

*We Believe: A Rediscovery of the Nicene Creed*

*St. Georges Anglican Church*

*Session 2*

*January 17, 2010*

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**We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.**

**General statement on the importance of the Creeds**

Although the historic creeds of the church are ancient, what is striking is their timeless relevance as succinct expressions of the universal beliefs that have bound Christians together across time, space and ecclesial groupings.

Since new heresies are just old ones in new clothes the creeds continue to be valuable navigational instruments individually and communally.

**We/I believe**

As a credal statement, a baptismal creed is an individual affirmation of the faith (“I believe”), embracing all the implications of faith and professing a commitment to discipleship.

At Nicaea and beyond, the Church was in quest of an expression of the fundamental and normative beliefs of all Christians in the one Church (“We believe”).

The **“I believe”** can only become a spiritual reality through faith which is a gift of grace (Eph. 2:8-9). By faith the **I** enters into the **WE** (Rom. 8:14-16).

**One God**

It is important to realize that the words “one God” apply not just to “the Father Almighty”.

We believe in **ONE GOD** :

The Father almighty ...

Lord Jesus Christ ... God, of God; light, of light; Very God, of Very God ...

Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life ...

**The Father**

Why “father”?

In the immediate context of the creed, He is the Father of the only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and this relationship is eternal - “before all worlds”.

Jesus Himself refers repeatedly to God as His Father in the Gospels (see esp. John chapter 14 and following) and wants to bring His disciples into the intimacy of that relationship.

Because some attribute of the Maker can be identified in each of the Creator's works, the task of us finding a single honorific for him that is inclusive of all the possible metaphors and at the same time retains the intimacy that the Son has with the Father is impossible. The danger in trying to do so leads us to a kind of conceptual idolatry.

Since God's supreme self revelation is in the person and teachings of Jesus (John 1 and Heb. 1:1-3), His directive "when you pray, say, **Our Father** which art in heaven ..." needs to be heeded.

In the end addressing God as Father is not about patriarchy it's about relationship: first of all the relationship of the Son to the Father, and then about our relationship to the Father through the Son.

### **The Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible**

The Father has brought everything into existence out of nothing by the word of his power. Its continued existence is maintained by His providence. His eternal power and divine nature are universally evident in nature (Psalm 19) and more specifically apprehended by faith (Hebrew 11:3).

The idea of creation as a spontaneous act of the divine will requires a consideration of the divine intent and an acceptance of that intent as normative. Departure from that idea must then be dysfunctional.

As created beings we are by definition dependent physically, spiritually, ethically and intellectually on divine grace. As Psalm 100:3 says, "It is he that has made us and not we ourselves."

Our response to this reality can be a positive one (as in Psalm 95) or a negative one (as in Romans 1:18-25).

### **Questions for Follow-up Session**

1. Who do you understand to be the communal **WE** ?
2. Why the emphasis on ONE God? What are the implications in the Creed?
3. Do you have any particular thoughts or issues around addressing God as Father? Why do we address God as Father? Should we continue to do so today?
4. Why is it important to acknowledge God as maker of "heaven and earth... of all things visible and invisible"? What might some people find difficult about this statement? Why?
5. What can we learn from the latter chapters of Job about the creator-creature relationship? What about Psalm 95?