

Worship services are being cancelled until further notice because of Covid-19. However, we will have worship services through the Internet Zoom platform every Sunday at 10:30 AM. The Zoom link for this service will be sent to you by email. The phone number for Zoom always remains the same but the Meeting ID and password number changes every week. If you need more information, please contact Mr. Vautour. See the bottom of the bulletin the contact information.

If you have friends or acquaintances who want to join in the worship service, please do not hesitate to share with them the Zoom links to join with us in the worship our great God.

The National GCI services will be at 1:00 p.m. each Sunday. The Zoom link sent to you yesterday by email will remain the same until further notice.

For more information about special activities happening in GCI, please see the international website at www.gci.org. On the left-hand upper side of the screen, you will see 3 short lines. You simply need to click on it. A drop down menu will appear. Click on "**PARTICIPATE**".

Please note that audio sermons are available and a PDF copy of sermons are available at www.worshipim.ca and video sermons are now available on YouTube – GRACE COMMUNION INTERNATIONAL-MONCTON (see link below)

If you have a prayer requests, other events you would like to announce and/or praise to our great God you would like to share, **please try to contact Mr. Vautour by email, text or telephone no later than Saturday, in the morning.**

From Mr. Bill Hall, GCI Canadian Director – May 29, 2020

Steve and I attended an interesting COVID 19 informational ZOOM meeting today with the Chief Medical Officer of Health for NS, Dr. Robert Strang. It was attended by a large number of Christian organizations and churches and the subject was re-opening during COVID 19. He was quite blunt in his assessment, (which is a result of a number of consultations in NS Health and the rest of the country), that the COVID 19 crisis is the new normal for the foreseeable future. He stated that this crisis will be with us for at least 1-2 years. We will continue to see outbreaks of the virus, and we need to start to wrap our minds around this fact.

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The fact is: this really is our new normal.

As Dr. Strang mentioned, even when we as churches can "officially" open up in our provinces, the restrictions put on such gatherings will be extremely limiting. He felt that the Alberta regulations (also attached), will be the norm across the country.

We can't get away from the truth that we have the greatest risk of transferring and catching the virus in a group of people, and church is the ideal medium.

I met with the two RD's after the ZOOM call to come up with a plan for GCI-Canada congregations in light of the facts presented. We all felt it was time to get out of crisis or emergency mode, and make some positive long-lasting decisions as to what we will do in Canada in regards to our churches and COVID 19.

We have come up with the following decisions:

1. For the immediate time and until circumstances change, (as this situation is going to be fluid), we are going to become a national cyber-church, and forgo any moves to meet in person.

We are asking all congregations to have live online services available for members by July 5th. Most of you are already doing so. And for those who are not, Steve has offered to provide you with assistance and mentoring to get your online presence up and running. Steve is also looking into getting a National ZOOM umbrella account.

Even if our provinces may open up for church services, the numbers that can meet, or restrictions are such that much, if not all, of what we hold valuable about being a GCI fellowship (singing hymns, personal interaction, shared meals, communion) will not be part of this new reality.

2. We are asking any churches that are currently having their online service on Saturday to move those services to Sunday. As we are no longer tied to a physical building in which to meet, there is no apparent reason not to make this move.

Once every congregation has an online Sunday service, we will discontinue the National online Sunday service (which was only meant to be a stopgap measure). We will look at hosting special National online services from time to time to build on some of the success of that online service.

I realize that there will be some mixed feelings with us taking this approach. But until circumstances change, I am convinced that we need to take charge of the situation before us.

If you feel that there may be extenuating circumstances why you or your congregations cannot adjust to these two directives, please let me or your RD know. We are there to discuss them with you.

Thanks, as always for your support. Bill

Godly Friendship

By Mr. Greg Williams, GCI President – May 27, 2020



Greg and Susan
Williams,
President GCI

Dear GCI Family and Friends,

The presidents all around the world have had their leadership tested through the recent global pandemic. I am a student of history and I enjoy reading about the different Presidents and some of the challenges they faced. I am a huge fan of US President Abraham Lincoln for many reasons. Historians characterize him as the best president in all of US history, and certainly he brought the country through a dark and troubled time.

Last summer on family vacation I read a fascinating book by Doris Kearns Goodwin entitled *Team of Rivals*. This book documents how Lincoln was secure enough and wise enough to work with other politicians who did not always agree with him. In fact, the very men who ran against him in the election of 1860 he placed in highly responsible positions on his cabinet.

In his early life Lincoln suffered great loss. When he was nine years old his mother died from what was called "milk sickness." His mother was who he attributed his intelligence and inspiration. Her loss was significant. When Abe was 18, his older sister Sarah—who had a large role in raising young Abraham—died in childbirth. Then four years after the death of his sister, his first real love, Ann Rutledge, died from typhoid fever.

Twenty months after Ann's death, Abe moved to Springfield, IL, to begin his law practice. Because he had never received mentoring and sponsorship from an established lawyer—which was the more typical path into law—Abe was a fairly desperate man hoping that his fledgling law practice would be successful. He was certainly a man who could use a friend and much-needed encouragement. Enter Joshua Speed.

Joshua was a well-educated man—a bit younger than Lincoln—and the proprietor of the Springfield General Store. Instead of selling Lincoln a bed on credit, he offered him the opportunity to become his roommate. Here is what Goodwin said about their relationship.

"Lincoln and Speed shared the same room for nearly four years. Over time, the two young men developed a close relationship, talking nightly of their hopes and their prospects, their mutual love of poetry and politics, their anxieties about women. They attended political meetings and forums together, went to dances and parties, etc."

It is clear that this hearty friendship with Speed came at a critical juncture for Lincoln. The Bible speaks a lot to the value of friendship. The Proverbs says that a true friend sticks closer even than a biological brother. Joshua was that kind of friend to Abe.

The example of Lincoln and Speed makes me think of the biblical relationship of Jonathan and David. Jonathan and David's relationship was characterized by a loving friendship, with their souls knit together in shared values, mutual admiration, and bonded in covenant to one another.

1 Samuel 18:1-4 documents how Jonathan received David into the ranks of the Israelite army, into the palace, into the family as his brother-in-law, and with the deepest sense of true brotherhood. As the story unfolds, we see how Jonathan worked to keep David safe from the murderous attempts from his father King Saul. How remarkable it is for Jonathan to stand in the gap for David in this fashion.

Ultimately, Jonathan's sister Michal forsook David, but Jonathan held true to his covenantal relationship, which is amazing since David was anointed to become the next king instead of prince Jonathan. Upon hearing the news of Saul and Jonathan's demise in battle, David expressed this deeply emotional lament:

"25 How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan lies slain upon your high places. 26 I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; greatly beloved were you to me; your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." (2Sa 1:25-26 NRSV)

The selfless, spiritual friendship we see on display with Jonathan and David is evidence of God's presence in the lives of these two men. I would suggest that Abraham Lincoln and Joshua Speed were also a living extension of the love of God present in their bond of friendship. These examples of brotherly affection, deep commitment to one another and genuine honoring of one another hold out great hope for how relationships can be.

I have been richly blessed with true friends at all stages of my life. For many people in leadership, be they presidents of countries or pastors of churches, they often experience a great deal of loneliness. For any of our GCI leaders who may feel alone and discouraged, I recommend that you show yourself friendly and give attention to forming some meaningful relationships. You will be glad that you did. In Brotherly Love, Greg William

Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, part 1

By Ted Johnston - May 28, 2020 (from <http://thesurprisinggodblog.gci.org/2020/05/holy-spirit-part-1.html>)

This post begins a series presenting "The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit," an essay by Dr. Gary Deddo, President of Grace Communion Seminary.

Seeking to understand and know the Holy Spirit is a wonderful, rewarding endeavor. It ties in with every aspect of the Christian faith and life. But if ever there was a topic we are likely never to get to the bottom of, this one would qualify. The very name of this Divine Person, the Holy Spirit, already tells us that we're in pretty deep. But we do have a good amount of insight given to us by biblical revelation that can inform our understanding and help us stay away from pure speculation. God has seen fit to reveal himself to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and has provided and preserved teaching about the Holy Spirit. Because he wants us to know, trust and worship him, we by faith can dare to pursue understanding on that basis. But we proceed only by God's grace.

In this essay we will touch on only a few key points that address questions that are, first, foundational to our faith in the Holy Spirit and are, second, of more immediate importance given current discussions and debates. Hopefully, this essay will also help keep further explorations and other discussions in perspective. We will not be able in a short space to offer anything near a comprehensive view, so regard this as more of a beginning than an ending.

I'd like to start by recalling the passage in the Gospel of John where Jesus, trying to explain to Nicodemus something foundational regarding the nature and work of the Spirit, says this: **"Truly, I say to you, unless you are born of water and the Spirit, you cannot enter the Kingdom of God."** Jesus continues, **"That which is born of flesh is flesh, that which is born of Spirit is Spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born anew [from above]. The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:5-8).**

Nicodemus wants to understand how God works. Jesus tells him that how God works with us is by the Holy Spirit. But Nicodemus is not exactly satisfied with that answer. He wants to know, if he can, how then the Spirit works. Jesus' answer to that how question amounts to him saying: How the Spirit works is like trying to talk about how the wind works. We see the effects, but we know very little about it, not even where it was a few moments ago, or where it will end up going a few moments later. The Spirit is not predictable or controllable by us. We don't and can't have an answer as to how the Spirit works, the mechanics of it. Apparently the how question is the wrong one to ask. And, given Jesus' reply to Nicodemus, we can assume that it's not necessary for us to know either, even to receive the benefits of the working of the Spirit.

Jesus' "no-explanation" answer does make sense. How can we possibly put in words, concepts and ideas something about the Spirit given that it is like the wind? You can't actually predict its movement or say much about it except that "it blows where it wills." The Spirit has a mind of his own! I think that's part of our experience. The wind of the Spirit blows where it wills. We did not necessarily see it coming and don't necessarily see exactly where it's going to go. So it is with the Spirit.

So why not just stop right there? Well, in some cases I think that might be the right thing to do. There is a lot of speculation taking place, especially about how the Spirit works. However, we are given other words and descriptions in biblical revelation that refer to the Holy Spirit. But not surprisingly, they don't tell us how the Spirit works nor especially how to bring the Spirit under our control or how we can influence or predict the working of the Spirit. Rather, most of what we are given relates to the nature and purpose and character of the Spirit, not the mechanics of his working. All sorts of problems can be avoided if we simply pay attention to what biblical revelation actually tells us and resist using what we discover in ways that actually disregard Jesus' own teaching on the limits of our knowledge of the Holy Spirit's wind-like working.

Sometimes, people think the Holy Spirit gets less attention than deserved -- the short end of the stick, as we say, or short-shrift. The complaint that the Spirit is under-represented can be heard both at the levels of theological discussion as well as at the daily and practical level of church life. That's a perfectly good concern to raise. We should be aware and take to heart all we are told regarding the Spirit. Neglecting any part of biblical witness is not a good idea. Faith seeks whatever understanding of the Spirit we are given, as in any other part of the Christian faith. But we can ask the counter question as well: Is it true that in practice and preaching we don't properly emphasize the Holy Spirit? If so, in what ways

do we fail to give the Spirit sufficient attention? And, what measure or criteria can we use to evaluate whether or not we have under (or over) emphasized the Holy Spirit?

Whether or not we give full attention is best gauged by the norm of biblical teaching. We can look to Scripture to weigh its own emphasis on the Spirit relative to other matters. We can also consider the full range of insights it actually presents us. Then we can compare our own current emphasis and range of teaching to the pattern and proportion found there. While we will not be able to conclude with something like a numerical measurement, I think there will be many indicators in biblical teaching that can greatly assist us in our process of discernment. And of course, we can also borrow understanding on this matter from teachers of the church down through the ages, including our present time as their teaching seems in alignment with biblical revelation considered as a whole.

Now, if there is some kind of deficit, then we'll also need to explore how best to correct for that lack. We'll need to discern this issue as well, because there are various ways to correct for it. But some correctives aren't as useful or faithful as others. And some promoted in recent times have seemed not only speculative but harmful to the health of the Body of Christ. But again, biblical teaching can help us in discerning how best to make any kind of corrective called for.

What are the basics of revelation about the Holy Spirit?

Recall that any theology built on biblical revelation must seek first and foremost to answer the question of who the God of the Bible is, for that is its central concern and controlling topic. Biblical revelation is not geared nearly as much to answer the questions of how or why, where or when. So our understanding must also begin by seeking to know first who the Holy Spirit is.

Let's begin with a review of the most basic truths we have been given about the Holy Spirit. Most fundamentally we are told about the Spirit's relationship with the Father and the Son. And those relationships identify who the Spirit of God is. Who is the Spirit? The Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Son. The Spirit is one with the Father and one with the Son. Jesus is conceived by the Spirit, he has the Spirit for us, and he ministers in and by the Spirit even in his atoning work on the Cross. Jesus and the Father send the Spirit to us. The Spirit takes us to the Father through the Son. By the Spirit we are united to Christ so that we share in his life, life in fellowship and communion with the Father. And we share, by the Spirit, in Jesus' ongoing ministry in the church and in the world.

Notice that what Jesus teaches Nicodemus (and us) fits the overall pattern of revelation about the Spirit throughout Scripture. Nicodemus wanted to know how one can be "born again" or "born from above." But Jesus' response indicates that such how questions can't really be answered in connection with the Spirit! Nicodemus is not told how the Spirit blows to bring us new life. Rather, Jesus' answer to his how question identifies who is behind the how. But Jesus does describe in a comprehensive way the effect of the working of the Spirit, namely, bringing us a new kind of life.

The Gospel of John goes on to shed even more light on the relationship of the Spirit to Jesus and to the Father which includes the inter-relationship of their missions and ministries. These relationships are especially prominent in chapters 13-17. The central concern throughout this Gospel remains their conjoint relationships. They are inseparable, always being together and always working together.

One in being, united in act

Borrowing now from the more developed doctrine of the Trinity we can say that the three Divine Persons of the Trinity are "one in being." This technical phrase helps us to remember there are not three Gods, but only one. So, the Spirit isn't a separate God that has his own independent mind, his own action, his own plan, and his own purpose. The Spirit is joined in one being and so joined in one mind, action, plan, and purpose with the Father and the Son. Even the name, Holy Spirit, indicates to us the unity of the Spirit with Father and Son, since only God has the name Holy.

The point here is not to let our minds think about the Holy Spirit as an independent operator. That's one of the biggest mistakes that we can make. Always remember, whatever the Spirit does, wherever the Spirit is at work, that Spirit is the Spirit of the Father, and of the Son, because they are one in being. They do not act separately, apart from one another. They act out of one shared mind, heart, purpose in unity with each other. St. Augustine famously summarized this in the fourth century: "All the works of God are inseparable."

A number of special phrases have been used down through the ages to convey the oneness or unity of the divine Persons besides saying that they are "one in being." They are said to "co-exist." They "co-inhere" in one another. They "in-exist" one another, or they "mutually in-dwell" one another. They "co-envelop" one another, or "mutually interpenetrate" each other. Their oneness of being has been expressed by saying that the whole God is present in each of the Divine Persons. The whole God is present in the Father. The whole God is present in the Son. The whole God is present in the Spirit. That's all to say: they're one in being even though they're distinguishable, we say, in person. An early creed sums it up this way: the Triune God is a Unity in Trinity and a Trinity in Unity.

Sharing all the divine attributes

This means that the Holy Spirit is fully and completely divine and has from all eternity all the attributes that the Father and the Son have. The Spirit is not subordinate or less than the others. All that you can say of the Father, such as being omniscient, holy, omnipotent, eternal, and even being a Creator, can all be said of the Spirit (and can all be said of

the Son). Dividing up among the Persons the attributes of God and the actions of God towards creation is ruled out because they are one in being.

That's a hard rule for us to follow because we have developed poor habits of thinking and speaking in the church, and likely were never taught otherwise. We also like to divide things up and align certain attributes or actions with the Father and others with the Son or the Spirit. A typical way we do this is by saying the Father creates, the Son redeems and the Spirit perfects or sanctifies. We might think the Father is just and holy in comparison to the Son who is merciful and gracious. However, if we take such a division of labor in a strict way, we would be embracing a very inaccurate, even misleading way of speaking about God. The distinct Persons of the Trinity do not have separate jobs or wear different hats or play different roles they accomplish by themselves. God acts as the one being that God is. His being does not fragment in mind, will, purpose or action.

So, to repeat, everything you can say about the eternal nature and character of the Father, you can say about the Son and you can say about the Spirit. They are each all powerful, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal, good, merciful, righteous, holy. They are all to be worshiped together because they're one in being. So we can say of our worship, we worship the Father through the Son and in the Spirit. Or, we pray to the Father, through the Son and in the Spirit. And we proclaim that the Father has redeemed us through the Son and in the Spirit. The whole God is our Savior.

The unity of the being and so of action, character and attributes of God is one of the most fundamental things to hold on to and to watch out for when we go on to say other things about the Spirit. We want to avoid talking as if the Divine Persons are separate, wear different hats have divergent purposes or as if they're operating independently of one another. Simply remembering they're one in being will prevent a lot of problems down the theological road.

Offerings: you can send your offering directly to the following address: **Grace Communion International- Canada, Suite 203A, 2121 Airport Dr., Saskatoon, SK 7S1 6W5.** If you prefer, you can also call **1-306-653-2705.** Thank you for your continued generous giving to God by giving to this part of God's church, his body.

From Mr. Bill Hall – GCI Canadian Director *"Our office here in Saskatoon will remain open during regular business hours. I'm self isolating for a couple of weeks, but Kathleen will be available. We will continue to process the donations we receive in Saskatoon. Members are urged to mail them directly to our office for the time-being. They can also donate via phone using a credit card, or via Canada Helps using the donate button on our website www.gcicanada.ca We are waving the provision that all donations given via Canada Helps go toward national expenses for the time being. We will credit all donations received via Canada Helps to a member's local congregation, if we can identify where they attend."*

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For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the GCI.org website.
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