

Year A Pentecost

What a delight it is to see St Mungo's so full this morning as Whipman Week gets into full swing and I trust that all of you who went on the Rideout yesterday returned safe and sound and are not too sore this morning.

Some of you may remember that at last year's Kirking Service at St Andrew's, which coincided with the Feast of Pentecost, Tony Foley talked about being drunk at 9 in the morning. Now, I'm sure no Whipman or his Lass has ever been drunk at 9 in the morning, so rather than talking about being drunk I want to talk about reeling – not as in reeling around the worse for wear but as in Scottish dancing – or to be more specific about foursome reels, of which there may well be some later this week at the dinner dance.

For those of you not familiar with the Church calendar, today marks Trinity Sunday, when we celebrate God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. You'll be relieved to hear I'm not going to dive down some theological rabbit hole trying to explain it, both because it would take too long, and I'd probably get it wrong anyway. Even an analogy such as comparing the Trinity to a tree – root, trunk and branch – doesn't really work as it's too simplistic.

But at its heart the idea of the Trinity is that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are in community with each other, receiving and giving love to each other in equal measure. Since as Christians we believe that we are all made in God's image, it follows that we too are made to be in community with each

other, and isn't Whipman Week a wonderful example of West Linton coming together every year as community.

Whipman is for everyone and so many people work together behind the scenes to make it a success. There's something for everyone, and that's as it should be and also one of the reasons why West Linton is such a vibrant community. So vibrant that Markie and I are set to move into the village next month after almost 30 years in Dolphinton. Better late than never.

Over the centuries the Church has played a huge role in community, particularly in social provision. Until the creation of the NHS the Church founded and ran many hospitals, and still has a part to play in healthcare today through chaplaincy services offered by different denominations in many hospitals.

The history of education in Scotland is quite similar; legislation almost 400 years ago created parish schools, generally run by the presbyteries of the local kirk. Did you know that St Mungo's, which was consecrated in 1857, was both a school and a church for more than 50 years until a purpose-built primary school was built in the village. Even now both St Mungo's and St Andrew's both play their part in community life, here and further afield. As Christians we are called to be Jesus's hands and feet on earth, to reach out to the poor, the disadvantaged, the oppressed, to be fully involved in the communities where we live.

Some of you may have heard of or seen the famous 15th century icon by the Russian painter Andrei Rublev. It depicts the story in Genesis Chapter 18 of three angels being entertained by Abraham. Officially entitled the Hospitality of Abraham, and unofficially as the Trinity, it has become one of the best known and most loved of Christian artworks, it shows the three engaging with each other over a meal – and crucially making it clear that there is room for a fourth at the table, for you, for me, for us.

One of my favourite Christian writers is the American Franciscan priest Richard Rohr. One of his books is called the Divine Dance, which is his description of the relationship between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The message of the icon, Rohr says, is that we, you and me, are invited to come to the feast table, invited to join the divine dance, invited to make up a foursome reel to put a Scottish twist on it. It's an open invitation with no preconditions, no requirement for professing certain beliefs.

Far from it, the whole of the Bible story from beginning to end is about God wanting to be in relationship with us, chasing after us even when, or perhaps especially when, we insist on doing it our way. So, the answer to anyone who says they would like to make up a foursome reel with the Trinity will always be yes. The good thing is that God absolutely doesn't care whether as dancers we have two left feet or not, he just wants us on the dance floor, however complicated the dance. And God's dance floor is always open – 24-7.