

Is the Trinity key to Church Unity? Ephesians 4:1-6

Hello, my name is David Priddy and I am a minister of Ashford Common Baptist Church. It's my pleasure to share some thoughts with you as a guest blogger this week.

This Sunday Christians around the world focus on what we call Trinity Sunday. It doesn't rank as one of the big 3 festivals, Christmas, Easter and Pentecost but does give us an important opportunity to express our faith.

The problem we often have is that the Trinity – God as three persons Father, Son and Holy Spirit yet being one – is a difficult concept to our human minds. How can three be one? It's a mystery but I'll attempt to add some clarity in Sunday's sermon. My question today is whether the Trinity is key to Church Unity. My thoughts went to Paul's letter to the Ephesians where we find the three persons of the Trinity in chapter 4. Paul is drawing our attention to what can seem to be another difficult concept – the Church being **one** despite there being many different ways of being church. 'One' is a key word, being used 7 times in 3 verses.

It's a basic scientific fact that a head cannot have more than one body. Jesus is head of the Church¹ and he only has one body – which Paul points out in verse 4 is the church.

Jesus, the Son of God, is crucial to the Church, and to each member of the church. There is only one means by which we can be saved from the penalty for our sin and only one story of significance – the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul expresses this in verse 5 – there is 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism.' He continues and draws our thoughts to the **Father**. No matter how many different so-called gods that culture tells us we must allow to co-exist in today's world, there is one God the Father to whom Jesus is the Way the Truth and the Life². He is **the** God of the whole planet whether people recognise him or not. He is the Father of the one united Christian family of whom Christ is the head – head of the church and head of the Hampton Mission Partnership.

Whatever differences Christians may have in the ways we practise our faith, it is still only **one** faith. I am encouraged to see how two of the ways we express our faith – what we call Methodist and Baptist – have come into a partnership to worship together and serve God together.

Partnership and such unity are rare. Many well-intentioned people have tried to heal the fragmented church through unity movements. There is a place for these, but the key to Christian unity lies in the nature of our relationships not in man-made organised structures.

Our Partnership was prompted by the third person of the Trinity: The **Holy Spirit** and has been guided by Him. Again in verse 4, just as there is one body, so there is one Spirit.

There are many different opinions as to the Holy Spirit's nature and what He can and cannot do. There are many different versions of how His presence in our lives is demonstrated. Diversity of ideas is nothing to be

¹ Ephesians 4:16

² John 14:6

shunned as it adds to our understanding of Him as long as our understanding is based on the scriptures He inspired to be written.

There are key elements of His nature which draw the church into closer relationship and unity, but let me mention just four elements of the so-called fruit of the spirit: love, gentleness, patience and forbearance³. The fruit is topped with a dose of humility just as we might add cream to a fruit sundae. These are key to the unity of the trinitarian church of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

May we all be a part of God's diverse and unified church. How to bring the church into unity may seem a mystery, but I hope my thoughts have helped. With God's help we can understand how that can be achieved.

In our Sunday sermon we'll try to understand more of the mystery of the Trinity.

- May the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, Amen

³ Galatians 5:22