

Nicene Creed Pop-Up Class

Jamie Thompson, Nov 13 2025

Nicea Conference

What is a creed, exactly, and why is this important?

First, we need a little church history . . .

Creed – a concise, formal, authorized summary of important points of Christian doctrine. Usually focuses on who God has revealed himself to be – how do we understand the Trinity and the person of Jesus as fully God and fully man. Wide agreement among many different branches and denominations of the Christian Church.

Confessions – what we confess to be true. Usually longer than creeds, confessions accept creedal understanding of who God is and focus on what we believe. More denominational in nature.

But I don't like creeds!!!

- Creed = latin *credo* = I believe
- Examples of Biblical creeds (Deut 6:4-6, 1 Cor 15:3-5, Jude 3, “Jesus is Lord”)

Historical Context of Council of Nicea

~250 AD Empire-wide persecution of Christians

303 Diocletian persecution (Bibles burned, churches dismantled, incense in court)

313 Emperor Constantine expresses faith in Christ

Arius teaching in Alexandria

- Christ is not fully God, but is the highest of creatures
- “was a time when he was not”
- Heresy often comes about by wanting to safeguard one truth at the expense of another truth. Arius wanted to safeguard the oneness of God, and this came at the expense of the full divinity of the Son

Bishop Alexander of Alexandria (with right-hand man Athanasius)

- If the Son is not truly God, he cannot save us.
- If Christ is a creature, how can he make us sons of God?

Emperor Constantine summons Christian leaders to sort this out:
What does Scripture mean when it talks about Jesus being God?!?

Council of Nicea (325)

- 3 groups, debate ensued, Creed of Nicea was affirmed as the Biblical understanding
- All but 2 bishops reject Arius, Arius was exiled.
- Easter and lapsed believers . . .

But the issue wasn't really settled . . .

- Council of Constantinople (381) - Creed of Nicea affirmed and expanded to present Nicene Creed*
- Council of Chalcedon (451) tackled 2 natures of Jesus
 - Fully God and fully man, one person in two natures
 - No confusion, no change, no division, no separation

The Nicene Creed

Why this matters for us / thoughts for Reflection

We are a part of a very long conversation. We are renewed in our personal and present faith by retrieving treasures from the historic faith. Creeds, Confessions, hymns, great historic writings and biographies, 5 solas, etc. Christianity did not begin when I or my local church came into existence!

Our Christian faith is a global faith. The Nicene Creed can help Door Creek Church affirm our unity with the Presbyterian Church of Santo Amaro in Sao Paulo, Grace Baptist Church in Singapore, Russian Bible Church in Moscow, Satya Vachan Church in Lucknow India, Emmanuel Church in Nairobi, etc.

The Christian faith is intrinsically doctrinal – there is a content to the Good News we share! There are correct and incorrect ways to understand who God has revealed himself to be and what it means that Christ “for us and for our salvation came down.” For Christians, we want our belief to align with what Scripture teaches. Scripture is the “norming norm,” creeds are the “normed norm.” The Nicene Creed helps us recognize right doctrine, detect heresy, and affirm unity. It enriches our true worship and true devotion.

The Nicene Creed

(original 325 Creed of Nicea italicized)

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

*And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the **only begotten Son of God**,
begotten from the Father before all ages,
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made;
of the **same essence as the Father**.
Through him all things were made.*

For us and for our salvation

*he came down from heaven; he became incarnate by the Holy
Spirit and the virgin Mary, and was made human.
He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was
buried.*

*The third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures.
He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead.
His kingdom will never end.*

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life.

*He proceeds from the Father **and the Son**,
and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.
He spoke through the prophets.*

*We believe in **one holy catholic and apostolic church**.*

We affirm one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

***We look forward** to the resurrection of the dead,
and to life in the world to come. Amen.*