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Church of the Holy Spirit
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Genesis 1:1-2:4a

There are very few things that can be said with certainty about the nature of the Holy Trinity. But if any of you are pondering the nature of the Holy Trinity and want to dive deeper into the mystery and what we believe about God, feel free to peruse The Creed of St Athanasius, found on pages 864-5 of the Book of Common Prayer.

As a philosopher, I am happy to discuss the ins and outs of the heretical arguments and how God is not like a plant with three leaves, or the three states of matter, or any questions or theories you may have in individual conversations, or in a book study at some point, but for now suffice it to say

that I do not have a better understanding of the nature of the Holy Trinity today than I did when as a youth minister I preached my first sermon ever on Trinity Sunday at St Gabriel's Church in Douglassville, Pennsylvania. I still wonder how it came to be, what it is made of, and many other substantive details about the nature of the Divine, and while that may keep other folks awake at night, I find comfort in the mystery of the divine relationship.

What I can tell you, however, is what I believe with my whole heart, mind, and strength. That God shows up. God is constantly changing, creating, adapting, and present in our lives.

In seminary, the Rev. Doctor J. Robert Wright, who was himself an institution at General Theological Seminary, had one class he taught annually that was the stuff of campus legend. He was known to dance when he taught about the Trinity. It is a brilliant way to demonstrate the perichoretic nature of the Holy Trinity. Which means the Holy Trinity cannot be experienced or seen as any one aspect of God, as they are intertwined and equally present in every moment and experience. The father is the son is the holy spirit is the son and the father. Clear as mud right?

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are constantly moving and are always in relationship with one another. It is an infinite dance. J Bob attempted to demonstrate this every year, beginning in the 60s when he taught his first lecture, to

2012, when I had him in his final year of teaching. After 6 decades, what started as swing dance became more of an energetic shimmy. But despite the simpler choreography, the image of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit engaged in an eternal life-giving dance has remained at the forefront of my understanding of the Holy Trinity through the years.

During one of the lockdown years, I was tasked with preaching virtually on Trinity Sunday. Having young children at the time and lots of sidewalk chalk, I decided to learn how to draw triquetras and attempt to make it interactive, a kind of Holy Hopscotch, if you will.

I then invited folks to get out and dance in the privacy of their own backyards as a way to engage with the Holy Trinity, a

community in and of itself, while we were physically separated from one another.

Since that time, I have shared the skill and the trinity dance with multiple parishes, and I will share them with you all in just a few minutes. One of my farewell gifts from a family in Haddonfield is a photo I keep in my office of us doing the Trinity dance in 2023. But it wasn't until December of 2024 that the truly mysterious nature of the Holy became apparent in a way that I want to share with you today.

The context of this story is that in November of 2024, my friend Vanessa, V, Joy, and Caitlyn Bomar died. She and I met when I worked alongside her husband, Kyle, in Richmond. Kyle and V had three little girls- Sophia, Anna, and Marie Clare. Sophia was born on my last day at Grace

and Holy Trinity Church, and over the years, V and I talked regularly about all the things. Parenthood, personhood, faith, hope, love, but mostly about understanding God not necessarily as we had been taught in the Church, but as an infinite mystery that can be experienced, engaged with, and who we are invited to know. In 2023, V was diagnosed with stage IV breast cancer, and she began the process of attempting to die a good death, lamenting that she would not live to see her daughters grow up.

It sounds very Eat, Pray, Love or Hallmark Movie-esque to say that one of the ways that V processed her illness and struggled with grief was through dance. She went to the mountaintops, concerts, retreats, and festivals. She found joy in the movement of her body even as the cancer destroyed

her cells. In sacred movement, she found God- in a way separate from the institution she grew up in, one that was fluid and foundational.

Dancing was a recurring theme at the memorial service we held for her in November of 2024. With her husband, Kyle, who in the years since we worked together had become a priest in the Episcopal Church, and another friend of hers, a Presbyterian minister from Tennessee, we carefully planned the service to include and focus on joy in the midst of grief and the understanding that life continues in the nearer presence of God.

At the announcement of the closing hymn, I looked out at the congregation and saw the girls – Anna (5), Marie Claire (3), and

Sophia (2)- who had just sat through a very long church service and were, understandably, squirmy in their pews. While they were surrounded by friends and family, they clearly needed something that wasn't being offered in the moment. No one could peer into their little minds to discern what they were thinking, feeling, or knowing during the first notes of the hymn. Yet, God knew what they needed. Not a well-intentioned hug, a word of comfort, or a cookie from the repast was going to be enough. The sisters needed to move and be comforted. They needed one another as a support to each other and to engage in the communion of the Holy Trinity, along with all the saints in the great cloud of witnesses, including their mom, V.

So as we began to leave the altar, singing the final hymn: “The Lord of the Dance,” the three women who had lead the service, myself, the pastor of the church where it was held, and the colleague from Tennessee each took one of the girls' hands, and we danced in a chaotic amoeba-like circle stepping in and out, crossing arms and raising them up.

All the while singing

Dance, then, wherever you may be,
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,
And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,
And I'll lead you all in the Dance, said he.

This moment demonstrated to me the complexity of this life and showed how God shows up to each of us in unexpected and yet completely needed ways.

In that moment, I saw the divine dance do its work. I intentionally looked into the eyes of each of these littles, who I love but do not know, who do not often see me, and still, their eyes twinkled with recognition that they are and always will be beloved.

It was not my feet dancing in that moment; it was not my body spinning Sophia like a top; it was not my voice singing the words; it was the Holy Trinity in that moment, comforting these children as they needed it. The specifics of how, why, where, and when God will show up are beyond what I can describe to you all, but I have seen what happens when we accept the invitation to dance with the divine.

Let us all take a piece of paper, a writing utensil, and a few minutes now to create a handheld Holy Hopscotch. I don't care if you can't draw a straight line or if you don't dance; this meditation tool will allow each of us to engage with the entirety of God.

Here's how we make a simple triquetra- also known as a Celtic knot.

1. First, put three dots on your paper (an equilateral triangle)
2. Then draw a half circle connecting the bottom two points (like a frowning face)
3. Then connect the top point and the bottom right point with a half circle
4. Finally, connect the two remaining points with a half-circle arc.

Now, when you need to move, when you need to be connected to the communion of saints of the constantly moving God of all creation, you can trace the interconnected lines and remember how God shows up and invites us to dance.

Amen