

WE BELIEVE

EXPLORING THE APOSTLES' CREED

**LIFE GROUPS
WINTER 2023**

INTRODUCTION

For almost two thousand years, creeds have served as a summary of the central beliefs of Christians across various times and places. They take us back to the basics - the beautiful, core truths about God revealed in Scripture and articulated in the worship and witness of God's people.

The Apostles' Creed descended from an earlier, simpler form from the 2nd century known as the Old Roman Symbol. While we do not have direct evidence that it was penned by the apostles themselves, it is certainly a simple summary of their teaching, which was core to the life of the Early Church. (Acts 2:42) Other creeds (Nicene, Athanasian, etc.) developed in the first few centuries of the church further expounded on various aspects of Christian belief, often to clarify doctrine or correct the church in the face of errors or misunderstandings.

One of the earliest uses of the Apostles' Creed was to prepare converts to be baptized. This period of instruction and preparation for baptism is the origin for the season of Lent, the 40 days leading up to Easter. This reminds us that confessing our faith in the words of the Creed has never simply been an intellectual exercise. It is an act of worship deeply related to the daily lives of Christ followers.

What we believe, or better yet, *the One in whom we believe*, shapes how we will live.

The Creed does not articulate *everything* there is to know about God. To do so would be impossible for us finite beings! But it does articulate who we believe God to be, grounded in the great story of God's self-revelation to us. Learning and prayerfully confessing the Creed invites us to shape our everyday lives around the gospel.

We can't explore every nuance or implication of the Creed in this study, but we will draw out themes that will hopefully prompt discussion and further exploration. The goal of this study is not to nail down all the answers or to engage in artificial boundary marking. Rather, the intent is to invite us *all* into a deeper knowledge of the triune God who is "an eternal community of love." (Justo Gonzalez)



Access a digital copy of this guide and all video teachings at christchurchkc.org/lifegroup. Videos will be posted and available by the beginning of each week.

SESSION OVERVIEW

Wednesday Onsite Schedule

6:00 pm – Dinner

6:40 pm – Welcome and Announcements

6:45 pm – Teaching

7:00 pm – Group Discussion

8:00 pm – Dismissal

WEEK	THEME
WEEK 1: FEBRUARY 8	I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth
WEEK 2: FEBRUARY 15	I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary
WEEK 3: FEBRUARY 22	<i>Ash Wednesday: No Wednesday Onsite Groups</i>
WEEK 4: MARCH 1	suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead
WEEK 5: MARCH 8	On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead
WEEK 6: MARCH 15	I believe in the Holy Spirit
WEEK 7: MARCH 22	the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins
WEEK 8: MARCH 29	the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting

WEEK 1

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

Teaching Notes

First 10-15 Minutes

Spend some time getting to know one another and making introductions with anyone who is new in the group. Review group expectations (ex: respect, confidentiality, listening well, etc.).

Optional Icebreaker: Of all the animals in creation, which is your favorite and why?

Key Scriptures

Genesis 1:1-3

¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. ³And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

Romans 1:20a

¹For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

almighty [ôl'mîdê] *adjective*: having unlimited power

create [krê'āt] *noun/verb*: to cause to come into being, as something unique that would not naturally evolve or that is not made by ordinary processes. to evolve from one’s own thought or imagination, as a work of art or an invention

Discussion Questions

1. How do the definitions of “almighty” and “creator” impact your understanding of this portion of the Apostle’s Creed?
2. What do you notice from the Scriptures or this section of the Creed? What ideas, images, or phrases stand out to you?
3. How is calling God “Father” a helpful metaphor for understanding our relationship with God? What are the limitations of that analogy?
4. What things in heaven or earth evoke wonder and curiosity or praise in you? What role does wonder play in the spiritual life?
5. If creation is good and valued by God, what are the implications for our relationship to the earth and its resources? To other human beings?

Closing Prayer

Spend a couple of minutes in silence praying for the person to your left. Close your time together by saying the following prayer together:

O merciful Creator, your loving hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature: Make us always thankful for your loving providence, and give us grace to honor you with all that you have entrusted to us; that we, remembering the account we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your good gifts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Practices for the Week

- Say the Apostles’ Creed out loud once each day this week.
- Write or journal this week about where you notice beauty in your neighborhood or city.

A Song for the Week



This Is My Father’s World performed by A New Liturgy

WEEK 2

“I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary.”

Teaching Notes

First 5-10 Minutes

Spend some time getting to know one another and making introductions with anyone who is new in the group.

Optional Icebreaker: Share your favorite Christmas hymn and tell the group why you like it.

Key Scriptures

Galatians 4:4-5

⁴But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

John 1:1-5, 14, 18

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it...

¹⁴The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth....¹⁸No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

believe [bɪ'li:v] *verb*: to consider to be true or honest. to accept the word or evidence of

conceive [kən'si:v] *verb*: to cause to begin; originate

Discussion Questions

1. What do you notice from the Scriptures or this section of the Creed? What ideas, images, or phrases stand out to you?
2. What image first comes to mind when you hear the word “God?” If Jesus is “the image of the invisible God,” what kinds of things does this reveal about God’s character?
3. Christians believe that Jesus is fully God (conceived by the Holy Spirit) and fully human (born of the Virgin Mary). Why is it important for us to affirm Jesus’ full divinity? His full humanity?
4. How did Jesus humble himself throughout his life? What about his humility is compelling and/or challenging to you?
5. In the Galatians passage, Paul uses the phrase “adoption to sonship.” What are the implications, expectations, and rewards of this relationship?
6. John asserts that Jesus is God’s Word made flesh, come to live among us. How does God’s movement *toward* our broken world inform how we are to live among our own neighbors?

Closing Prayer

Spend the last several minutes sharing any burdens or thanksgivings with the group and pray together. If the group is larger, consider breaking into smaller groups of 3-4.

Suggested Practices for the Week

- Light a candle at the dinner table to remind yourself that Jesus is with you in your joys and worries.
- Practice a “breath prayer.” Quiet your heart and mind. As you breathe in, pray “Jesus Christ, Son of God...” As you breathe out, pray “...have mercy on me.”

A Song for the Week



Of the Father's Love Begotten performed by Out of Darkness

The Season of Lent

Lent begins this year on Wednesday, Feb. 22. Lent is a season of spiritual preparation for Easter spanning forty days (not including Sundays). Over the centuries, Lent emerged as an intentional season of repentance and reflection for the church. Purple is used as a dominant color in our worship space to remind us of Jesus' royalty and kingship. The forty days of Lent commemorate the forty days of Jesus experienced in the wilderness. (Matt. 4:1-11) Just as Jesus fasted and prayed during that time, we are invited to adopt practices of prayer, fasting, and giving as we grow in our dependence upon God. (Matt. 6:1-6, 16-21)

Ash Wednesday

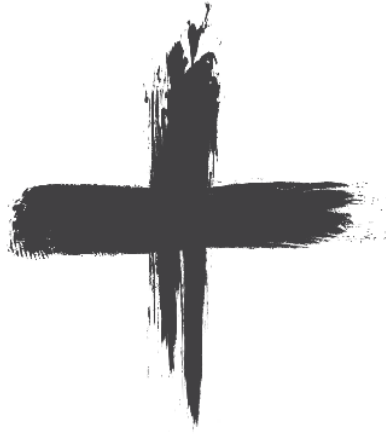
Lent officially begins on Ash Wednesday with a worship service focused on confession and repentance. In confession, we acknowledge our need for forgiveness and healing. Trusting in the mercy and grace of God, we turn *away* from our sins and *toward* God. During this service we are invited to receive ashes on our foreheads in the shape of a cross as a tangible reminder of our mortality and of God's grace. This theme of confession and repentance continues during the season of Lent, culminating in Holy Week and Easter.

The Ash Wednesday service always begins with this solemn invitation:

Dear People of God:

The first Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord's passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church to prepare for them by a season of penitence and fasting. This season of Lent provided a time in which converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism. It was also a time when those who, because of notorious sins, had been separated from the body of the faithful, were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness, and restored to the fellowship of the Church. In this manner, the whole Congregation was put in mind of the message of pardon and absolution set forth in the Gospel of our Savior, and of the need that all Christians continually have to renew our repentance and faith.

I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent: by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and alms-giving; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word. And to make a right beginning, let us now pray for grace, that we may faithfully keep this Lent.



This week, groups are encouraged to attend one of our Ash Wednesday services together.

Ash Wednesday Services
will be held at 12:00 pm and 6:30 pm on February 22
at Christ Church Overland Park and at Christ Church Mission.

*Services will last about an hour and include Communion and the imposition of ashes.
Families are encouraged to attend together; childcare will be available for children 4 and under.*

WEEK 4

“...suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead...”

Teaching Notes

First 5 Minutes

Optional Icebreaker: Have you ever tried to pass on an important piece of family history or tradition? How did that go? Describe the experience and the emotions you had throughout it.

Key Scriptures

1 Corinthians 15:3-4a

³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...

Colossians 1:19-20

¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

suffer [sʌfəɹ] *verb*: to submit to or be forced to endure. to feel keenly: labor under

descend [dɪ'send] *verb*: to lower oneself in status or dignity. to worsen and sink in condition or estimation

Discussion Questions

1. What do you notice from the Scriptures or this section of the Creed? What ideas, images, or phrases stand out to you?
2. Jesus suffered physically on the cross. In what other ways did he experience great suffering? Why is his suffering significant?
3. Jesus's last words from the cross "Father, forgive them..." displays the unity of the Father and Son to forgive sinners. Have you ever experienced or witnessed unexpected forgiveness?
4. What do you think it means that "all things" in heaven and earth will be "reconciled" to God through Jesus' death? How have you experienced a taste of this reconciliation in your own life? Where do you see the need to experience this reconciliation in your own life?

Closing Prayer

Spend the last several minutes sharing any burdens or thanksgivings with the group and pray together. Consider closing by praying this prayer together:

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Suggested Practices for the Week

- Send a text or note of encouragement to someone you know is suffering. In addition, consider blessing that person in an unexpected way.

A Song for the Week



In Christ Alone performed by Anchor Hymns

WEEK 5

“On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.”

Teaching Notes

First 5 Minutes

Optional Icebreaker: Do you enjoy any reality tv shows that feature people being judged for a performance, craftsmanship, or art?

Key Scriptures

Acts 2:32-33

³²God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. ³³Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.

Hebrews 1:3

³The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

ascend [ə'send] *verb*: to go or move up to succeed to : **occupy**
judge [juhʃ] *verb*: to form an opinion about through careful weighing of evidence and testing of premises to form an estimate or evaluation of

Discussion Questions

1. What do you notice from the Scriptures or this section of the Creed? What ideas, images, or phrases stand out to you?
2. There are many stories in the Gospel accounts of people encountering the risen Jesus. Are there any that are especially meaningful or encouraging to your own faith?
3. Jesus is described as being seated at the right hand of God - a place of access, honor, and authority. What does this reveal about God's disposition towards his people?
4. Sunday worship is a celebration of Christ's resurrection and ascension - the life of Jesus raised from the dead and received into our own lives. In what ways do you experience the presence of the risen Christ in our worship?
5. How does Christ as judge give you hope? What do you long to be made right? What apprehension do you have about Christ's judgment?

Closing Prayer

Spend the last several minutes sharing any burdens or thanksgivings with the group and pray together.

Suggested Practices for the Week

We traditionally sing the hymn Joy to the World at Christmas time. However, this song is primarily about Jesus' Second Coming. Listen to or read the lyrics to this song a few times this week in light of Christ's promised return.

A Song for the Week



His Heart Beats performed by Andrew Peterson

Teaching Notes

First 5 Minutes

Optional Icebreaker: Describe a time when you were out of your depth and immensely relieved when help arrived.

Key Scriptures

Acts 1:7-8

⁷He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.'

John 14:15-20

¹⁵“If you love me, keep my commands. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. ¹⁸I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.”

holy ['hoʊli] adjective: exalted or worthy of complete devotion as one perfect in goodness and righteousness : divine

spirit [ˈspɪrɪt] noun: an animating or vital principle held to give life to physical organisms : a supernatural being or essence: such as: HOLY SPIRIT

Discussion Questions

1. What do you notice from the Scriptures or this section of the Creed? What ideas, images, or phrases stand out to you?
2. There are many images and metaphors for the Holy Spirit throughout Scripture, including fire, wind, water, breath, and a dove. Which of these is most compelling to you and why?
3. One of the key aspects of the Holy Spirit's work is forming the character of Jesus within us - particularly love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5.22-23). How have you experienced growth in these traits? Is there one you want to see increase in your relationships with others?
4. Have you ever had a meaningful conversation with someone to share your faith? What are some internal challenges or external obstacles that make those conversations difficult?
5. Jesus called the Holy Spirit our "advocate" - one who comes alongside to help. Can you remember a time when the Holy Spirit gave you strength in a time of need, guidance in a time of discernment, wisdom in a time of confusion, or comfort in a time of pain?

Closing Prayer

Spend the last several minutes sharing any burdens or thanksgivings with the group and pray together. Close by praying this prayer together:

Oh God, in the name of Christ, please send your Spirit to us: into our minds, to guide our thinking; into our mouths, to guide our speaking; into our feet, to guide our walking; into our hearts, to guide our loving; amen.

Suggested Practices for the Week

Pray a "breath prayer" this week. Try repeating a verse of scripture to the rhythm of your breath. Try part of Psalm 23 for example: inhale the phrase "the Lord is my shepherd" and exhale "I have everything I need." Repeat for several breath cycles.

A Song for the Week



Rest on Us performed by Maverick City Music

WEEK 7

“...the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins...”

Teaching Notes

First 5 Minutes

Optional Icebreaker: Share a meaningful or funny experience you had with a group. How did that experience bond you together?

Key Scriptures

Matthew 28.18-20

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

James 5.13-16

¹³ Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

catholic [kath-lik] *adjective*: comprehensive, universal. *especially* : broad in sympathies, tastes, or interests

communion [kə'myun yən] *noun*: an act or instance of sharing. intimate fellowship or rapport: communication. a body of Christians having a common faith and discipline

Discussion Questions

1. What do you notice from the Scriptures or this section of the Creed? What ideas, images, or phrases stand out to you?
2. How do the definitions of “catholic” and “communion” impact your understanding of this portion of the Creed?
3. Who are some of the people in the church (past or present) who have nurtured your faith? What was it about them that was so special?
4. How has worshiping together on Sunday challenged and encouraged you in your life and faith? What elements of worship have you found most meaningful?
5. Why do you think the Creed includes forgiveness? What happens to us if we do not forgive?

Closing Prayer

Spend the last several minutes sharing any burdens or thanksgivings with the group and pray together. Consider closing by praying this prayer together:

**Gracious Father, we pray for your holy Catholic Church. Fill it with all truth, in all truth with all peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where in any thing it is amiss, reform it. Where it is right, strengthen it; where it is in want, provide for it; where it is divided, reunite it; for the sake of Jesus Christ your Son our Savior.
*Amen.***

Suggested Practices for the Week

- Initiate and set a date for a walk or a time to get coffee with someone you would like to get to know better or haven't caught up with for a long time.
- Think back on your life and identify some people who nurtured your faith in God. Take a few minutes to thank God for them. If possible, let them know how they've impacted your life.

A Song for the Week



Creed performed by Rich Mullins

WEEK 8

“...the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.”

Teaching Notes

First 5 Minutes

Optional Icebreaker: Do you have a favorite “underdog” success story, whether from a book or movie or real-life event? What do you find compelling about it? How did you feel the first time you learned about or watched it unfold?

Key Scriptures

1 Corinthians 15:20-26

²⁰But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²²For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ²³But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. ²⁴Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. ²⁵For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

resurrection [rez-uh-rek-shuhn] noun: the rising of Christ from the dead. the rising again to life of all the human dead before the final judgment

everlasting [ev-er-lah-sting] noun: lasting or enduring through all time : eternal

1 John 3.1-3

³ See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ² Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. ³ All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you notice from the Scriptures or this section of the Creed? What ideas, images, or phrases stand out to you?
2. If you had everlasting life in a world made good, what are some things you would enjoy doing with all that time?
3. The resurrection of the body implies that the earth itself will also be “resurrected” - healed and renewed to be better than before. How does this resurrection hope shape our values and practices?
4. God’s promise of eternal life provides hope that death is not final. How have you experienced that hope yourself or witnessed it in the life of another?
5. As we’ve gone through the Creed together through this session, how has your understanding of faith grown or developed? What’s one way you might like to continue that growth as we go on from here?

Closing Prayer

Spend the last several minutes sharing any burdens or thanksgivings with the group and pray together. Consider closing with the Lord’s Prayer.

Suggested Practices for the Week

Plant some seeds this spring and watch what is dead come to life!

A Song for the Week



Mystery of Faith performed by Greg LaFollette



Christ Church
ANGLICAN