

## Episode 78 - Trinity Sunday

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Narrator: Thanks for listening to another episode of Project Zion. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts the restoration offers for today's world. Project Zion is sponsored by the Latter Day Seekers team from Community of Christ.

(Music)

Karin: Welcome. I'm Karin Peter and this is common grounds where we have conversations about the liturgical or Christian calendar. So, a brief review: Through the seasons and holy days of the liturgical calendar, we relive the story of faith, the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. In each season of the calendar, we participate with our whole being through scripture and symbol and color and the hymns we sing. As we learn about the calendar and live it as a spiritual practice, we deepen our understanding of discipleship and of Christian community. The calendar begins four weeks before Christmas with the season of Advent and moves through Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, and Ordinary Time. Today we're talking about a holy at called Trinity Sunday with our guest Susan Oxley. Susan is a minister in Community of Christ and has served in many roles in the church, administrative and ministerial, including several years as a member of the Council of Twelves. She currently serves in the Office of Evangelist, a minister of blessing. So, Susan, welcome.

Susan: Thank you very much. It's great to be with you, Karen, and to share a little bit about Trinity Sunday. I'm now retired from the Council of Twelve. I really enjoyed my years serving, not only in the United States, but also in the South Pacific Island nations and in Canada, and I learned from all of those people. I loved being with them, encountering their cultures, and they helped me grow and mature in my faith and my ministerial experience, so, it was just great being with them and being a part of their journey as well.

Susan: Now, in my retirement, I'm teaching in the Renton School District as a substitute teacher, mainly with elementary school kids, and I am now learning from them and from my four granddaughters, whom I love dearly and who keep me on my toes and keep me active and focused. So, my life is full with the children and with the ministry of an Evangelist and with opportunities to serve and share as I am doing today.

Karin: Well, Susan, your teaching skills are going to come in handy today, because I discovered, as I began to look into information about Trinity Sunday, that I know very little about it. So, what exactly is Trinity Sunday?

Susan: Trinity Sunday is the Sunday after Pentecost, the very next Sunday, which makes sense because, as you explained in your summary of the liturgical calendar, we start with the birth of Jesus, his life, his death, his resurrection, finally the coming of the Holy Spirit. And there, in that flow, from Advent through Pentecost, you have an exploration into the nature of God and also into the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and there are all these events that come about in the Christian year and we celebrate on our Sundays. So after Pentecost, when you add the Holy

Spirit, now we put the whole thing together in a Sunday that doesn't focus on an event in the life of the church, it focuses on a concept, a doctrine, and that is the doctrine of one God expressed in three persons as Father, Son, and Spirit. So, that Sunday is dedicated to the doctrine of the Trinity, and we are to focus on that unity of God, Jesus, and the Spirit on that day.

Karin: So when you and I talked a little bit about this, you shared with me a Trinity confession, if you will.

Susan: Yes! So I confess that for most of my life, I have not necessarily focused on or even believed in the Trinity.

Karin: Really!?

Susan: No. Not really. And so I'm not surprised that you don't know a lot about it. Probably a lot of our listeners may not know a lot about it either. When I grew up, it was in a lot of different denominations, and I heard about the Trinity; but I didn't understand it. It didn't make sense to me: three in one. And I couldn't rationally put my mind around it. So I kinda dismissed it. Didn't even bother with it. And in our own faith denomination, we did not teach the Trinity. We didn't focus on it; we didn't try to explore it and understand it. We just shoved it off to the side, so I'm not surprised you don't know much about it.

Karin: No. I don't remember hearing about it growing up at all.

Susan: That makes sense, because we didn't---we didn't really use the concept and, probably, if we had been asked if our church was Trinitarian, we would have said no, that we are not. And we would have been proud of it, because we would have been associating that concept of Trinity with the Catholic Church. Maybe with a few of the other Protestant churches, but we would have been wanting to separate ourselves from them by affirming what we did not believe instead of what we did believe.

Karin: Okay. Well, that makes it complicated then to launch into this, but I think you're up to it. So, what is the Trinity.

Susan: Well, the Trinity is a belief that God is not alone out there. One deity sitting up there choosing to either love or not love as the whim---as He---you know---as the whim catches Him, but rather God is a relationship. God is a community of three aspects, three elements, three beings that all intertwine, interweave, dance together, kinda hold hands, and are one God. And so, at its very heart, God is community. God is this relationship, and that captured me. That's a fairly new development in the theology of Trinity. It's not one---although it was imbedded in some of the ancient texts and some of the old ways of understanding Trinity, it wasn't the standard way the doctrine was expressed. And so, this has come to light, people have run with this, and grabbed hold of it, and written about it now. There's a book called *The Divine Dance* by Richard Rohr, which is quite good. And so it's captured me. And now, as I understand Trinity as being relationship and community, it makes a whole lot more sense. And being in Community of Christ, it sounds like it matches very well with our theology and where we are and what we're trying to do in the world. The old ways of understanding Trinity simply named

God, the Father; God, the Son; God, the Holy Spirit. And then it was gradually expanded to include Creator, Redeemer, and Comforter; or Sovereign, Savior, and Counsellor. But there's a whole variety of ways of understanding God now in those three different elements that open up all kinds of possibilities for devotion, for worship, for exploring and expressing yourself in psalms or poetry or something like that. So, for instance, imagine that you understand the Trinity as God Beyond Our Understanding, God of Our Best Understanding, God Working in Us to Draw Us into New Understanding.

Karin: Ahhhhh. That is a new way of thinking about the Trinity.

Susan: How about God that Sacrifices for Us, God that Calls Us to Sacrifice for Others, and God that Gives Us the Strength to Make the Sacrifice.

Karin: So now we're taking this understanding of community beyond something static, over there, and making it live here, in our discipleship.

Susan: Exactly! And Trinity Sunday is all about discipleship, because the part of the calendar that follows Trinity Sunday are all of the Sundays of Ordinary Time where we explore what discipleship is and how to live out the teachings and precepts that Jesus gave us so that we can grow and become and deepen our faith and be the people that God has called us to be in discipleship.

Karin: Okay. So when we talk about Trinity and you say that the---the old ways of understanding the---the Trinity were Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and now there's these new creative, living ways of understanding the Trinity. How did we get from there to here?

Susan: Well----we have to go clear back to Jesus's day.

Karin: Okay.

Susan: So, in the Bible there is not the word Trinity, and the beginning followers of Jesus didn't even think in terms of Trinity, which is one of the reasons why I didn't think in terms Trinity, 'cause I was pretty attached to just simple Bible scriptures. But during his lifetime, Jesus's followers struggled to understand who he was; they struggled to understand his identity and his relationship to God, to the promise of Messiah, to the prophets, to current leaders of the day, and when he died and then rose again, that struggle did not change, in fact, it deepened, it got more complex, and his disciples began to share with others their stories of the empty tomb, of the resurrection appearances of Jesus, of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and their conviction that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. But what does it mean to be the Son of God? Does that mean that Jesus is a god? Is Jesus divine? And what about this Holy Spirit who came and empowered them and changed and transformed his life. Was that God also? Does that mean there's three gods or only one God? So, these were questions the disciples had not figured out and solved. They simply lived in the middle of that mystery. But Jesus was Jewish, and the heart of the Jewish faith is an affirmation that God is One. Jesus would have been appalled at anything that hinted that there was more than one God, and his followers knew that. They could not affirm three gods. So, how do you resolve all this? Leaders and disciples and theologians

debated this for centuries, and, finally, at one of the councils, the Council of Nicea, 325 AD or Current Era, the Church leaders drafted a statement about God that included a concept of Trinity, that God was indeed one God, but there were three persons in that God who were distinct persons, but not separate, if you can believe that---

Karin: I'm---I'm with ya. (laughter)

Susan: And those three persons were God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And that's how it all began. But they also affirmed at that time, and it has continued to this day, that Trinity is a mystery. They didn't understand it completely even in making the statement. They thought they had most of the answers and could cover most of the bases, but our rational mind just can't handle it. So, Trinity is basically a mystery that we live with. It's not a wall that we can climb and get on top of. It's more like an ocean we swim in.

Karin: So, we're swimming in this ocean of mystery, if you will, and it took 300 years for really smart people to figure out the concept and now 2000 years for us to just kind of live in it. Is that what we're saying?

Susan: That's exactly what we're saying. And we still don't have it figured out. We still have to affirm it's a mystery.

Karin: So what's the best way for us to begin to explore that mystery to better understand why Trinity Sunday is in the liturgical calendar?

Susan: Well, let's go back to the scriptures.

Karin: Okay.

Susan: In the scripture record of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, you find hints of the concept of Trinity as people explore the nature of God. There's explorations into God as Creator; there's explorations into God as Wisdom, which is often, then later, equated to the "Word" that John talked about in the New Testament, which is Jesus; and there are references to the Holy Spirit, the spirit of God throughout the Old Testament. So you have each of the members of the Trinity being held up in the Old Testament, and you also have some times places where the number three is associate with God in one way or another. For instance, in Isaiah where you have the call to Isaiah, and the affirmation, the shout of praise to God as "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts." And you've got the "holy" three times. And so this happens, too, in the scriptures. So the idea of three as a holy number comes into it to, too. Well, then, in the New Testament, there's not the word "Trinity." You don't find the word "Trinity" in the Bible anywhere. That's a concept that was added to to try to explain how to put the scriptures together. So the first time that we have in the written record a scripture that really puts all three of these together in a statement that seems to hint toward Trinity is in the writings of Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians. And you'll find in Corinthians 13: 11-14, Paul talks about the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit in his doxology to the saints at the end of his letter. And he puts those three together, so you've got Jesus Christ, God, and the Holy Spirit, and he puts them together in that way. And that was

around 52 to 53 Current Era, which would have been about 20 years after Jesus lived and died. Now, in the Gospel of Matthew, which was written in 80 AD or Current Era, you have in the Great Commission, a statement that sounds very Trinitarian when he says "Go therefore into all the world, making disciples and baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And in our church, we still use that in our baptismal formula, and that's the only place in our history where we might have really come across that Trinitarian concept, even though we didn't name it that.

Karin: Because we've had that statement with us since the beginning of the church.

Susan: Since the beginning of the church. Even though we didn't say, "this is a Trinitarian formula. This means the Trinity." We didn't say to ourselves, or to anybody else. But we did use that Trinitarian understanding of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy spirit in our baptismal formula, and we still use it today. Now of the Gospels, the Gospel of John is the one that explores more completely some of the foundational issues underlying Trinity, even though he never expresses the concept of Trinity. John always talks about Jesus and the Holy Spirit, God and Jesus, God and the Holy Spirit. He always puts two of them together; he very rarely puts all three of them together, but he is busy in his Gospel creating a relationship between those three. And so we turn to the Gospel of John to understand a lot of what the fundamental idea of Trinity is about. The Spirit will guide you into all truth; the Spirit glorifies Christ and declares him, and all the Father has is Christ and will be declared to you by the Holy Spirit. So, you see, we get--- we get some of this theology put together, and that was in John 16; 12-15. But, you also have in John and in the letter of John later--written later--you have this expiration into the concept of God as love. And, of course, I grew up with God is Love; that's the simplest explanation of what God is, and I could--I could relate to that. I could grab hold of that and make that my own. And so, love made a whole lot of sense to me, and I believed God was love. But what is love? Love is not one individual, a long ranger out there doing whatever they chose, love is a relationship. And so you have not only the need for two people in order to have love, you also have to have communication between those two people, which creates the third element. So you have one individual is an individual; two makes a pair, but three make the pair communicating and flowing with love. Three makes a community.

Karin: Three makes in the sense of what we've discussed already a holy community.

Susan: A holy community.

Karin: All right.

Susan: And, that flow moves throughout the Universe, throughout our lives, throughout all of creation, and pulls us in so that we live in the flow. We live in that community of God. We are part of that. We are drawn into it.

Karin: Part of that holy relationship.

Susan: Part of the holy relationship. That's what the grace of God is all about. That's--when God loves us unconditionally, when Jesus grants us forgiveness and mercy, when the Holy Spirit

inspires us, we are experiencing that communion of love, that community of love, and we are part of it. We are the fourth member of that community, but we're not just that fourth member alone. You can't just have four, because everybody else is part of the community, too. So, we can't stand alone. We have to stand in relationship with one another, and we have to acknowledge the community, not only of God, but the community that we are a part of in the human realm that brings all of us together as one in the kingdom and community that Jesus preached and taught and spoke about.

Karin: Well, when you put it that way, I begin to understand why the Trinity is celebrated as part of the calendar. We're putting God, Jesus, Spirit, together in a way that influences not just what we believe, but who we are and how we live that out in our discipleship.

Susan: Exactly. And we can't live out our discipleship without that flow of love, that flow of Trinity, of communicating love among God, Son, and Spirit. We can't live out lives without that bathing us and flowing through us and informing us about how to be the disciples that Jesus has called us to be.

Karin: So that kind of leads us into the idea of the calendar being something that helps us shape and form our discipleship, so how has Trinity Sunday kind of been observed in the Christian church?

Susan: In the first century church, not only did they not have a concept of Trinity, they did not have a focus on celebrating the nature of God on a particular Sunday in a particular worship. And that wouldn't have even occurred to them. It took a lot of organization of the church and more hierarchy and more elaborate organization and thought before they began to designate specific themes at different times of the year and for specific purposes. But, the idea and the language of the Trinity after 325 was used a lot in worship in various ways, and leaders began to write poems and psalms and songs and prayers that expressed Trinitarian language, but remembering Trinity on a specific Sunday didn't happen until the middle of the 1100s. That long! It took over a thousand years--a thousand and one hundred years before they actually established a Trinity Sunday. And here's---

Karin: They were busy swimming in the mystery, Susan.

Susan: That's right. (laughing). Still swimming in the mystery. We hadn't come ashore yet. So, it all started with Thomas a Becket when he was ordained the Archbishop of Canterbury on the Sunday following Pentecost.

Karin: I'm sensing a theme here.

Susan: Yes. And he wanted to--as his first act as the Archbishop of Canterbury--he wanted to commemorate that Sunday as being terribly important, not because of his ordination to Archbishop, but because he felt the love of God and he wanted to make sure that people were turning their focus to God and praising God and focusing completely on God, and so he designated that Sunday after Pentecost as Trinity Sunday. And the practice spread from Canterbury all through England and then the rest of the western church. Now, the Catholic

church established it as a special feast day for universal observance all around the world in 1334. And that was Pope John XII, and everybody listened to what he said and they began celebrating Trinity Sunday after 1334. Now, after the Reformation, many of the Protestant churches that broke away from the Catholic church kept some of the concepts and principles that they had learned in the Catholic church, and the Trinity was one of them. And they continued to celebrate Trinity Sunday even as Protestants on that Sunday following Pentecost. And today, a lot of, but not all, Protestant churches still celebrate Trinity Sunday then, and they have special Trinity prayers. They praise the mystery of God; there's a lot of praise for the love of God and the grace and mercy of God; some recite old creeds like the Athanasian Creed or the Nicene Creed that came out of those councils, in memory of the struggle that they went through and what those creeds say about the nature of God. And then many of those Protestant churches begin then to turn their faces toward discipleship in the coming weeks, just as I explained, so that Trinity Sunday is kinda the jumping off point or the kick-off for a program focused on discipleship and living out in our own lives the teachings of Jesus. So, that's---that's kinda the flow of how Trinity Sunday came into being and how it's practiced today.

Karin: So if I went to church on Trinity Sunday, I might see, as I understand it, I might see symbolism that reflects the understanding of the Trinity. For example, the triangle is something I saw mentioned over and over as kind of a symbol of Trinity that would be displayed on Trinity Sunday.

Susan: Yes. Traditionally, the color for Trinity is white, which represents purity and holiness---

Karin: So banners and pulpit cloth and everything would be white.

Susan: Sure. Sometimes ribbons, you know, if you are having a ribbon dance----(laughter)

Karin: If we're having ribbon waving in church it, it would be white ribbon.

Susan: Ribbon waving in church, it would be white ribbons. But, anything that would celebrate the nature of God, you know, and---is usually white. The equilateral triangle that you've mentioned is the most ancient symbol. And that was the very first of the symbols that was used for Trinity, because it's got three points. Makes sense.

Karin: Makes sense.

Susan: And from that it grew into three overlapping circles, which have kind of a triangle in the middle, and then they got more elaborate and they put symbols in each one of those circles. So, a crown for God, a lamb for Jesus, a dove for the Holy Spirit, and the word 'unity' in the middle, in that triangle in the middle. There's a symbol called triquetra, which is like the---the three rings, only each of those rings is---has a point like an arch and they all flow one into the other so you can---if you start your pencil at one side, you can trace the whole thing without ever taking your pencil up out of the design, which means it's a symbol for eternity.

Karin: I see.

Susan: So you've got the three in one, but you've also got the eternity in there, and---and the fact that three can't be separated or divided from one another. St. Patrick in Ireland taught the concept of Trinity using the shamrock.

Karin: Of course.

Susan: Of course. The three little hearts of the shamrock which, of course, stood for love; but it was Father, Son, and Spirit, you know, all loving, all united in one leaf, one shamrock plant. So, you've got those kinds of symbols.

Karin: So I found some---I don't know---rather interesting descriptions of symbols that you haven't mentioned; for example, at one point the Trinity would be symbolized by three animals, like three rabbits in a circle, or three deer in a circle, or three bird in a circle, which I'm not sure how that makes sense (Susan laughs), but would be interesting to see. And then I read about a church in Austria that was built in 1722 called the Holy Trinity Church, and it has three aisles, three towers, three doors, three windows on either side, three altars, three bells, and three rows of pews. That is definitely a holy Trinity church.

Susan: Wow. I would love to see that sometime. That would be interesting. Well, there are other images for Trinity that have been used through the years to try to express it, like H<sub>2</sub>O can be ice, water, and steam. Or if you have three candles, each with a flame, and you tilt them so they all are together and make one flame out of the three, that's like the Trinity. Or, if you line three candles up, one right behind the other, and then you lean down and you look through the flames, so the flames are lined up and you're seeing right straight through the flames, all of them together, that's like the Trinity. There's also a totem pole that has three, you know, images on it, but it's all one pole.

Karin: Oooh, what a great Northwest image for the Trinity.

Susan: Yes. And then, of course, the divine dance that, you know, of persons holding hands and interweaving and all that. The Celtic knots are sometimes expressive of the Trinity union and continuity. But, the problem is, Trinity is still a mystery, and it's not like a riddle to be solved. It's something that we don't understand; it's beyond our comprehension, and the common statement is that if you talk about the Trinity for more than just a few minutes, you've probably erred into heresy because it's not easy to figure out how to talk about it without dividing God completely separately into three things that aren't united or to uphold the elements as all of one being. Anyway, I think we've probably, in this whole conversation, erred into heresy multiple times, and I'm not even going to apologize for it. All I'm gonna say is we're using human speech and how do you understand something this big and this grand and glorious. We'll just go back to God is love.

(laughter)

Karin: I think we're safe there, although it has been a good conversation in heresy here with you so far. So you mentioned earlier that in Community of Christ, we traditionally did not really talk



about Trinity nor even claim it as part of our doctrine or understanding, so how now is Trinity and, particularly Trinity Sunday, how is it observed in Community of Christ?

Susan: Well, nowadays, we need to help our people begin to understand the sense of God as community, that the very nature of God is community. And so, that is expressed in our faith through a variety of ways that we could use to celebrate Trinity Sunday. For instance, Trinity not only affirms that the three elements or the three person of God are united, but also that they are diverse, that they're not the same. They each have their own flavor, if you will, but they are all one. And so this idea of diversity, not being a dividing thing, but rather a unifying thing that enriches the whole is very important in the concept of Trinity, and our church stands for unity in diversity. Not uniformity----that's a completely different thing, and uniformity cannot be an expression of love. It has to be unity in diversity, upholding each individual in their uniqueness and accepting them totally and loving and letting that flow of God flow through. So on Trinity Sunday, one of the ways we can express that is to focus on unity and diversity.

Karin: Our Enduring Principle.

Susan: Our Enduring Principle of unity and diversity. We also have the Enduring Principle of community and the blessings of community. And so that's another way to focus our Trinity Sunday is on the blessings of community, recognizing that God, within the Divine experience, is basically community; and we are called to live that out and to let go of our individualism, our individual greed, our need to, you know, do it my way---that kind of thing, and to embrace one another in community. Many churches in the Protestant world also use Trinity Sunday to celebrate peace and justice. And we are all about peace and justice. We are trying to become a peace church, and we don't know what that means either.

Karin: Part of the mystery, Susan.

Susan: It's part of the mystery. We---we have 50, 60 nations around the world and people who think different things about peace and we just wrap our arms around all of us and head us down the road toward Christ's peace, not knowing exactly how to get there or what that means. But we do have to listen to each other. We have to work together. We have to identify where we can work for justice in our desire and our---our journey toward peace. And Trinity Sunday is a great time to do that, because embedded in Trinity Sunday embedded in the concept of Trinity is this mutuality of the three persons, this idea that none of them are equal or over the other. They all are mutually supportive and caring and compassionate. They all have an equality that does not allow for injustice within the Trinity. And if we are bathed by the flow of the Trinitarian love, then we cannot allow injustices to occur either. So, a focus on peace and justice would be perfect for Trinity Sunday if you have that understanding of what Trinity is all about.

Karin: Thank you, Susan. That's a beautiful image of Trinity.

Susan: There are ways in your worship life that you can celebrate Trinity in all kinds of aspects. For instance, you could have a processional shout of "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty" that all of the congregation would shout, not say, but shout in praise to God. You could have special prayers that praise God for God's love and God's nature. It's---life in the

triune God is never static, and so you can always have a, you know, there's always action, there's always movement in that flow of God's love. And so you could have active elements in your worship experience, even, maybe, a dance---a Trinitarian dance---that everybody would eventually join in. You can just gradually build this dance, and everybody would dance around the---you know, circle around the sanctuary, if you're---you know, if you're that into active things. Communion is a perfect time to focus on the communion of God, with these three persons all communing together. God is the one who welcomes us to the table and gives us the bread and the wine, and that divine hospitality is something that we need to mirror in our own lives. We think of God as the one who blesses us with the bread and wine; Christ is the one who welcomes to the table and calls us to faithful members of the body of Christ; and the Spirit renews us, comforts us, flows among us in unity. In the space that we gather, we listen for the word of the Father, the teaching of the Son, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; and then we go out to witness to everybody else that we have known and participated in this Trinitarian flow of love that we call God. So, there's all kinds of ways that we can embody Trinity in our worship experience. Don't just collect the offering; BE the offering. Pass out slips of paper that have these three circles, intertwined circles, and ask people to write in each circle one way in which they can celebrate the Trinity with their time, treasure, and talent. In one circle, how can they celebrate or give back or uphold creation? In one circle, how can they celebrate and act out and live the discipleship to Jesus Christ. In one circle, how can---what spiritual practice are they going to engage in to listen more closely to the Spirit? And then, for the offering, you bring that up to the altar and you lay it on the altar with a silent prayer of thanks to God for all of the ways in which those three intertwine in your life. So there's all kinds of ways.

Karin: There ARE all kinds of ways. You've got me actually excited for Trinity Sunday with some of this creative thinking. So, as you have shared with us about the Trinity in your personal journey, with Trinity as well as the journey of Community of Christ in understanding it, do you have any specific memory or moment of interaction with this understanding of Trinity that stands out for you?

Susan: Well, for me, it's hard to separate the notions of love and the triune God and community into separate pieces. And so, there have been extremely---extremely poignant moments in my life---start again. There've been extremely deep and spiritual moments in recent years when those three have come together for me in such a way that I feel like I have experienced the Trinitarian God in a way that goes beyond human speech. Those moments have come quite often when I have been in---in relationship with somebody else. Now, once or twice, it's come when I've been alone, but almost always it's been when I've been with someone else. When my husband was diagnosed with terminal cancer, there were moments in our life---and we had to decide to live each day and not die each day--that whatever time he had left, we needed to focus on living. And so, in those days when he struggled with cancer and sometimes there was not much energy or even desire to do much, and we spent time just being together in each other's company. And that flow of love that was given to us in those moments, and the moments of awareness of how precious that moment was, how beautiful was the communion between the two of us, that was enlarged and enriched because we both were believers and disciples of Jesus Christ, and God was in those moments. And so, I have multiple moments in the last few years where that--that---togetherness that we---that every couple experiences--was deepened and enriched and made larger than all life for us because we focused in, because we recognized God's

love flowing between us and the way in which God's spirit was there enlivening and enriching and giving us life in that moment, even though death hovered, even though death was in our minds, life was a gift at that moment, and it was the flow of God's love and that God as creator, sustainer, redeemer, all working together in that moment. There's many moments like that when Ron was alive. I also experienced in his death, in his final moment of death, I had an opportunity to speak to him just before he died. He was in coma. I believe, and it's a statement of faith, that he heard me. And I told him that it would be okay, that he didn't have anything to fear, that God was with him in that moment with a flow of love that bathed and comforted and--and sustained him in that moment, and that it would be a sacred moment, because God was present in Christ, in the Holy Spirit, and in the creator. It was a sacred moment and that it was a sacrament to die. And he would simply pass from our human love into God's divine love and God would receive him in God's loving arms in that communion of three persons and take Ron right in and he would just blend right in to that community in a beautiful way. And---and then he died. So I believe Ron heard me in that time, and I feel like that was a moment of being in the flow [clears throat]--sorry, in the flow of God's love and that relationship of three persons and that divine dance that reaches out and draws us in and makes us truly children of God.

Karin: Thank you, Susan, for sharing that with us. That holy, divine moment. I think, with that, I'll offer some words from St. Augustine from the 4th Century. Most blessed Trinity, the lover, the beloved, the love that exists between them, may we so share in your divine dance that our lives may be forever entwined with yours, both now and forever, Amen.

Karin: It has been a blessing to swim in the mystery of God with you this morning, Susan. So, in closing, in this spirit of Trinitarian love, we'll close and thank Susan for stopping by to visit with us today to share so profoundly about Trinity Sunday and about her experience with the flow of God's love. So, again, I'm Karin Peter. This is Common Grounds, part of the Project Zion podcast, and our next episode will be with Apostle Janne Grover, and our topic on that day will be Ordinary Time as we continue living in the liturgical calendar. Thanks for listening.

(Music)

Narrator: The views expressed in this episode are of those speaking and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Latter Day Seekers team or of Community of Christ. The music has been provided by Ben Howington. You can find his music at [Mormonguitar.com](http://Mormonguitar.com).

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