



The Spirit of Truth Rev Amanda Mark

Trinity Sunday

John 16:12-15

15 June 2025

The Spirit of truth

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth."

These are Jesus' words in John 16—tender, patient, honest. He knows his disciples are overwhelmed. He doesn't demand that they grasp it all. He doesn't deliver a doctrinal summary. Instead, he makes a promise: the Spirit of truth will come and guide them.

That promise is still for us.

We live in a time of profound uncertainty. The ground shifts beneath us—not just politically or ecologically, but spiritually and intellectually. We are flooded with information, yet we often feel uncertain about what is true. In a world of misinformation and disinformation, even naming what we know—and how we know—feels precarious.

Truth feels hard to hold. We're surrounded by information but unsure what to trust. Certainty is rare, mistrust is common, and the weight of the world—climate, war, injustice, disconnection—can leave us feeling like those first disciples: anxious, confused, and yearning for clarity.

Jesus doesn't give us easy answers but he gives us the Spirit.

The Spirit as Guide

Jesus doesn't give us the Spirit as a hand book where everything is laid out for us in black and white. There's no black letter law here. He says the Spirit will guide us—*into* truth. Guide is a journey word. Not a download, but a walk. Not a lecture, but a relationship.

And in this reading, John's Gospel gives us something distinctive. Jesus names the Spirit "the Spirit of truth"—a phrase found only in John. Nowhere else in the New Testament is the Spirit described this way. This matters. Because in John, "truth" is not just factual accuracy—it's relational and revealing. It is not cold, static information; it is lived experience.

The Spirit of truth is not a distant oracle, but a companion who walks with us. The Spirit doesn't simply *give* truth but *guides us into* it— relationally, over time. This is important: truth is not a possession we hold, but a reality we enter into. It is known not through communion. The Spirit of truth meets us in relationship and draws us deeper into God's truth, which is always, at its core, love.

Giving us our God who speaks through all that is; Jesus who lives in solidarity with our joy and pain; the Spirit who meets us in relationship, guiding us forward.

John 16 gives us a trinitarian moment. Jesus speaks of the One who sent him and of the Spirit who will come. All are united in truth, yet none are collapsed into the other. There is distinction, and also communion. There is relationship. This is not a static doctrine—it is a living truth.

Naming God in the Midst of Mystery

Jesus says, "You cannot bear them (the things he has to say) now." That feels deeply relevant. We cannot bear all the truth—not because truth is bad, but because it is too much to hold all at once. The Trinity doesn't ask us to grasp the entire divine mystery. It invites us into a relationship with it.

So when we name the trinity, we are not drawing a boundary of belief. We are naming our trust in a truth that is unfolding. We are stepping into a rhythm, not a rule. It's a rhythm carved by generations seeking to follow the Spirit in their own time, with their own questions.

Traditionally the trinity might have been described as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but we might also say:

Source, Presence, and Breath;
Creator, Christ, and Spirit;
Lover, Beloved, and Love.

All these names gesture toward the same mystery. They don't nail the Divine down; they open the mystery wide and invite us to deeper relationship. They allow the Spirit to speak what is needed for our moment, the truth we need.

The Spirit in a Time of Disinformation

In our current moment, the Spirit's role as guide into truth is radical. Because truth itself is contested—not only denied, but distorted. In a world where algorithms and regimes manufacture outrage and amplify falsehood, the Spirit of truth offers a form of resistance.

The Father/Source reminds us that all life is rooted in a deeper truth than markets and metrics. The Son/Presence reveals a God who takes on flesh, who suffers, who

heals. The Spirit/Breath empowers a movement into relationship, justice, humility, and courageous love.

This isn't just about theology. It's about how we live in the world. Truth isn't just data. It is relational. It is discerned in community. It is breathed, not shouted. And the Spirit of truth teaches us that God's truth is not individual possession—it is shared, dynamic, always pointing us toward deeper love.

The Spirit of truth draws us not only into knowing, but into being known. The truth we are guided into is not a set of conclusions, but a web of connections – truth that is alive in our relationships, our justice-seeking, our compassion. The Spirit guides us in relationship, calling us into honest dialogue with God, one another, and the world.

Holy Spirit as Communion

The church has wrestled for centuries to express this. When Jesus' followers have tried to articulate who he was and how they had experienced God through him, they didn't end up with neat answers. They ended up with communion: a vision of God as relationship, not hierarchy.

The Spirit of truth doesn't reinforce old power structures. It unsettles them. It disrupts false certainties. It reminds us, as Jesus did, that God is not distant but here, breathing in us, guiding us into deeper relationship, challenging us to follow love rather than control.

I think that's essentially what the doctrine of the Trinity that the church has laboured over for all this time might be about: the sense that God is not static, not locked in, but moving in the world. Suffering with us. Guiding us. Living among us.

Go Therefore... but How?

In the text used for Trinity Sunday in Matthew's gospel, Jesus says, "Go therefore and make disciples..." In today's gospel, John reminds us that this going out is always in relationship with the Spirit, that we go as learners, listeners, lovers of truth.

We go in the Spirit's name—to participate in what God is already doing. We go to in relationship with the Divine, not as conquerors of mystery, but as companions within it.

Why Still Say "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit"?

Some may ask: why do the traditional liturgies of the church say, "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," when there are so many ways to name the Divine? It's a good question. Language matters. Inclusive, expansive naming matters.

But perhaps the words aren't said because they are perfect—they're said because they are deep wells, carved by centuries of people asking the same kinds of questions as we ask, people finding their way to God like us.

To say words like these with depth might be to claim them, not as dogma, but as doorway, reminding us again and again: God is relational, God is with us and the world, God is among us and all that lives of our world.

These are not the only names we have and they're not the names we use at St Matthews. But they are deep with longing, trust, and generations of human experience. When they are said they point to the fact that there is more to God than we can know. The words are not cages but compasses, reminding us that God is relational, God is with us, and God's truth is still being spoken.

Trinity as Way, Not Just Word

The trinity is not just a word, it's a way of being, and so it goes with the Spirit which is not so much a puzzle to be solved as a way of seeing. A way of seeing where our relationship with the divine is a way of participating in an ever-changing relational dance, engaging with our belonging to God, each other, the world, the whenua and all its creatures.

And so we go—not with perfect knowledge, but with hope, to tune ourselves to the Spirit who guides us, calling us on through it all, to the God who is within us, among us, before us—drawing us into deeper relationship, because as Jesus says, “The Spirit will guide you.”.

In the name of the Source, the Presence, and the Breath.
Amen.