

Homegroup Sermon Guide - Together in Creed

The most important doctrines in Anglicanism are those held in common with Christians universally. For defining the features of doctrine which Anglicans hold in common with others, the Nicene Creed is one of the most useful tools.

The Nicene Creed is the most widely accepted statement of faith among Christian churches. It is used by Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran and most Protestant churches. The Nicene Creed was established to identify conformity of beliefs among Christians, as a means of recognizing heresy or deviations from orthodox biblical doctrines, and as a public profession of faith.

The original Nicene Creed was adopted at the First Council of Nicaea in 325. The council was called together by the Roman Emperor Constantine I and came to be known as the first ecumenical conference of bishops for the Christian Church. In 381, the Second Ecumenical Council of Christian churches added the balance of the text (except for the words "and from the Son"). This version is still used today by Eastern Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches. In the same year, 381, the Third Ecumenical Council formally reaffirmed the version and declared that no further changes could be made, nor could any other creeds be adopted.

Along with the Apostles' Creed, most Christians today regard the Nicene Creed as the most complete expression of the Christian faith, with it often being recited in worship services.

1) Read the text below and write down/discuss what you think are the key doctrines it expresses.

The Nicene Creed

*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 from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man.*

*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 worshipped 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.*

Compare the four points in turn with your own notes:

•Anglicans believe in the triune God. Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

•Anglicans believe both in the divine nature and historical status of Jesus. Along with theologians from many traditions they have argued over the philosophical and theological implications of this for centuries. But where the essential divinity or the true humanity of Jesus have been challenged or compromised, the Anglican Church has been clear that this is not how they interpret the Scriptures.

•Anglicans believe in a God who cares for us and for the whole world, and who acted towards us for our salvation. He is not a remote God dispassionately pulling levers but is fully engaged with us and His creation through Christ.

•Anglicans believe in the visible church as the place (but not the only place) where God's mission to the world is worked out. It is a single church, universal, going back to Jesus and his apostles. And it is a holy Church, whose 'saints' (which means all its members) are also called to be holy, in communion with each other.

We all believe in something. Even those who don't believe in something, believe that they don't believe. An atheist believes that there is no God. Disbelief is not the absence of belief but the presence of an opposing belief. An agnostic believes that he does not know if there is a God.

The object of our beliefs may vary significantly, but we all believe. We cannot help but believe. It is part of who we are. The ability to believe is part of what makes us human. You cannot choose to believe or not to believe; you can only choose what you believe.

Our lives are directed by belief. You cross the street and you believe that the people driving cars from the other direction will stop at the red light. When you are driving you have faith that the drivers coming from the other direction will stay on the other side of the road. You may not have complete faith in this, but you believe it to some extent. Without belief we would be so paralyzed by fear of everything and everyone that we would be reduced to a mass of paranoia and would simply be unable to function in the world.

We all believe in something. But some beliefs are more important than others, and any belief that is disconnected from eternal truth is a recipe for misery.

2) How might belief in each of the points listed above affect our behaviour in everyday life? Discuss one point at a time.

3) What level of evidence is there in your own life that you believe or don't believe each of the four points above? Share this in groups of three or four.

And if you have time or are really keen on doing some homework...

4) Make a list of the key Bible passages you would use to back up the four points above.