Class 4: The Church’s Teaching: Creeds and Baptismal Covenant

* Open in Prayer.
* What is a Creed:

**a.** A form of words setting forth authoritatively and concisely the general belief of the Christian Church, or those articles of belief which are regarded as essential; a brief summary of Christian doctrine: usually and properly applied to the three statements of belief known as the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds. (OED)

* Have you been in churches that profess the Creeds? How do you feel about the creeds; does it sum up faith for you?
* What creeds do we use in the Episcopal Church?

1. **The Nicene Creed**

* It was issued in 325 by the council of Nicaea.
* First Ecumenical Council of the Church. Called by Emperor Constantine. Constantine wanted to settle unity in the church. Primarily to combat Arianism (Arianism denied the full divinity of Jesus Christ. The Son was not eternal but a creation of God, thus not divine.)
* “Of one being with the Father”- is what we can see combated Arianism. Jesus and God the Father are of one substance. Also recently translated Consubstantial.
* The Creed in its original form was much shorter and ended with "And in the Holy Spirit"- the church still needed to figure this out.
* The Creed that we use and call "The Nicene Creed" is actually titled the "Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed." This is because the Creed needed to be finalized theologically. The form we work with was approved at the Council of Constantinople in 381.
* It has been associated with the Eucharist, said after the Gospel since the 5th century, which we do today.
* The use of the Creed is seen as being a binding or unifying element to some churches.
* Let’s look at the Creed… pg. 358 of the BCP

**The Baptismal Covenant/ Apostles Creed.**

* **Apostles Creed-** only used in the Western church. In tradition, by the 4th century, said to be compiled jointly by the 12 Apostles. Associated with Rome and most likely came into being by way of the Old Roman Creed. Used primarily in Daily Offices (morning and evening prayer) and since the Middle Ages has been used in Baptism.
* Briefly look at its place in Morning Prayer. BCP pg 96
* **The Baptismal Covenant** “is widely regarded as the normative statement of what it means to follow Christ”(Armentrout) BCP pg. 304- Let’s look at it. Used in Baptism and on many major feasts to reaffirm our baptisms if there is not a baptism happening.
* This follows the three Baptismal questions of the Primitive Church. The three sections of the Apostles Creed are used as answers- Do you Believe in God the Father? Do you Believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God? Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?
* After we move past the traditional baptism questions about belief in God, we have five more questions. All rooted in scripture. With the response, "I will, with God's help."
* “Will you continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?” Acts 2:42 (“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”) Life in the community and Eucharist.
* “Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?” 1Cor 10:13 “No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.” Some things tempt us, and we may give in, but God offers us repentance and forgiveness.
* “Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?” Mark 16:15 “And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+16%3A+15-16&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-24881a)] to the whole creation." As Jesus says, we must proclaim the Gospel.
* “Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?” Matthew 22: 37-39 “He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ **38**This is the greatest and first commandment. **39**And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The great commandment.
* “Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?” James 3: 17-18 **“**But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. **18**And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=james+3%3A+17-19&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-30320a)] those who make peace.” Luke 6:30-31 “Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. **31**Do to others as you would have them do to you.” Golden Rule.

**The Creed of Saint Athanasius** BCP pg. 864