* because our understanding is different. Words are just words; names are just names. So, you've heard the name "*Yahweh*" in some circles. And perhaps rightly so, since God gave us this name to use.

But the early followers didn't want to abuse the gift, so whenever the text would have those letters, YHWH, then the reader of the text would substitute the word "*Adonai*" for the name. *Adonai* means *Lord*; it is a title instead of a name. Adonai was used for human beings at times to acknowledge a superior. It was an honorific.

So, now when translators heard the word "*Adonai*" inserted where they saw the letters "YHWH," they substituted the vowels from the first into the consonants for the latter and came up with a new word, "*Yahovah*." Since they were German translators, where the "Y" letter is pronounced like a "J," the word was *Jehovah*. We now use that word as a substitute for both the name and title of God, but it doesn't appear in the original text of the Bible anywhere.

OK, fascinating, but what does it have to do with Trinity Sunday or the psalm for that matter? Well, I'm not sure. Except that it is a bit of a mystery. This name thing, I mean. And how can a name be majestic in

all the earth? And does constant repetition of praise bring glory to God's name? And what aspect or dimension of God are we praising anyway.

The psalm is about the Creator God, whom we usually understand to be the father. (Oh, right, Happy Father's Day, dad. And all other dad-like creatures out there.) So, how is this a Trinity Sunday passage? Where are the other dimensions? Or aspects? Or persons? Or whatever you call them?

"When I look at the heavens, the work of your fingers..." I'm amazed, I'm astounded, I feel small. Not a bad feeling to have every now and then: that in the vastness of this created universe, we are but a tiny speck. And yet this isn't a humbling psalm. It isn't about our *speckness*; it is a psalm of amazement that we are anything but *speckish*! We are a "little lower than God, crowned with glory and honor." We share in God's glory, by God's choice. We are significant because God made us so.

That is the aspect of God we know as Jesus or the Son. The Redeemer aspect of God is what lifts us beyond where we might be, could be, and perhaps should be. Elsewhere, we are told this was done because of love. Because God so loved us, we might know eternity, we might stand in glory.

So, how else could we respond but by saying, "O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" Like babes, we coo and gurgle to the one who cares for us, or so says the psalmist. And those coos and gurgles silence those who say there is no God. And those coos and gurgles are what brings majesty to the name of God. It is us, our words, our lives, our power that gives majesty to God's name. We are bearers of that name, a name that is beyond us, bigger than us, more than we can carry, unless we are strengthened by the God whose majesty we proclaim with our words and deeds and being. Unless the Spirit, the consolation, the comforter and guide is with us.

It is that Spirit that pours God's love into our hearts that enables us to stand and grow and become the disciples that we are seeking to be. "That's our boast," says Paul in Romans 5. We boast that we can share in the glory of God. Wait, what? The glory? The same glory that we were singing about in Psalm 8? Well, yes. But not so that we can supplant God, but that we might stand in grace before God. The amazing thing is that grace is available even when it seems like everything is going wrong. "We rejoice," Paul says, in our sufferings—not because we like to suffer, but because we can know grace and we can know glory, even in the midst of suffering. And we know that in the midst of this, we are loved and we are being made more like the Christ we follow. Our love is being shaped by God's love that is poured into us.

We are God's act of creation. That's a part of the message of Trinity Sunday. The Creator works within us, choosing us to be a sign of God's presence in the world. And the tool that God uses, according to Proverbs 8, is wisdom. Wisdom is God's first creation, we're told, and then wisdom becomes the means by which everything is made. Is this the Word that John 1 speaks of? Is this the Spirit that pours love into our hearts? Maybe. Could be. Who knows for sure? But it all works together in the mix that we have come to call the Trinity, a concept that is both wholly other and an intricate and intimate part of us, the community of faith and the making of disciples. We bow to the one whose name is majestic, and we are also crowned with glory because we stand in the presence of that one. The only way we can bring sense to this beyond-sense understanding is to live it out, to live out the glory in ourselves and in any and all who seek to stand in that presence, any and all who want to claim a birthright, a grace, a hope. We are the sign that God is God whenever we reflect the promise of creation and the hope of redemption and the wisdom of encouragement and growth.

LITURGICAL RESOURCES

Call to Worship

God, how majestic is your name! You create, and through creation, we encounter your wisdom and power.

How majestic is the name of God, our Creator!

You redeem, and through Jesus Christ, we encounter your saving love and grace.

How majestic is the name of God, our Redeemer!

You sustains us, and through your Spirit, we encounter your renewing presence.

How majestic is the name of God, our Sustainer!

Come, let us worship the Triune God!

We gather to worship God, Three-in-One and One-in-Three!

Written by Dr. Lisa Hancock, Discipleship Ministries, October 2024.

Opening Prayer

God our Potter, God who becomes clay, God who shapes us in the fire, we are made new in your presence. We come seeking your wisdom, crying out our concerns, needing your peace. Use this time to form us as community, connected through your breath, life, and hope that propels us as your body in the world. Amen.

Written by Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay on the Worship Ways website at <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/trinity-sunday-c-june-12-2022/>.

Prayer of Confession

Great God of all creation,
who are we that you are mindful of us?
You who set the stars in motion,
who launched waves crashing against the shore,
who knows the heights and depths of the world;
Why do you bother with us?
You count the hairs on our heads,
and call us each by name.

You give us your wisdom and you uphold us by your Spirit.
You tend to us and care for us,
and we do not understand why.

We cannot grasp your love for us, O God,
for it is unlike us to be that loving and forgiving.
We become enmeshed
by our own needs and wants and desires
and we fail to see beyond anything but our own little circles.

Turn us around, O God.
Remind us once again of the sacredness
of our ordinary, day-to-day lives.
By your Spirit,
teach us to live truly as beings little lower than angels.
In your mercy, O God,
forgive who we are and bless who we will be. **Amen.**

Written by Beth Merrill Neel, and posted on **Hold Fast to What is Good**,
<https://holdfasttowhatisgood.com/liturgy/>. Re-posted on the re:Worship blog at <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2018/05/prayer-of-confession-psalm-8.html>.

Benediction

Go, now, in the blessing of the Triune God who creates all things, redeems all things, and sustains all things so that we may live out the glory of God's abundance and peace with one another and all creation. Amen.

Written by Dr. Lisa Hancock, Discipleship Ministries, October 2024.