**WE BELIEVE … A Study of the Creeds of the Church**

**3:00 – 4:00 p.m. CDT Thursday ZOOM Study**

**September 7, 14, 21, 28, October 5, 12, 2023**

**HIGHLIGHT THIS NEW LINK AND THEN CLICK ON OPEN HYPERLINK**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89369767349?pwd=enlVWVFKNllqbWx1UHhoYVpZTmRDZz09>

**PLAN**

**September 7, 2023 SESSION 1: Introductions**

1. **Opening Prayer**
2. **Who and where are we?**
3. **What are the purposes of a creed?**
4. **Doxology**
5. **Unity/Community**
6. **Response to other faiths**
7. **Response to divisive issues**
8. **Two biblical creeds**

1. Deuteronomy 26:1-11 **(5-10)**

*When you have come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it, 2you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. 3You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him, ‘Today I declare to the Lord your God that I have come into the land that the Lord swore to our ancestors to give us.’ 4When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the Lord your God, 5you shall make this response before the Lord your God:* ‘A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. 6When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, 7we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. 8The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; 9and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. 10So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O Lord, have given me.’ *You shall set it down before the Lord your God and bow down before the Lord your God. 11Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the Lord your God has given to you and to your house.*

2. Philippians 2: 1-11 **(6-11)**

*If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, 2make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. 4Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. 5Let the same mind be in you that was in* Christ Jesus,  
6 who, though he was in the form of God,  
   did not regard equality with God  
   as something to be exploited,  
7 but emptied himself,  
   taking the form of a slave,  
   being born in human likeness.  
And being found in human form,  
8   he humbled himself  
   and became obedient to the point of death—  
   even death on a cross.

9 Therefore God also highly exalted him  
   and gave him the name  
   that is above every name,  
10 so that at the name of Jesus  
   every knee should bend,  
   in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
11 and every tongue should confess  
   that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
   to the glory of God the Father.

1. **Our Father**

**September 14, 2023 SESSION 2: The Oldest Creed**

#### **Opening Prayer (Holy Cross Day)**

1. **Questions/Comments from last week**
2. **Stages of Development: the Nicene Creed**
3. **Nicene Creed as adopted in 325**

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance (ὁμοούσιον) with the Father; by whom all things were made both in heaven and on earth; who for us and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and became human; he suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

And in the Holy Ghost.

But those who say: 'There was a time when he was not;' and 'He was not before he was made;' and 'He was made out of nothing,' or 'He is of another substance' or 'essence,' or 'The Son of God is created,' or 'changeable,' or 'alterable'—they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church.

### **Theodore of Mopsuestia (Creed of 325)**

I believe in one God, Father Almighty, Creator of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ the Only Begotten Son of God, the first-born of all the creatures.

Who was born before all the worlds, and not made.

True God of true God.

Consubstantial with the Father.

By Whom the worlds were made and all things were created.

Who for us children of men and for our salvation came down from heaven, was incarnate and became human.

And was born of the Virgin Mary and crucified in the days of Pontius Pilate.

And was buried and rose the third day according to the Scriptures.

And ascended into heaven and sat at the right hand of God.

And He shall come again to judge the living and the dead.

And in the Holy Spirit.

1. **Nicene Creed as altered in 381 Council of Constantinople**

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds (æons), Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was became human; he was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; from thence he shall come again, with glory, to judge the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. In one holy catholic and apostolic Church; we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

1. **Roman Catholic (additions made by the western Catholic in the late 6th Century)**

I believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.  
  
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Only Begotten Son of God,  
born of the Father before all ages.  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us men and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,  
and became man.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,  
he suffered death and was buried,  
and rose again on the third day  
in accordance with the Scriptures.  
He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead  
and his kingdom will have no end.  
  
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.  
  
I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.  
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins  
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

#### **1975 ecumenical version (ICET)**

*The*[*International Consultation on English Texts*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Consultation_on_English_Texts)*published an English translation of the Nicene Creed, first in 1970 and then in successive revisions in 1971 and 1975. These texts were adopted by several churches. The Roman Catholic Church in the United States, which adopted the 1971 version in 1973, and the Catholic Church in other English-speaking countries, which in 1975 adopted the version published in that year, continued to use them until 2011. The 1975 version was included in the 1978 Lutheran Book of Worship, the 1979 Episcopal Church (United States) Book of Common Prayer, though in both cases with one variation: in the line "For us men and for our salvation", they omitted the word "men." The ICET text and the versions adapted by various denominations use the plural "we" form which corresponds to the original text from the Council of Nicea (325 CE) and the Council of Constantinople (381 CE) which begin the creed with Πιστεύομεν (Greek, pisteuomen, "we believe").*

We believe in one God,

the Father, the Almighty,

maker of heaven and earth,

of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,

the only Son of God,

eternally begotten of the Father,

God from God, Light from Light,

true God from true God,

begotten, not made,

of one Being with the Father;

through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation

he came down from heaven,

was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary

and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;

he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again

in accordance with the scriptures;

he ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,

and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,

who proceeds from the Father and the Son,\*

who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,

who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,

and the life of the world to come. Amen.

\*Or, “who proceeds from the Father.” The phrase “and the Son” is a later addition to the creed.

. **D. Our Father**

**September 21, 2023 and September 28, SESSIONS 3 & 4:**

**The Oldest Creed continued, important players; history**

#### **Opening Prayer**

#### **September 21 (Day of Saint Matthew the Evangelist)**

**September 28 (Day of Michael and all Angels)**

1. **Questions/Comments from last week**
2. **Stages of Development: Important Players and the Nicene Creed**
3. **Clement (35-95CE)** Bishop of Rome (88-99); considered to be first of the early church fathers and either the 2nd or 3rd Bishop of Rome. His only extant writing, a ltter to the Corinthians, is the oldest Christian document after the New Testament and almost was included in it. That letter is about the apostolic authority of presbyters.

**AN IMPORTANT SOURCE DOCUMENT: Didachē**, (Greek: “Teaching”) also called **Teaching of the Twelve Apostles**, the oldest surviving Christian church order, probably written in Egypt or Syria in the 2nd century. In 16 short chapters it deals with [morals](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/morals) and [ethics](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ethics), church practice, and the [eschatological](https://www.britannica.com/topic/eschatology) hope of [Christ’s](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jesus) [Second Coming](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Second-Coming) at the end of time and presents a general program for instruction and initiation into the [primitive church](https://www.britannica.com/topic/history-of-early-Christianity). It is considered to be a work of [patristic literature](https://www.britannica.com/topic/patristic-literature) from an unknown [Apostolic Father](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Apostolic-Father). The *Didache* includes two primitive and unusual prayers for the [Eucharist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eucharist) which is the central act of Christian worship. It is the earliest text to refer to this rite as the Eucharist.

Chapter 9 begins:

Now concerning the Eucharist, give thanks this way. First, concerning the cup:  
We thank you, our Father, for the holy vine of David your servant, which you made known to us through Jesus your Servant; to you be the glory forever...

And concerning the broken bread:

We thank you, our Father, for the life and knowledge which you made known to us through Jesus your Servant; to you be the glory for ever. Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom; for yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever. (Often a prayer after communion or offering prayer))

But let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist, unless they have been baptized into the name of the Lord; for concerning this also the Lord has said, "Give not that which is holy to the dogs."

1. **Justin Martyr (ca.100--165)** Apologist, Justin’s writings passionately defends the morality of the Christian life, arguing to convince the Roman emperor, [Antoninus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antoninus_Pius), to abandon the persecution of the Church. Justin argued another important point His major contribution to the development of the creed is that the “seeds of the Gospel” are in the Hebrew Scriptures.
2. **Hippolytus (ca. 17—265)** championed the Logos doctrine of the Greek apologists, most notably [Justin Martyr](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justin_Martyr), which distinguished the Father from the Logos ("Word"). One of our Eucharistic Prayers is based on one of his. We use it most often on Christmas:

We give you thanks, Father,

through Jesus Christ, your beloved Son,

whom you sent in this end of the ages

to save and redeem us and to proclaim to us your will.

He is your Word, inseparable from you,

through whom you created all things,

and in whom you take delight.

He is your Word, sent from heaven to a virgin’s womb.

He there took on our nature and our lot

and was shown forth as your Son,

born of the Holy Spirit and of the virgin Mary.

He, our Lord Jesus, fulfilled all your will

and won for you a holy people;

he stretched out his hands in suffering

in order to free from suffering those who trust you.

He is the one who, handed over to a death he freely accepted,

in order to destroy death, to break the bonds of the evil one,

to crush hell underfoot, to give light to the righteous,

to establish his covenant, and to show forth the resurrection,

taking bread and giving thanks to you, said:

Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

In the same way he took the cup, gave thanks,

and gave it for all to drink, saying:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood,

shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, then, his death and resurrection,

we take this bread and cup,

giving you thanks that you have made us worthy

to stand before you and to serve you as your priestly people.

Send your Spirit upon these gifts of your church;

gather into one all who share this bread and wine;

fill us with your Holy Spirit to establish our faith in truth,

that we may praise and glorify you through your Son Jesus Christ;

through whom all glory and honor are yours, almighty Father,

with the Holy Spirit, in your holy church, both now and forever.

**Amen.**

1. **Marcion of Pontus, (flourished 2nd century CE, Asia Minor),** Christian [heretic](https://www.britannica.com/topic/heresy). Although Marcion is known only through reports and quotations from his orthodox opponents, especially [Tertullian](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Tertullian)’s Adversus Marcionem (“Against Marcion”), the principal outlines of his teaching seem clear. His teaching made a radical distinction between the God of the [Old Testament](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hebrew-Bible) (the Creator) and the Father of [Jesus Christ](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jesus) (the God of Love). Sometime after his arrival in Rome, Marcion fell under the influence of Cerdo, a [gnostic](https://www.britannica.com/topic/gnosticism) Christian who held that the God of the Old Testament embodied [justice](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/justice) while the God of the New Testament embodied goodness, and further developed this [ideology](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ideology). According to Marcion, that distinction had been obscured at the very earliest stages of the Christian movement, and, among the [Apostles](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Apostle), only [St. Paul](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Paul-the-Apostle) had understood it. Because the corruptions that had consequently been introduced into the life and message of the church and into the very text of the [New Testament](https://www.britannica.com/topic/New-Testament) had to be expunged, Marcion edited his own versions of the biblical books. His collection of those books that he regarded as [authoritative](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/authoritative) seems to have had some influence on the formation of the church’s canon of the New Testament. And various elements of early Christian creeds, such as the widespread equation of Father with Creator, may have been formulated partly in response to his teachings. Marcion was [excommunicated](https://www.britannica.com/topic/excommunication) from the church in 144 as a heretic, but the [Marcionite movement](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Marcionites) he headed became both widespread and powerful.
2. **Arius**, **(born c. 250, Libya—died 336,**[**Constantinople**](https://www.britannica.com/place/Istanbul)**[now Istanbul, Turkey]),** Christian [priest](https://www.britannica.com/topic/priest-Christianity) whose teachings gave rise to a theological doctrine known as [Arianism](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Arianism). Arianism affirmed a created, finite nature of [Christ](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jesus) rather than equal divinity with God the Father and was denounced by the [early church](https://www.britannica.com/topic/history-of-early-Christianity) as a major [heresy](https://www.britannica.com/topic/heresy). An [ascetical](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ascetical) [moral](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/moral) leader of a Christian [community](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/community) in the area of [Alexandria](https://www.britannica.com/place/Alexandria-Egypt), Arius attracted a large following through a message integrating [Neoplatonism](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Neoplatonism), which accented the absolute oneness of the Divinity as the highest perfection, with a literal, rationalist approach to the [New Testament](https://www.britannica.com/topic/New-Testament) texts. This point of view was publicized about 323 through the poetic verse of his major work, Thalia (“Banquet”), and was widely spread by popular songs written for laborers and travelers.
3. **Athanasius, (**born c. 293, Alexandria—died May 2, 373, Alexandria), theologian, [ecclesiastical](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ecclesiastical) statesman, and Egyptian national leader. He was the chief defender of Christian orthodoxy in the 4th-century battle against [Arianism](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Arianism), the [heresy](https://www.britannica.com/topic/heresy) that the Son of God was a creature of like, but not of the same, substance as God the Father. His important works include The Life of St. Antony, On the Incarnation, and Four Orations Against the Arians.
4. **Council of Nicea (325)** was a council of Christian bishops convened in the [Bithynian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bithynia) city of [Nicaea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicaea) (now [İznik](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C4%B0znik" \o "İznik), Turkey) by the [Roman Emperor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_emperor) Constantine. This [ecumenical council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecumenical_council) was the first effort to attain [consensus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consensus_decision-making) in the church through an [assembly](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legislature) representing all [Christendom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christendom).  Its main accomplishments were settlement of the [Christological](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christology) issue of the divine nature of [God the Son](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_the_Son) and his relationship to [God the Father](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_the_Father#Christianity), the construction of the first part of the [Nicene Creed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicene_Creed), mandating uniform observance of the [date of Easter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Date_of_Easter), and promulgation of early [canon law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canon_law).

One purpose of the Council was to resolve disagreements arising from within the [Church of Alexandria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_Alexandria) over the nature of [Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus) in his relationship to the Father: in particular, whether the Son had been 'begotten' by the Father from his own being, and therefore having no beginning, or else created out of nothing, and therefore having a beginning.[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Council_of_Nicaea#cite_note-kelly1978-13) [St. Alexander of Alexandria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Alexander_I_of_Alexandria) and [Athanasius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athanasius_of_Alexandria) took the first position; the popular [presbyter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presbyter) [Arius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arius), from whom the term [Arianism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arianism) comes, took the second. The Council decided against the Arians overwhelmingly (of the estimated 250–318 attendees, all but two agreed to sign the creed, and these two, along with Arius, were banished to [Illyria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illyria)).

Another result of the Council was an agreement on when to celebrate Easter, the most important feast of the ecclesiastical calendar, decreed in an [epistle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistle) to the Church of Alexandria in which is simply stated:

*We also send you the good news of the settlement concerning the holy pasch, namely that in answer to your prayers this question also has been resolved. All the brethren in the*[*East*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Byzantine_Empire)*who have hitherto followed the Jewish practice will henceforth observe the custom of the Romans and of yourselves and of all of us who from ancient times have kept Easter together with you.*

Historically significant as the first effort to attain [consensus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consensus_decision-making) in the church through an [assembly](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legislature) representing all of [Christendom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christendom),[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Council_of_Nicaea#cite_note-Kieckhefer_1989-16) the Council was the first occasion where the technical aspects of [Christology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christology) were discussed. Through it a precedent was set for subsequent general councils to adopt [creeds](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creed) and [canons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canon_(canon_law)). This Council is generally considered the beginning of the period of the [First seven ecumenical councils](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_seven_ecumenical_councils) in the [history of Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Christianity).

1. **Council of Constantinople (381)** was a council of Christian bishops convened in [Constantinople](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantinople) (now [Istanbul](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Istanbul), [Turkey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkey)) in AD 381 by the [Roman Emperor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Emperors) [Theodosius I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodosius_I). This second [ecumenical council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecumenical_council), an effort to attain [consensus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consensus_decision-making) in the church through an [assembly](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legislature) representing all of [Christendom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christendom), except for the [Western Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Church),[]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Council_of_Constantinople#cite_note-dictionary-3) confirmed the [Nicene Creed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicene_Creed), expanding the doctrine thereof to produce the [Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicene_Creed" \l "Niceno-Constantinopolitan_Creed" \o "Nicene Creed), and dealt with sundry other matters. It met from May to July 381[]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Council_of_Constantinople#cite_note-4) in the [Church of Hagia Irene](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hagia_Irene) and was affirmed as ecumenical in 451 at the [Council of Chalcedon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_of_Chalcedon).

The [Council of Nicaea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Council_of_Nicaea) in 325 had not ended the [Arian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arianism) controversy which it had been called to clarify. [Arius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arius) and his sympathizers, e.g. [Eusebius of Nicomedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eusebius_of_Nicomedia) were admitted back into the church after ostensibly accepting the Nicene creed. [Athanasius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athanasius), bishop of Alexandria, the most vocal opponent of Arianism, was ultimately exiled through the machinations of Eusebius of Nicomedia. After the death of [Constantine I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantine_I) in 337 and the accession of his Arian-leaning son [Constantius II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantius_II), open discussion of replacing the Nicene creed itself began. Up until about 360, theological debates mainly dealt with the divinity of the Son, the second person of the [Trinity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinity). However, because the Council of Nicaea had not clarified the divinity of the [Holy Spirit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Spirit), the third person of the Trinity, it became a topic of debate. The [Macedonians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macedonians_(religious_group)) denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit. This was also known as [Pneumatomachianism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pneumatomachi" \o "Pneumatomachi)..

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