

REFLECTION TRINITY SUNDAY 31ST MAY 2026

By Rev Dr Fei Taule'ale'ausumai

I remember going for an interview to write the curriculum for a particular Training Institute's new programme on Christian Leadership. I knew everyone on the panel they were all Samoan men. One man in particular the least educated amongst them was not Presbyterian trained and did not possess a degree or even a diploma of sorts, he was the pseudo chaplain of the said outfit. He was always suspicious of my theology and I was suspicious of his intentions as well; it was a mutual dislike I suppose you could say. Anyway, the question he asked me was about the Holy Spirit. He said, "Do you believe in the Holy Spirit". An arrogant and judgemental question determined to undermine my faith and spirituality. Smelling something sinister I thought to myself what's he trying to get at. So I decided to respond with a smart Alec answer.

I responded, "did you know that the Christian leaders of the 3rd century AD also struggled with this same question? If you are referring to the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. The Council of Nicaea in 325 AD debated homoousias to define the exact relationship between God the Father and Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. This debate sought to resolve the Arian controversy, which threatened to split the early Christian Church. Alexander of Alexandria argued that Jesus was co-eternal and uncreated. They insisted that Jesus shared the exact same divine nature as the Father. The Term: *Homoousias* is a Greek word meaning "of the same substance" or "consubstantial." Da de da de da, blah blah blah... My answer went way over the top of his head and he looked confused and baffled. Two of my Presbyterian colleagues were beside themselves laughing on the inside trying not to be seen, they thought that was such a witty and cheeky response to this mans questions. We all had a hilarious laugh afterwards. Anyway, I got the job to write the curriculum.

On this Trinity Sunday, many people still struggle with the traditional language of "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." For some, the image of "father" does not bring comfort or safety. For others, it feels too limited to describe the fullness and mystery of God. And so today we gently open ourselves to new images of the Divine, Creator, Christ, and Spirit; Lover, Word, and Breath of Life; the Holy One who nurtures humanity like a loving parent who gathers every child with tenderness and compassion.

The Trinity reminds us that God is relationship, community, movement, and love flowing between one another. It is not about hierarchy or exclusion, but about connection, mutuality, and belonging. And in that sacred relationship there is room for all people, women and men, young and old, every culture, every identity, every story.

This past week I have spent time with Presbyterian women ministers celebrating women in the church, particularly women who have now been ordained for more than fifty years within our Presbyterian Church. We have remembered the struggles, the discrimination, the barriers, and the resistance they encountered. But we have also celebrated the courage, the wisdom, the faithfulness, and the extraordinary gifts that women have brought into the life of the church.

We remember the women who preached when others said they should remain silent. Women who prayed, who led, who nurtured communities, who bridged the gap between rejection and acceptance. Women who quietly held congregations together through compassion and perseverance. Women who embodied the Spirit of God long before the institution was ready to fully acknowledge their calling. Women, who were brave enough to continue preaching with full 9 month pregnancies claiming that New Life was within. Even I struggled with a colleague at the time and she graciously reminded me of the beauty of being pregnant. My uncomfortableness came after a Niuean minister who was married to an aunt of mine said at my licencing, you have my blessing to be a minister, but I don't ever want to see you preaching behind the pulpit with a 9 month pregnancy. His niece went on to have another 4 children after her ordination.

Today, part of the mystery of Trinity Sunday is that God continually reveals Godself through unexpected people and unexpected voices. The Spirit blows where it will. Revelation comes not only through power and authority, but also through gentleness, wisdom, resilience, and love.

So today we acknowledge and give thanks for the beautiful women who helped bring the church to life women who taught, women who prayed, women who challenged injustice, women who carried hope. We celebrate those who helped transform the church from a place of exclusion into a community moving, however imperfectly, toward greater justice and acceptance.

In John 16:12-15, Jesus tells the disciples that the Spirit will continue to guide them into truth. In this text truth is not a closed book. The Spirit is still speaking, still leading the church into deeper understandings of justice, inclusion, compassion, and human dignity.

The Trinity, Creator, Christ, and Spirit can be understood as God's ongoing movement in the world: creating life, redeeming what is broken, and sustaining hope. Rather than a doctrine to solve, it is a relationship to live. We are invited to participate in God's creative work, Christ's ministry of reconciliation, and the Spirit's movement toward justice and peace.

Perhaps the question for Trinity Sunday is this: How are we being created, redeemed, and sustained today, so that we might help create, redeem, and sustain the world around us? That is the invitation of the Trinity to seek to follow Christ in our own time.

For Trinity Sunday, the reading from Book of Proverbs 8:1–4, 22–31 offers a fascinating and beautiful image of God through the figure of Wisdom Sophia.

Unlike many biblical passages that speak directly about God as Creator, this passage presents Wisdom as a companion of God,

Wisdom speaks in the first person: "The Lord created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago."

Wisdom describes being present before the mountains were formed, before the oceans existed, before the earth itself came into being. She stands beside God as creation unfolds:

This is poetic language rather than a scientific account of creation. It portrays creation as something joyful, creative, relational, and filled with delight.

The doctrine of the Trinity had not yet been developed when Proverbs was written. The author was not consciously speaking about Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

However, early Christians saw in this passage hints of the relational nature of God.

They noticed:

- God the Creator bringing the world into being.
- Wisdom present with God before creation.
- Wisdom participating in God's creative work.
- The Spirit of God moving over creation.

Later Christians connected Wisdom with Christ. The opening of John's Gospel echoes this idea: "In the beginning was the Word..."

Just as Wisdom is present with God at creation, John describes Christ as present with God "in the beginning." this passage offers a richer image of God than a solitary ruler sitting on a throne.

God is revealed as:

- Relationship rather than isolation.
- Creativity rather than control.
- Delight rather than domination.
- Community rather than hierarchy.

The image of Wisdom is especially significant because Wisdom is portrayed as feminine. In a tradition that often speaks of God using masculine language, Proverbs reminds us that the divine mystery cannot be contained by any one gender or image.

Wisdom laughs, dances, delights, and rejoices in creation. The universe is not made through violence or coercion but through joy and relationship.

Perhaps Trinity Sunday is less about trying to explain how three can be one and one can be three, and more about recognising that at the heart of reality is relationship.

Before there was anything else, there was relationship:

- Creator delighting in Wisdom.
- Wisdom delighting in creation.
- Spirit breathing life into the world.

And if we are created in the image of this relational God, then we too are called into relationships of love, justice, mutuality, and community.

The Trinity reminds us that we are not created for isolation. We are created for connection with God, with one another, and with the whole creation in which Wisdom still dances and delights.

That may be the deepest message Proverbs brings to Trinity Sunday: the universe begins not with power, but with relationship; not with loneliness, but with love; not with fear, but with delight.

And as we acknowledge the Trinity today, may we also honour the sacred image of God reflected in every human being. May we become a community where all gifts are welcomed, all voices are heard, and all people know themselves to be deeply loved by the Holy One who creates us, journeys beside us, and breathes life into us still. Amen.