

The Apostles' Creed is one of the most popular creeds used in worship by Western Christians and affirming it is one of the membership requirements of Greenfield Community Church. It was developed between the second and ninth centuries. Legend has it that the Apostles wrote it after Christ's ascension into heaven (that is not the case, though the name stuck).

Beginning the Conversation

1. What are your initial thoughts or associations when you hear the word "creed"? Have you ever attended a church where the Apostles' Creed was recited as a regular part of worship?
2. In many non-liturgical traditions you may hear it said, "no creed but the Bible." Why do you think some people might be hesitant to use a formal creed in a church setting?

Digging Deeper

1. Read over the Apostles' Creed. How does it seem to be structured? What gets more attention? Are there any doctrines that seem to be missing? Note any questions you may have for further study about any parts of the Creed.
2. Each article of the Creed can be traced to statements in the Bible. Examine it line by line and list any biblical texts that it may be drawing upon (e.g., "creator of heaven and earth" – Genesis 1 & 2). Looking at the list, why do you think it would be good for a believer to have a concise summary of the entire biblical narrative?
3. The sermon described a creed as both a "centring statement" that highlights the core of our faith and a "boundary statement" that acts as guard rails. How does viewing the Creed this way help protect the "essentials of the faith" without it becoming an exhaustive list of every belief?
4. How does the Creed (or any statement of faith) help summarize and clarify the message of the Bible? That is, help us determine what is an "essential" and what may be a disputable matter (see Romans 14-15).
5. Notice how the Creed is written with a Trinitarian format with its focus on Jesus Christ as God's only Son and our Lord. How does the Creed help us understand and summarise the work of the Trinity?
6. The Creed begins with the line, "I believe." Who is the "I" in the Creed? How does starting with these words transform the Creed from a simple list of facts into a personal and communal confession of faith?
7. Read James 2:10-24. What is the relationship between "belief" and "trust" or "belief" and "faith"? (or faith and works) What does it mean to "believe" in something? Real belief or faith will always be worked out in the way we live our lives. How does the Creed serve as a foundation for this kind of transformational faith?

Living it Out

1. Read through the Apostles' Creed prayerfully and ask: "Does my life reflect the truths I claim to believe?" Is there something you can commit to working on over the duration of this study?
2. Reciting the Apostles' Creed has been part of Christian worship in the West for hundreds of years. I would encourage you to commit it to memory and make it part of your daily spiritual practices to remind yourself of your allegiance to the Triune God.

The Apostles' Creed*

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

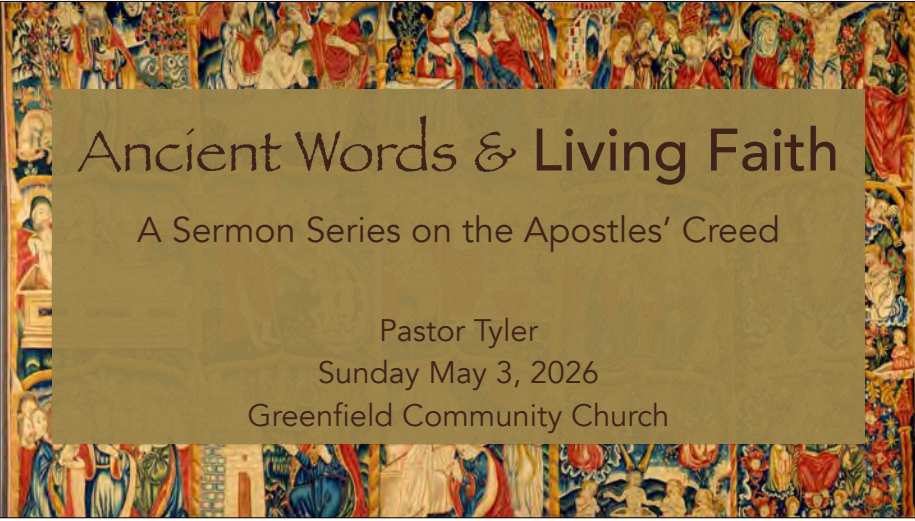
I believe in Jesus Christ,
God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic^[a] Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Notes

[*] This version is based on the translation of the ELLC.

[a] Catholic (small case c) means "universal."



Ancient Words & Living Faith

A Sermon Series on the Apostles' Creed


Pastor Tyler
Sunday May 3, 2026
Greenfield Community Church

Tapestry of the
Apostles' Creed

Europe (1550–
1600 AD).

Medium: Wool
warp, wool weft.

In the MET
Collection.



What is a "Creed"?

"A concise and memorable summary of essential Christian beliefs."

- ♦ **Centring statement** that highlights the heart of our faith.
- ♦ **Boundary statement** that functions as guard rails to our faith.



Why Creeds?

Is not the Bible enough?

A creed does not to replace the Bible, but summarizes and clarifies its main tenets in response to questions (usually about Jesus) that arise in particular historical contexts.

Creeds are "reading traditions" that show us how the church before us read Scripture in order to understand the essentials of the faith.



Why Creeds?

1. To understand their experience of Jesus within and over against the shared story of Israel.
2. To clarify the complex understanding of God in light of Jesus' death and resurrection and the giving of the Holy Spirit.
3. To correct misunderstandings of the "good news" of Jesus.



Origin of the Creeds

The Earliest Creed: The *Shema*

"Hear, O Israel: Yahweh our God, Yahweh is one. Love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deuteronomy 6:4-5).

- Defines the one to whom loyalty is given (**centring**) and distinguishes Israel among the nations (**boundary**).



Origin of the Creeds

Earliest Christian Creed: "Jesus is Lord"

"No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit" (1Corinthians 12:3; Romans 10:9)

- Confessing "Jesus is Lord" is a **centring** statement and a **boundary** statement.



Origin of the Creeds

"Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ²By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. ³For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that [the Messiah/Christ] died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to..." (1Corinthians 15:1-6).



Origin of the Creeds

The creedal statement in 1Corinthians 15 starts to look like the Apostles' Creed.

- Summarizes the "gospel preached" (15:1) to us by which we are "saved" (15:2).
- Of "first importance" that was "passed on" (15:3).
- Contents: the Messiah died for our sins, was buried, raised on the third day, and that he appeared to people (15:3-8).
- All this happened "according to the Scriptures" (15:3,4).



Why Creeds?

The experience of the crucified and risen Jesus demanded a new telling of the biblical story, and the proper understanding of that story needed to be defined and described.

Creeds give expression to the implications of the experience, the conditions, and the language present in the Christian faith since its birth.



The Apostles' Creed

- A "grassroots confession of faith" (Myers 3), in contrast to the other ecumenical creeds like the Nicene Creed (AD 325).
- Used to teach the faith to candidates for baptism as early as the 2nd century (Hippolytus, *On the Apostolic Tradition*).



The Apostles' Creed

- Earliest reference to the name comes from a 5th century commentary that relays the legend that each of the 12 apostles had written one line (Rufinus, *Commentary*, ca. 404).
- While the legend is just that, it conveys a deep truth that it is "rooted in the faith of the apostles, and ultimately in the word of the risen Christ himself" (Myers 3).



The Apostles' Creed

"As the Lord's Prayer is the Prayer of prayers, the Decalogue is the Law of laws, so the Apostles' Creed is the Creed of creeds. It contains all the fundamental articles of the Christian faith necessary to salvation, in the form of fact, in simple Scripture language, and in the most natural order—the order of revelation—from God and the creation down to the resurrection and life everlasting.... It is by far the best popular summary of the Christian faith ever made within so brief a space" (Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 1.14-15).



The Apostles' Creed

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

Father

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

Son

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. Amen.

Holy Spirit



"I believe..."

The first work of the Creed is *pisteuo* (Greek) or *credo* (Latin); both which translate as "I believe...."

- ♦ The word conveys notions of personal belief, faith, trust, as well as allegiance.
- ♦ Real "belief" or "faith" will be worked out in the way we live our lives (James 2:10-24).



"I believe..."

Who is the "I" in the Confession?

- ♦ It is the confession of the **body of Christ**.
- ♦ It is a **confession of trust** in the Triune God.
 - ♦ "Taste and see that the Lord is Good" (Ps 34:8).



Invitation

As we go through the Apostles' Creed together, I invite you to move from a "private faith" to "public confession."

Read through the Creed this week and ask yourself, "Does my life reflect the truths I claim to believe?"



Resources

Weekly Study Guide (available from website and eBulletin).

Ben Myers, *The Apostles' Creed. A Guide to the Ancient Catechism* (2018).

Michael Bird, *What Christians Ought to Believe. An Introduction to Christian Doctrine through the Apostles' Creed* (2nd ed.; 2026).

