

'LENT  
for OUR  
EVERYDAY'

Spending time in the Creeds

## Week 1

### Why do we have the Creeds at all?

From the earliest days of the Church, Christians developed short, simple summaries of the faith. Many of these were to be contained in the New Testament scriptures, some became early hymns, many formed an easy to use set of words when people were being baptised.

These short statements became our creeds; the word 'creed' coming from the Latin 'credo', meaning 'I believe and trust'. Two of these Creeds were developed during the age of 'heresy' when people sought to bring their 'belief' to the table and divisions began to creep in. We see early signs of this very soon after the gospel expands about the known world; Paul writes of it in his Epistles., especially within the letters to the Corinthians—Apollos says this, Paul says that and so forth.

The Apostles Creed was developed directly from the work of baptism in the church and is a short summary for folks to use to say what they believe and have faith in. The Nicene Creed was come to via the Great Council of Nicaea in 325AD as a direct rebuff for the heresies going round in that age.

The least used today is the Athanasian Creed, very early in date and very long — 44 paired verses. However, maybe more so that the shorter Creeds it shows how the early church wrestled with the key points of the faith; 'how is God one and yet known as three persons: Father, Son and Spirit? (not three Gods but one God). In what manner is Jesus fully human also fully God? Is the Holy Spirit one with the Father and the Son? The Athanasian Creed skips and dances through its verses to weave answers and explanations to all that is God, Church and the world.

Whilst we know that over the centuries the church has become divided, the divisions are of secondary order. All the major denominations and church traditions hold to the words of the Apostle's Creed and the Nicene Creed; we all say them, in every part of the world, in all the languages you can imagine!

### What to do with the Creeds!

Well, firstly we should use them, read them, speak them in our worship. Every time we do it is apt to reflect and remember how it is that the Church has come to believe them. It is by the grace and mercy of God that we have come to faith and are able to say and explore these words. It is not through human cleverness or ingenuity. God has revealed himself through the Scriptures. God has revealed himself most clearly through the gift of his Son, Jesus

Christ. God makes himself known personally to each believer through the work of the Holy Spirit.

But more, it is good to reflect on how 'we came' to believe them, to believe in the things referenced in them, of how we came to make our baptism or confirmations statements of faith.

When we say the Creeds it isn't that we are summarizing a human creation but the story of God's good news for all he has made. These are not our own personal, individual beliefs but the faith of the Church; we may say in one 'I believe', but this is part of our corporate 'we believe'.

Exploring the Creeds can seem daunting, but it is easy especially if you think of them like a hamper filled with good things to unpack and unwrap, taste and savour. Over the next few weeks we will look more at what it means to understand God as trinity: father, Son and Holy Spirit. To look more at Jesus the Christ and wonder at how he is fully God and fully human, come to redeem the world. Then we will look to the person and work of the Holy Spirit and what we believe about the people of God, the Church.

So, in the best fashion of seeing what's in the hamper lets begin by tipping everything out and seeing what we have.

Either print out the Apostle's Creed or write it out from the following; do so line by line just as is laid out on the back page.

Then take a pair of scissors and cut each line out and lay all the pieces on the table in front of you.

Carefully spend time reflecting on each of the sentences before you and begin to place each of them into one of three piles -

1. I am happy with this statement;
2. I do not want anything to do with this;
3. I do not understand this at all.

Do not worry about what might be in one list or not!

Through the remainder of the week come back to the lists. Jot down why you are happy with the things in 1.; why it is you do not want anything to do with those of list 2.; and begin to ask question about those in list 3 (maybe do an internet search on them - would knowing about these see them move to list 1 or 2 now?)

As you do this you might like to begin your reflection time each day with the following prayer, and finish by saying the Lord's Prayer.

Prayer for each day:

Holy God, faithful and unchanging:  
enlarge our minds with the knowledge of your truth,  
and draw us more deeply into the mystery of your love,  
that we may truly worship you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

### Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.