

The Baptismal Covenant: Your Guide to a Jesus- Centered Life



“Christ Has Died, Christ Is Risen, Christ Will Come Again” painting by Tracey, a Catechist with the Center for Children and Theology in Washington, D.C. <https://cctheo.org/shop/art-prints-for-the-mystery-of-faith/>

Session 2: The Creed
Trusting in Mystery, Shaping Our Faith
The Very Rev. Joe Hensley
2/4/2024

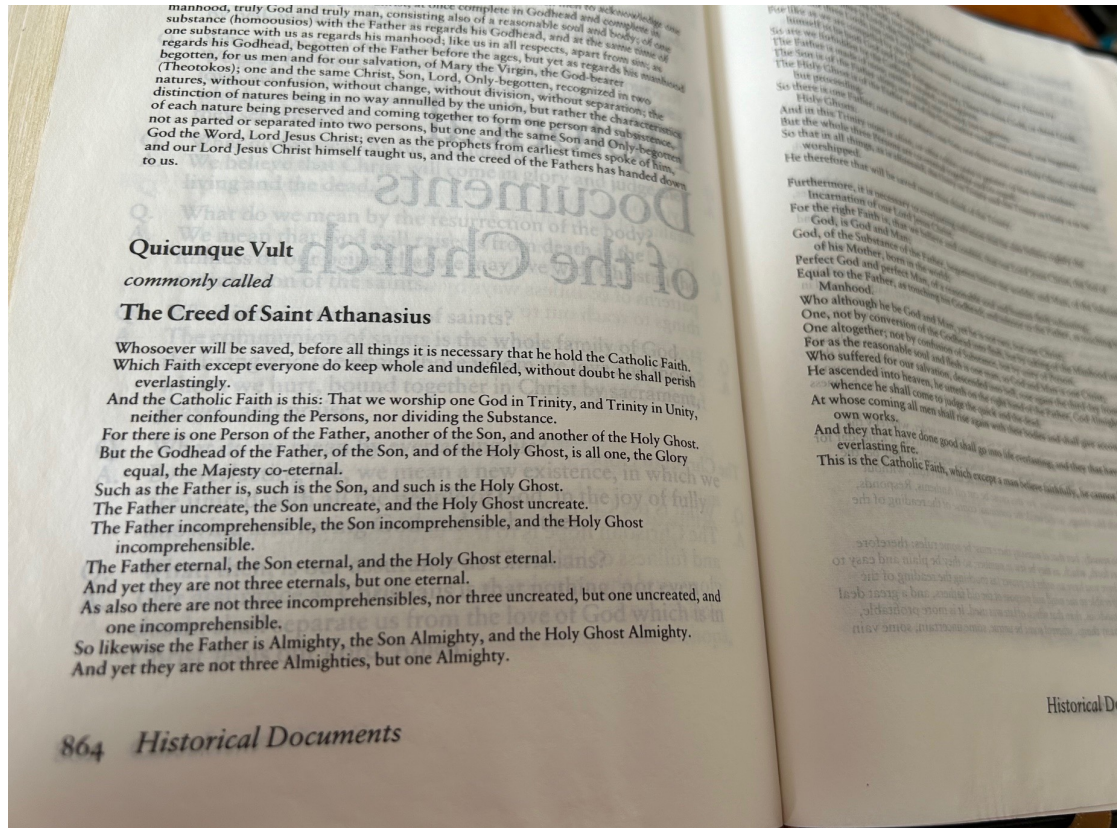


St. George's
Episcopal
Church

The Creed: Trusting in Mystery Shaping Our Faith



Overview of the Creeds



- We have 3 recognized Creeds in the Episcopal Church: Apostle's Creed, Nicene Creed, Athanasian Creed.
- Apostle's Creed said at morning/evening prayer, baptisms, Burial of the Dead.
- Nicene Creed said at Eucharist (includes more theological explanation). Only ecumenical creed (accepted by all Christian churches).
- Athanasian Creed is a historic document affirming the nature of the Incarnation and Holy Trinity. Not used in worship.

Apostle's Creed as the Creed of Baptism

The Baptismal Covenant

Celebrant Do you believe in God the Father?

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

Celebrant Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

People I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He 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,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Celebrant Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

People 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.

- Tradition held it was originated by the twelve apostles, but it more likely developed out of examination of candidates in the liturgy of Baptism in early centuries of the church.
- Twelve articles of faith.
- Based primarily in scripture and said in liturgy as part of the response to the Holy Scripture

What are we doing when we say the Creed?



- Are we pledging our loyalty to God?
- Are we affirming/confessing the Church's faith?
- Are we expressing our trust?
- Are we pondering sacred mysteries?
- All of the above?

Why is a Creed part of the Baptismal Covenant?



What's a covenant?



Marc Chagall "The Prophet Jeremiah" 1968

Jeremiah 31:31 "The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

- Things God promises to do
 - Noah, Abraham, Moses, Mary
 - New Covenant
- Things God's people promise to do in response
 - 10 Commandments, David / Kings
 - New Covenant
- Always in that order

I believe in...

Confession of Faith

A declaration of belief in the triune God, after the example of the Christian martyrs and confessors of faith. In Christian liturgy, this confession is expressed through the recitation of the ancient ecumenical creeds—the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed—and through the eucharistic prayer. At every baptism in the Episcopal Church, the congregation welcomes the newly baptized by urging: “Confess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection, and share with us in his eternal priesthood” (BCP, p. 308).

<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/glossary/>

**AND, there is more going on than just a
“declaration of belief” when we say the Creed...**

“I believe in...”



- Faith is active. Belief is our response to who God is and what God has done, is doing, and will do for (and with) us.
- Abraham “believed God” and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. (Genesis 15:6)
- Hebrew word for “faith” is related to “Amen” (sense of confirming and supporting, acknowledging truth).
- “By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.” (Hebrews 11:8)

“I believe in...”

Strong's Concordance

pistis: faith, faithfulness

Original Word: ΠΙΣΤΙΣ, ΕΩΣ, ἡ

Part of Speech: Noun, Feminine

Transliteration: pistis

Phonetic Spelling: (pis'-tis)

Definition: faith, faithfulness

Usage: faith, belief, trust, confidence; fidelity, faithfulness.

HELPS Word-studies

4102 *pístis* (from 3982/*peithô*, "persuade, be persuaded") – properly, *persuasion* (be persuaded, come to trust); *faith*.

Biblehub.com is a great site for Bible word study

- Faith/belief is more than mere intellectual assent.
- It is a trust and expression of confidence.
- Faith is a gift from God. Our choice to trust God is also enabled (or persuaded) by grace.
- “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God...” (1 John 5:1)

Trusting in mystery, shaping our faith

This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me.”

Therefore we proclaim the **mystery of faith**:

Celebrant and People

Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

The Celebrant continues

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

- The twelve articles of the Apostle’s Creed are not statements of scientific fact (based on observation).
- They express the “mystery of faith.”
- “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1)

The Creed as a Liturgical Response



- The Creed is always said after we hear the Word of God in the Holy Scriptures.
- We express our faith, trust, loyalty, and wonder in response to the mystery of God's being and action.
- The expression of faith represents our participation in the Covenant initiated by God and revealed in Scripture.

The Creed as a Liturgical Response

Altar pieces like this one at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Port Royal, VA were posted so that worshippers could participate during worship in the recitation of the 10 Commandments, Lord's Prayer, and Apostle's Creed in a time before there were prayer books and bulletins in every pew.



Baptismal Covenant: Your [Theological, Ecclesiological, Ethical] Guide to a Jesus- Centered Life



Theology — faith seeking understanding*

The Apostle's Creed describes God as three persons of the Holy Trinity: who God is and what God has done, is doing, and will do for us and with us.

God the Father

One article describes:

- parental relation to us (love, creator)
- omnipotence
- role as creator and realms of creation

“I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator/maker of heaven and earth.”

*Anselm of Canterbury coined the phrase “faith seeking understanding” as a way to understand the process of exploring truths about God.



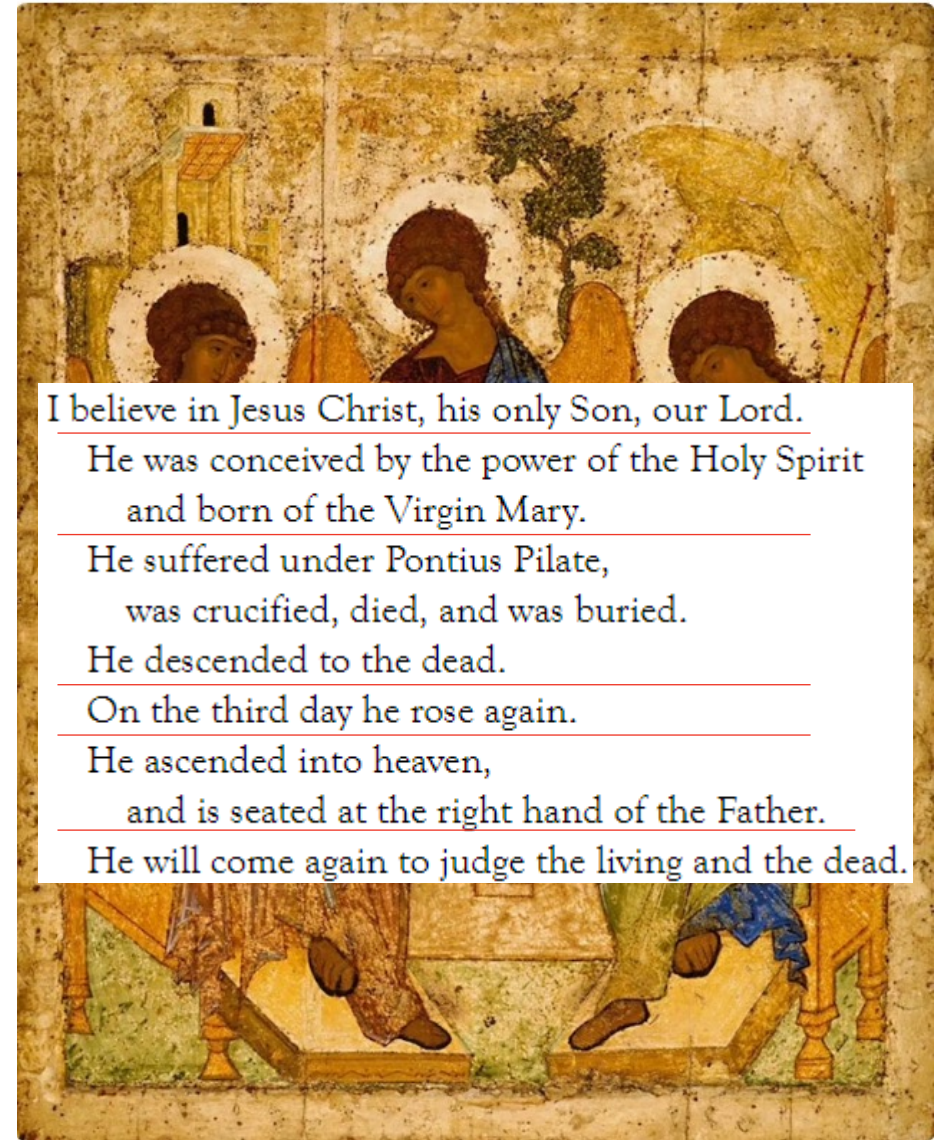
Andre Rublev's Icon of the Holy Trinity

Theology — faith seeking understanding

God the Son

Six articles describe:

- name and title, relation to Father, and relation/authority to us
- supernatural birth through Holy Spirit and named human mother
- suffering in a certain time under certain empire in certain manner; expiration; burial and existence in realm of death.
- Resurrection according to predicted three days
- Ascension and position in heaven.
- Future return and judgement



I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He 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,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

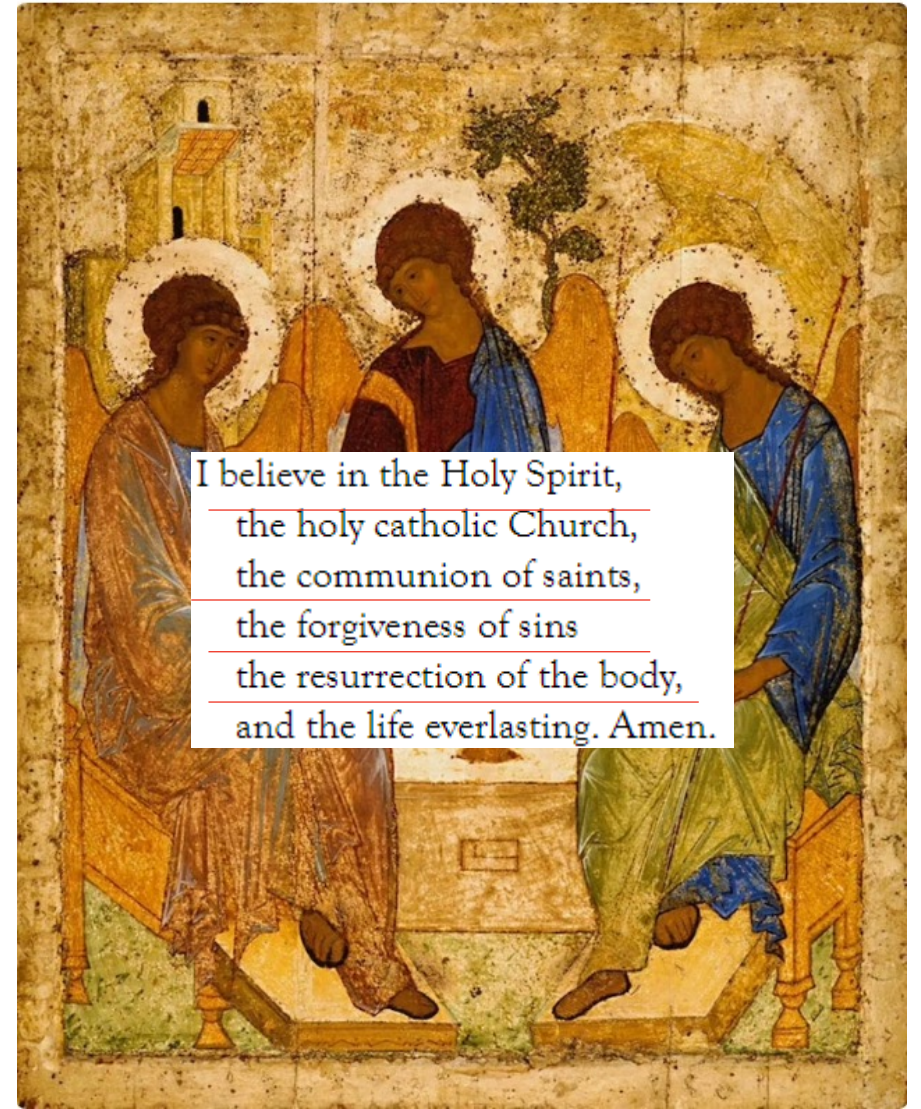
Andre Rublev's Icon of the Holy Trinity

Theology — faith seeking understanding

God the Holy Spirit

Five articles describe:

- the name (or lack thereof): Holy Spirit
- the Spirit's work through the Church universal and the gathered saints in heaven and earth
- God's power to forgive through the Spirit
- anticipation of a physical reanimation through the Spirit (Ezekiel)
- hope in the Spirit's eternal blessing of life for all the people of God.



Andre Rublev's Icon of the Holy Trinity

Theology

- These articles are at the core of the Tradition of Christian theology but are not comprehensive.
- They contain mysteries which shape our faith and can lead us into deeper trust in God.
- The Episcopal Church encourages asking questions and exploring interpretations that engage with traditional teaching.
- Keep in mind the “three-legged stool” (scripture, tradition, reason) when considering the Creed



Rublev-inspired Trinity Icon by Kelly Lattimore

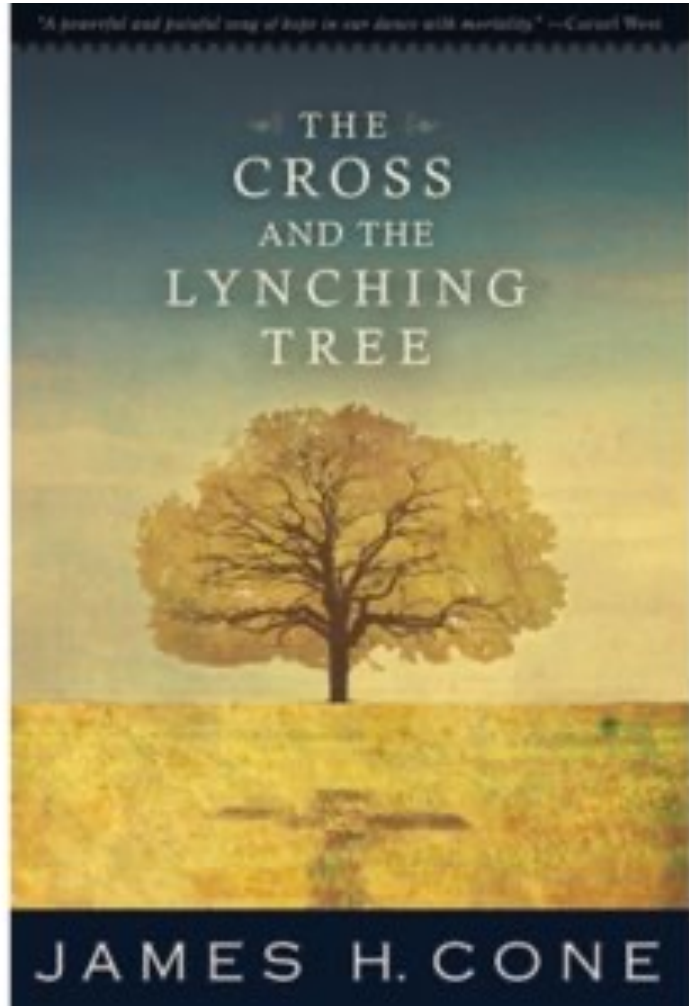
Ecclesiology: The Church

- The creed was formed in the context of church liturgy and later codified through church councils.
- Our sharing in the creed is part of our sharing in the dance of faith through the centuries in communion, in gathered fellowship.
- Our recitation of the Creed in the gathered “ekklesia” continues the process of collective renewal of faith in the Church Universal (“catholic”).



Detail of the Dancing Saints Icon: St. Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church. San Francisco, CA.

Ethics

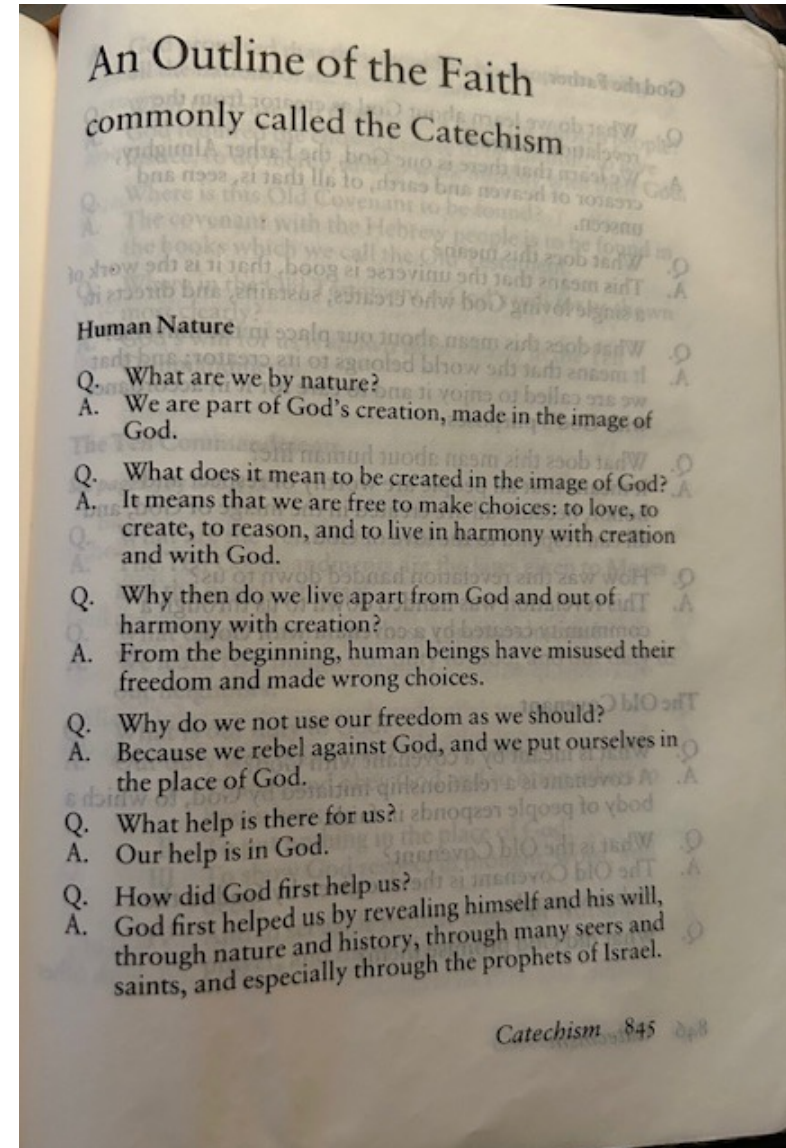


In his groundbreaking book, Black theologian, James Cone, compares the crucifixion of Jesus to the lynchings of African Americans which leads to a call for continued action for justice.

- In the Baptismal Covenant, the Creed precedes our promises to act, with God's help, in accordance with God's will (ethics).
- The Creed reveals God's character (ethos) and action as the ground for our response.
- God creates, suffers, dies, rises, judges, forgives, bestows life.

Explore

1. Use Morning and Evening Prayer as an opportunity to say the Apostle's Creed regularly in combination with Scripture.
2. Slowly say (or chant) the words and notice what makes you pause and wonder? What may give you difficulty?
3. Explore the Catechism (BCP pp. 845-862) and Episcopal Dictionary of the Church <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/glossary/> for some interpretations of terms and articles in the Creed. Short articles in <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/> explain Biblical roots (keywords: faith, covenant).
4. Remember that the Creed is a response to Scripture. It symbolizes an expression of faith. How does the Creed invite you to go deeper?



This Series

1. Bringing us together
 - Different services, same church!
2. Preparation
 - Baptism, Confirmation, Reception, Reaffirmation
3. Conversation Starter
4. Experience, not Mastery
5. Practice for Evangelizing
6. ...to impress the bishops...

The Most Reverend Michael J. Curry, first Black Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, asperges the congregation at Washington National Cathedral during his ordination and consecration in 2015.



What's Next?

Schedule:

- Feb 11: Will on Affirmations and Renunciations

What do I do?

- Baptism, Conf., Rec.: Contact the Church Office!
- Not sure? Great! Keep coming!
- Morning Retreat: March 2



Barbara Miller-Richards, Church Secretary and all-around superhero.