



## **UNITED PARISH OF CHINNOR, ASTON ROWANT, CROWELL AND SYDENHAM**

### **PASTORAL LETTER JUNE 2026**

Dear Reader,

In the Church Year, we are now in the season called 'Trinity', which last 22 weeks.

When I was ordained and began life as a curate, there was a 'joke' about how the Vicar should always take Trinity Sunday off and the Curate should get to do the sermon that day. It was seen to be a real challenge to understand, and an equally challenging task to explain it to others.

God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, three yet one, one yet three. Like H<sub>2</sub>O experienced as water, steam and ice, God known as three separate persons of the Trinity, yet in essence one. Which might at first seem simple to grasp, yet in reality far more complex, hence we have 22 weeks to think about it!!

I've just completed writing a three-part course on 'The Creeds' for a United Parish study group, where the Trinitarian Nature of God is clearly evident in the words we repeat when we say the Creed together every Sunday, although you won't find the word 'Trinity' in the Bible. In identifying bible passages to include in the course material, and in constructing questions for the group to discuss, I have been on a journey of discovery which has included at times being puzzled, confused, informed and illuminated.

It's reminded me of the importance for me of sitting beside the disciple Thomas, confronting my doubts when presented with something amazing and mind-blowing, and questioning and thinking: *"Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."* (John 20:25) But I also recognise the importance as a disciple of Jesus of being available to encounter the Risen Christ for myself, and hearing his voice: *"Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."* (John 20:27)

My journey of discipleship is one of life-long discovery – for me it's essential to have a questioning faith, that's how I learn and confront my doubts and questions. But that sits alongside another strong belief I have, that God is so immense and beyond my understanding, with mystery and awe, that there comes a point where I must simply trust him and put my faith in him.

For me I am 'jumping' metaphorically into God's loving arms, like a child jumping from the side of a swimming pool into the arms of a parent waiting in the pool to catch them, and when appropriate to let the child swim on their own. God will catch me as I jump and be with me as I swim through the waters of life, whether in the calm shallow end or in the challenges of the deep end.

So 'Dear Reader', during the next 22 weeks of Trinity I hope you discover something new about God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and where there are doubts and questions, that you will encounter God in your searching with an open mind, and in the mysteriousness and majesty of God you will be able to trust him for those things that seem beyond comprehension. Try jumping and see what happens!

Holy God,  
faithful and unchanging:  
enlarge our minds  
with the knowledge of your truth,  
and draw us more deeply  
into the mystery of your love,  
that we may truly worship you,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.

Tony Whitaker

