



# Kaurihohore Historic Church

P O Box 4118, Kamo, Whangārei 0141



## Kaurihohore / Kamo Co-operating Parish Sunday 12 June 2022 – Trinity Sunday

*Our service today has been prepared by Richard Smith, one of our Lay Preachers*

We continue to provide emailed, posted or hand-delivered service outlines for those unable to participate in our services in person, and seek to find creative ways of doing Church so all are included in some way.

### **Welcome**

Welcome to worship at Kauri this morning, or wherever and whenever you are sharing in this service. We are trying to reflect the inclusive nature of the love Jesus showed us as the way of God's kingdom in how we worship, despite the difficulties posed by the presence of the Covid virus in our community. We hope you can feel safe and included wherever you are.

Today is Trinity Sunday, the Sunday in the middle of the year when we reflect on how we understand God and experience him in our lives. Battles have been fought, people have been excommunicated, tortured, beheaded, crucified, and burned at the stake over different ideas and understandings of the trinity or unity of God. Hopefully here we can accept it is okay to share different perspectives and points of view, acknowledging God is much more than any of us can ever grasp with our finite minds. By listening to each other openly maybe we can each develop our understanding, deepen our commitment, and grow our faith. Through this season of Pentecost, we continue to ponder the three questions Kimberley raised with us last Sunday:

*How has the Holy Spirit led our church in the past?*

*Where do you see the Holy Spirit active in our church, or in your own life?*

*What dreams do you have for our church in the future?*

So let us now prepare to engage with the divine, however we think of divinity.

Come, then, let us prepare to worship.

## **Call to Worship** (*Based on Psalm 8*)

O Lord, our Lord, your greatness is seen in all the world!

**Your praise reaches up to the heavens;**

**It is sung by children and babies.**

When I look at the sky, which you have made,

**At the moon and the stars, which you set in their places-**

What are human beings, that you think of them;

**Mere mortals that you care for them?**

Yet you made them inferior only to yourself;

**You crowned them with glory and honour.**

You appointed them rulers over everything you made;

**You placed them over all creation:**

Sheep and cattle, and the wild animals too;

**The birds and the fish and the creatures in the seas.**

**O Lord, our Lord, your greatness is seen in all the world!**

Come then people of God, come to worship, and learn of Him.

**God is Spirit and we who worship are called to worship in Spirit and in Truth.**

## **Opening Prayer**

Holy God, however we picture you in our minds, we gather here in worship, to express our awe at the wonderful world you have set us in and the life you have given us to enjoy. We glimpse your character of forgiving and accepting love in the stories we hear of Jesus of Nazareth. We seek to know and be known by your Holy Spirit, that infused with her loving presence, we may discern what is good and true and be enabled to share your love in and through all your creation.

**Amen.**

## **Hymn HFTC 506: God, Whose Almighty Word**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJugdlVH8VY>

## **Prayer for Centring and Renewal** *(based in part on a prayer by David Sparks)*

Holy and Loving God calm our minds with the reassurance that no matter what we have done or not done you welcome us home to your presence like a loving father welcomes a long-lost son. Help us to let go any anxieties and fears for ourselves or for others and to know your deep peace in the depths of our being. In the shelter of this holy place open our hearts and minds to learn of you, to grow our spiritual roots into the soil of your loving presence within us and around us in this faith community and this wonderful world of your creation.

Holy Spirit, truth bringer, you are with us.

**Bind us together in this faith community.**

Holy Spirit, truth bringer, you are with us.

**Expose the depth of our fear, and free us from its power.**

Holy Spirit, truth bringer, you are with us.

**Enable us to discern the dark places, and to change them through the light of Christ.**

Holy Spirit, truth bringer, you are with us.

**Give us courage to confront injustice, and strength and persistence to bring change.**

## **The Lord's Prayer**

### **Scripture Readings**

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31   Romans 5:1-5   John 16:12-15

## **Hymn HFTC 183: The Lord is King, Lift Up Your Voice**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkLzRQ7Jdao>

## **Food for Thought**

May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

Trinity Sunday! I remember one of my teachers from Knox Theological College in the 1960s saying that any preacher who doesn't try to avoid having to preach on Trinity Sunday doesn't know enough to be worth listening to. So, this morning I invite you to engage in reflecting on how you understand God and how does that way of understanding influence how you live your life in this day-to-day world?

In the past it was assumed there was only one right way of understanding the Christian faith and all other ways were wrong, and therefore called heresy. This restriction on accepting difference stems from the time of the Roman Empire and has resulted in unimaginable suffering and persecution over the two thousand years since Jesus taught in Galilee and Judea. In the first couple of centuries there were hundreds of different groups with different ways of understanding and practicing the Way of Jesus. The diversity of Christian churches we see today around the world is much less diverse than that of the first two centuries.

As the early disciples spread out into the Mediterranean world of their time, they developed ways of thinking and talking about the teaching of Jesus as they understood it. But Jesus was a Jew and Jews thought of God as intimately engaged with this world and able to be known through this world. However, the Greek ways of thinking, influenced by Plato, were that the divine was supernatural, unchanging, separated, and unmoved by events in the material world.

Today many peoples' ideas of God and of heaven are largely influenced by this Greek understanding, which was quite different to how Jesus had originally taught.

Then, as we began to develop a scientific understanding of the mechanics of how this material world functions, this Greek other-worldly idea of God meant that, if we could explain things scientifically, we automatically assumed God was not involved. This was the so-called God-of-the-gaps way of thinking. Today some insurers refer to unexplainable events that come out of the blue as 'Acts of God'. So, for many people today God is understood as a way of explaining what we don't understand, and his actions are like some kind of magic. Or, for many, no such aspect of reality exists. I think this is a major reason so many people have left the church and most of the generations after us are not here.

So, today I want to explore with you a story from my childhood that influenced me in how I began to grow my understanding. This is not to say I think you should think like I do. One of the main strengths of this faith community is that we consciously accept that we do not all think or understand our faith in the same way and that's fine and as it should be in a community of different people with different backgrounds and experiences and points of view.

I'm going to invite Rory and Hamish to help me explain how I got to understand God as more than an easy explanation for what I couldn't explain otherwise.

Now Rory and Hamish, I'm going to tell you a story of something that happened to me. Then I'm going to ask you what you think was going on. I'll ask Hamish first as he's younger. Then I'll ask you Rory because being older you may understand things differently. Okay?

One morning, when I was only eight years old, I woke up and went out into the kitchen. There I saw some socks hung up on a cord above the fireplace. Each of the socks had a name on it, Dad, Mum, Uncle Bill, Auntie Carol, Richard, and Lyn, who was my little sister. We had all hung the empty socks up there before we went to bed. But this morning each sock was full of presents.

What day do you think it was?

Why were there presents in the socks?

What is the link between those presents and Jesus?

One of my classmates had commented to me, "Richard, you don't still believe in Father Christmas, do you?" Perplexed I asked my mother what he meant.

She explained that the popular story of Father Christmas was based on an historical story of a Duke Wenceslaus of Bohemia who was famous for giving gifts to the poor and to children, especially in the middle of winter as a way of celebrating God's giving of his son Jesus, at Christmas.

So since then, people had celebrated his memory, by carrying on his legacy by giving gifts to each other, especially to their children at Christmas time.

So, Father Christmas isn't real then? I asked.

What counts as real? She replied. You know Mr. Butler?

Yes. Everybody knew Mr. Butler. He was a very rich local businessman and renowned for always driving a hard bargain in business and never giving to any cause or charity.

Well at Christmas he gives all his staff a half-day holiday to do their Christmas shopping. If the spirit of Christmas is strong enough to make him be that generous on that day, is it real?

You may never be able to see or touch the spirit of Christmas but if it has such a powerful effect that parents all around the world give presents to their children and even hard-hearted people like Mr. Butler do generous things doesn't that mean it counts as real?

That conversation has come back to me often when someone has said God is not real.

This Trinity Sunday How do we experience the reality of the presence of God in our lives?

I see the reality of God in the sense of awe when I look at something beautiful, or some amazing aspect of the natural world, the profound depths of order and complexity revealed by science as we explore the universe. The created universe is one way we experience the reality of God. God the Creator.

I see the reality of God in the stories of Jesus; The forgiving father welcoming his prodigal son home, the compassionate Samaritan caring for the injured crime victim, the exploited woman being defended from her self-righteous attackers, the excluded tax collector and the sick and paralysed being welcomed back into the community. The example and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth are another way we experience the reality of God. God the Son.

I see the reality of God in the examples of self-giving caring, inclusion and power-sharing all around me in the church and in society. People affirming the equal rights of those with disabilities and working to enable them to live as full a life as they can.

People supporting policies ensuring the wealthy pay more tax than the poor and that the poor have access to health, education, housing and welfare services so they can engage in living as members of society regardless of how worthy they are seen to be.

Journalists and scientists pursuing truth and publishing their results, so all are informed and able to participate in decision making that affects their lives. The outworking of the spirit of compassion, forgiveness, generosity, and truth. God the Spirit.

Three ways in which I see the reality of God, but all aspects of the one and only God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

### **Hymn: God who sets us on a journey**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vI2\\_WL9Txo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vI2_WL9Txo)

### **Dedication Prayer**

God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. Loving Lord, we give you thanks for life and all the love we have received that has enabled us to know you and to care for others.

**Receive and bless our giving of all that we are, our treasures, our time, our talents, and our mistakes and learning, that they may enable your love to be known and your transforming compassionate forgiveness experienced among your whole creation. Amen.**

## Prayers of the People

Holy and loving God we give thanks this morning for the things we so often take for granted, the air and the gift of breathing, for life and the chance to laugh, for light and the treasure of being able to see, for warmth and comfort and feeling safe. We celebrate the joy of creation and of opportunities to be creative, to relish beauty and to learn new things.

While we, who are privileged, can enjoy these gifts we pray for those who cannot. We pray for those who have difficulty breathing, those suffering with Covid and other illnesses, those strangled by partners in violent family situations, those forced to live in cities choked with pollution.

We pray for those who are in pain, suffering or dying and for those who know no reason to be happy, for the victims of floods, droughts, fires and landslides, for those trapped in warfare and in poverty and for those in prisons whether of concrete and steel or of depression or anxiety.

We pray for those who cannot see, whether because of blindness or failing vision or from prejudice or lack of knowledge and understanding or whose ability to enjoy life is diminished by fading memory or loss of loved ones. We pray especially for the Ward and the Russell families.

**Lord where we can take action, move us, and where there is nothing more we can do, hear our prayers and move those who can. Reassure with the comfort of your presence all those who mourn and guide and strengthen all who turn to you.**

**Amen.**

## Hymn HFTC 525: Lead Us, Heavenly Father, Lead Us

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OpkEeXWtWg0>

## Commissioning and Blessing

People of the God of Creation go out into the world he has made for you to enjoy, it is so vast no human mind can comprehend it, yet our brains are the most complex things in it. Give thanks every day for all his gifts to us and to all. Share with those who are missing out. Love your friends as well as your enemies so the whole world will know the love of him who has poured out his love for all. His Spirit is within us and out there, the voice of Wisdom and Understanding and Justice. She will be with us to live it into action.

**Thanks be to God. Amen**