

God is Holy Mystery

a theological reflection project
of Immanuel United Church
Winnipeg

Spring 2021

Theological
reflection means
"thinking about
God"

We all have our own understanding of God, shaped by stories and images from the Bible, Christian tradition, and our experience.

No understanding of God is complete. Our understandings of God change over time as we learn more.

None of the images, symbols, concepts, stories can fully express who God is.

However, churches all over the world worship and work together and learn about God from one another.

The World Council of Churches includes 350 member churches who together represent more than half a billion Christians around the world.



God, of life,
lead us to
justice and peace
World Council of Churches
1948-1962

Half a billion ... That's a **lot** of people.

That's really a lot of people who agree about some important things about God.

The first thing they agree about is that God is...

Triune

That's pronounced
Try - oon!

Go ahead, say it
out loud

Triune means three things that are also one thing.

$3 = 1$?????



$1 = 3$?????

What kind of Math is that?



You already know some things that are triune.



Immanuel United Church
is part of The United Church of Canada.

The United Church of Canada is part of the
World Council of Churches. That means that
we agree that God is triune!

What **that** means is that we believe
we learn about who God is and what
God is like through...

Creation



the teachings of Jesus



the movement of the Spirit



The God we know from each of
these sources is

loving gentle
with us just
welcoming powerful



and so much more!

The United Church declares what it believes about God in some official statements. These statements are written by groups of people (Councils) who work really hard to listen to what everybody believes.

They ask questions about how what the people believe fits with the main message of the Bible. They also talk about what all of that means today. Then they write, then talk some more.

And they pray together. And they vote. And they pray again...

One of the official statements of The United Church of Canada is called *A New Creed*.

It was new in 1968. Then it was new again in 1980 when a couple of important words were changed to make it more inclusive.

Then it was new again in 1995 when we added a line that says "to live with respect in Creation".

Here is one section of it.
Look familiar?



We believe in God:
who has created and is creating,
who has come in Jesus,
the Word made flesh,
to reconcile and make new,
who works in us and others
by the Spirit.
We trust in God...

Our most recent statement of faith was finalized in 2006. Entitled "A Song of Faith", this statement "seeks to provide a verbal picture of what The United Church of Canada understands its faith to be in the historical, political, social, and theological context of the early 21st century in relation to the world in which we live."

Fun Fact:



One of the major writers of this statement, and a member of the General Council Committee that developed it, was Scott Douglas, who has long associations with, and has offered significant leadership within, Immanuel.

The United Church of Canada encourages all of its members to learn and use many names for God.

We are also encouraged to think about why the words and images we use to describe God are important to us.

And we are encouraged to talk about all of this with others in the church, with our families, our friends.

So... You may be saying "thanks for the info about God but why now, why me?"

Remember way back to that first page?

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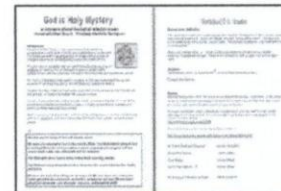


For the next few weeks, all the people of Immanuel – all ages – are invited to participate in an intergenerational theological reflection project.

Worksheets will be provided for each week in May, starting the week of May 2. It will include resources and a process for you to follow to think about God – your long held beliefs and surprising new ones, your questions, doubts...

There will also be opportunities for creativity.

Much of the learning will be done at home using the worksheets that will be provided. There will also be a few minutes during the worship services in May dedicated to this project.



Everyone - of all ages – will be invited to send in part of your worksheets. Your responses will become part of a creative expression that represents some aspects of the congregation's thinking about God and questions about God. We hope that this artistic creation will become part of the environment of the worship space. Please be patient as we sort out the administration of this project. We welcome your ideas.

If you have questions, please contact Ann Naylor, Guiding Elder, Faith Formation and Life Long Learning. Contact information will be on the worksheets.

Thank you in advance for your participation.