“Who Do You Say That I Am?”

In Matthew 16, Jesus asks His disciples who they say that He is. Peter responds with the statement, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” His confession demonstrated his faith in God—and that Jesus is on par with God. It is Peter’s “creed.”

A creed is a statement of beliefs. The creeds we are discussing in this supplement safeguard the faith from corruption while defining the boundaries of authentic Christian faith.

Where the Creeds Come From
As the early church grew it discovered teachers, claiming to be Christian, who seemed to be saying things that ran contrary to what Jesus and the apostles taught. To refute heresies and to instruct new believers, brief summaries of those teachings were created.

The Apostles’ Creed
The earliest form of this creed appeared by A.D. 150. It was not written by the apostles but is based on apostolic teaching. The Apostles’ Creed took the baptism formula found in Matthew 28:19 and expanded it: “I believe in God, the Father Almighty, and in Christ Jesus his Son, our Lord, and in the Holy Spirit, the holy Church, and the resurrection of the flesh.” Through the years phrases were added to it so that by the eighth century it had the form we know today.

This illumination from a 13th-century manuscript shows the apostles writing the Creed, receiving inspiration from the Holy Spirit.
The Nicene Creed
The main purpose of this creed was to insist that Jesus is fully God. At the time of the Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381, there were people teaching that Jesus was only the highest creation of God, and not fully divine.

The Athanasian Creed
Dating from the mid-fifth century, this creed stresses the unity of the Trinity.

The Creeds Today
The creeds challenge much in our modern secular worldview. By thinking through what the creeds say each time we recite or hear one, we can start to understand our faith. We can see how the Father Almighty brings authority and love together. We can know that Jesus, God’s only Son, is the Savior of the world and that the Spirit is holy, divine, and equal with the Father and the Son.

Anglicans use the creeds nearly every Sunday in worship. By saying “Amen” at the end, we are offering the creed to God as a kind of prayer. It is an act of praise as we declare with heart and mind: “this is my faith, this is what I really believe.”

AS YOU TEACH THIS QUARTER
☐ Look over the Nicene and Apostles’ Creeds (See page 13). Look for phrases or words that are difficult to understand. Rephrase them as if you were explaining them to a student.
☐ For an in-depth study this quarter, use an exhaustive concordance to find Bible references that support each of the statements in the creeds.
☐ Why are the creeds important today? How can they help you answer questions society asks believers?
Advent and Christmas! What a wonderful time of the year to share our faith with our families! During Advent and Christmas we often find ourselves surrounded by family traditions—both old and new. One tradition my family has is to wrap up the baby Jesus from our manger scene in a special gift bag. That gift bag is the first present opened at Christmas time. We spend time as a family talking about what it means that God sent His Son Jesus.

As you go through Advent and Christmas, think about your family traditions. How can you use those traditions as faith-sharing times in your family?

Sharing our faith—telling others what we believe—is a key part of Christian life. In church, we say the Creeds each Sunday to share our faith. Take time this quarter to talk about what the Creeds mean and then build a new family tradition by creating a book that shows what a Creed means for your family.

If you have younger children in your family, you might want to look at the *Apostles’ Creed*. Older children will be able to understand the *Nicene Creed*. Some resources are given to help you get started.

**RESOURCES TO GET YOU STARTED**

**WEBSITES**

- www.gty.org and do a search for “creeds.” Loaded with information on Creeds and confessional statements throughout Christian history.
- www.justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp
  Gives electronic versions of the Book of Common Prayer and other resources.

**A BOOK TO READ TOGETHER**


**Celebration Ideas**

**A BOOK ABOUT THE CREEDS BY YOUR FAMILY**

Use this family activity to share beliefs as well as work together to memorize the core teaching of the Christian Church. Note: This will take several weeks. Try to set aside some family time each week to work on your book.

- Choose which Creed your family will work through. Divide the Creed into short sections to work through.
- Each week, create a page for a section of the Creed. For example, if your first page is “I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth,” talk about what it means that God the Father created us as well as heaven and earth. What would you put on your page to show that?
- Add each page to a scrapbook or notebook. As children say their prayers or do devotions, have them say the parts of the Creed you have worked through using the book.

*Almighty God, by your Holy Spirit you have made us one with your saints in heaven and on earth: Grant that in our earthly pilgrimage we may always be supported by this fellowship of love and prayer, and know ourselves to be surrounded by their witnesses to your power and mercy. We ask this for the sake of Jesus Christ, in whom all our intercessions are acceptable through the Spirit, and who lives and reigns for ever and ever. AMEN* (1979 Book of Common Prayer, p. 250).
Coming Up on the Church Calendar

Throughout history, Christians have followed the church calendar to remember the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and the beginnings of the Church. Consult the Book of Common Prayer for more information. Here are a few events that occur this quarter:

**Advent** begins on December 1. In anticipation of the birth of Jesus Christ, we remember the Old Testament prophecies that foretold His coming. The traditional color used in church is purple for royalty.

**Christmas** (December 25) marks the occasion of God coming as a human when Jesus was born. In the Creeds, we state that Jesus is both fully human and fully God. The traditional color used in church is white or gold for celebration.

**The Confession of St. Peter** (January 18) Matthew 16:16 records Peter’s confession to Jesus “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Such statements are forerunners of our creeds. Traditional color used in church is white for purity.

**Lent** begins with Ash Wednesday on February 26. Lent lasts for 40 days plus Sundays. Christians observe the 40 days to remember Jesus’ time in the desert when Satan tempted Him to abandon the Father’s plan for our salvation. Jesus resisted evil—and we benefit. Lent is a solemn time when we contemplate Jesus’ time in the desert and pray “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Traditional color used in churches is purple for repentance.
In Your Toddler/2 Classroom

Reproduce and send home Passing the Torch—Family Edition (Page 3 of this supplement).

With Toddler/2s, only work through what attention levels allow, and don’t worry about “finishing” a project. It’s the process that counts for toddlers.

January Activities

Reproduce and send home The Creeds on page 10. Use the Toddler activity on Introducing the Creeds to Your Sunday School (page 12) on January 12.

Continue talking about Creeds by focusing on Jesus, God’s Son (All month). Leave out the manger and Jesus from the nativity set. Add a simple wooden cross. As children discover these objects, talk about how in church we say the Creed. The Creed says that Jesus is God’s Son. The manger and cross can help us remember that Jesus died for our sins and became alive again.

February Activities

Finish your emphasis on Creeds throughout the month of February. Set up an area with a large picture of a dove and make smaller copies for the children. While children color or glue pieces of paper on the dove, talk about how the picture of the dove can help remember the Holy Spirit. God the Holy Spirit came to be with Jesus’ followers and to help them be like Jesus.

Teaching about the Creeds to Toddlers

In Your Preschool Classroom

Reproduce and send home *Passing the Torch—Family Edition* (Page 3 of this supplement).

**December Activities**

**Advent and Christmas** (All month) Set up an Advent wreath with evergreens and four flameless or paper candles to use during Worship Time. Each week light another candle. Talk about how the wreath helps us remember that prophets in the Bible told God’s people to get ready for Jesus’ coming. Jesus came as a baby. Someday He will come back as our King.

**The Creeds** (All month) Create a table center that can be used either as a Welcome Time Activity or another Step 3. Cover the table with newsprint. Set out different magazine pictures showing parts of Creation. Let children create a mural collage of things God the Father created. Talk each week about how God the Father made us and loves us.

**January Activities**

Reproduce and send home **The Creeds** on page 10. Use the Preschool activity on Introducing the Creeds to Your Sunday School (page 12) on **January 12**. Continue talking about **Creeds** by focusing on Jesus, God’s Son (All month). Set out a manger and Jesus from the nativity set as well as a simple wooden cross. As children discover these objects, talk about how in church we say the Creed. The Creed says that Jesus is God’s Son. The manger and cross can help us remember that Jesus died for our sins and became alive again.

**February Activities**

Finish your emphasis on **Creeds** throughout the month of February. Set up an additional Step 3 center with a large picture of a dove and make smaller copies for the children. While children color the dove, talk about how the picture of the dove can help them remember the Holy Spirit.

Teach this fingerplay and do it with the children each week.

- “God is Three in One!” Hold up 3 fingers and then 1 finger and point up.
- “God is Father” Raise arms up.
- “God is Son” Touch index fingers to opposite palms.
- “God is Spirit” Wave hands like dove’s wings.
- “God is Three in One!” Hold up 3 fingers and then 1 finger and point up.

**Teaching about the Creeds to Preschoolers**

Reproduce and send home *Passing the Torch—Family Edition* (Page 3 of this supplement).

### December Activities

**Advent and Christmas** (All month) Set up an Advent wreath with evergreens and four flameless or paper candles to use as part of Prayer Time. Light another candle each week and share the following: Advent is a waiting time. Long before Jesus was born, God told prophets to tell people to get ready. The King was coming. In Advent, we wait and get ready to celebrate Jesus’ birthday. We also remember that Jesus will come back.

**The Creeds** (All month) Create a table center that can be used either as an Early Bird Activity or another Step 3. Cover the table with newsprint. Set out different magazine pictures showing parts of Creation. Let children create a mural collage of things God the Father created. Talk each week about how God the Father made us and loves us. Memorize the first section of the creed.

### January Activities

Reproduce and send home **The Creeds** on page 10.

Use the Early Elementary activity on Introducing the Creeds to Your Sunday School (page 12) on **January 12**.

Continue talking about **Creeds** by memorizing the section of the Apostles’ Creed that covers Jesus, God’s Son (All month). For each sentence, bring in an object to cover each sentence. Some ideas to get you started are a manger from a nativity set, a nail, a cross, the number “3,” and a crown. As the class learns a line, talk about how the object represents the idea they are learning.

### February Activities

Finish your emphasis on **Creeds** throughout the month of February by memorizing the rest of the Creed.

Choose one Sunday to make wordless books as an alternate Step 3 activity. Have children make books with five sheets of construction paper. As they make the books, discuss what the colors mean and how they relate to the Apostles’ Creed.

- **Black**: For sin in our lives.
- **Red**: For Jesus’ blood on the cross.
- **White**: How God sees us when our sins are forgiven.
- **Green**: How we grow in love and knowledge of the Lord.
- **Gold**: For heaven. Someday we will be with God and His forever family.

### Teaching about the Creeds to Elementary-Age Children

As you teach this quarter, take some time each week to work on a Creed with your class. The Apostles’ Creed will work better with younger elementary age children. Begin with the first line of the Creed. Say the line to your class, then have them say it back. You could try putting the Creed to a tune or creating a rhythm to play while reciting. Break the Creed down into meaningful segments. Explain difficult words before they are memorized. For older children, create a bulletin board with the three headings “God the Father,” “God the Son,” and “God the Holy Spirit.” Write each phrase of the Creed on a piece of paper. Let students put the phrases in the right place and order on the board. Try removing some of the phrases later in the quarter but still recite the Creed.
DECEMBER ACTIVITIES

Advent and Christmas (All month) Set up an Advent wreath with evergreens and four flameless or paper candles to use as part of a worship time. Light another candle each week and share the following: Advent is a time to prepare for Jesus! In the Old Testament, God’s prophets encouraged people to get ready for the coming of Jesus! Read a prophecy each week and talk about what it says about Jesus: Isaiah 9:6; Micah 5:2; Luke 1:31-33. For December 22, change the candles to white and read Luke 2:1-7 as a class.

The Creeds (All month) Create a table center that can be used either as an Early Bird Activity or another Step 3. Cover the table with newsprint. Write out James 1:17 on the paper and trace your hand several times on the paper. Have children read the verse and write answers inside the hands to this question: “What kind of Father is God?”

JANUARY ACTIVITIES

Reproduce and send home The Creeds on page 10.

Use the Elementary activity on Introducing the Creeds to Your Sunday School (page 12) on January 12.

Continue talking about Creeds by memorizing the section of the Apostles’ Creed that covers Jesus, God’s Son (All month). For each sentence, bring in an object to cover each sentence. Some ideas to get you started are a manger from a nativity set, a nail, a cross, the number “3,” and a crown. As the class learns a line, talk about how Jesus takes away our sins.

FEBRUARY ACTIVITIES

Finish your emphasis on Creeds throughout the month of February by setting out a large section of newsprint. Write out Luke 3:21-22 on the paper. Encourage children to fill up the paper with how the Holy Spirit helps them.

Choose one Sunday to make wordless books as an alternate Step 3 activity. Have children make books with five sheets of construction paper. As they make the books, discuss what the colors mean and how they relate to the Apostles’ Creed.

- **Black**: For sin in our lives.
- **Red**: For Jesus’ blood on the cross.
- **White**: How God sees us when our sins are forgiven.
- **Green**: How we grow in love and knowledge of the Lord.
- **Gold**: For heaven. Someday we will be with God and His forever family.
December Activities

Advent (All month) Set up a cozy place for talking. Decorate with blue and purple. Each week give students time to share how they are preparing for the arrival of the King. Encourage them to look at different Old Testament prophecies such as Isaiah 9:6, 40:3, and Micah 5:2. Challenge them to find more prophecies about Jesus.

January Activities

Reproduce and send home The Creeds on page 12.

Use the Upper Elementary activity on Introducing the Creeds to Your Sunday School (page 12) on January 12.

Set up an extra Early Bird Option or Step 3 activity throughout the month to work on Creeds. You will need to create simple books for your class. The first page should say “God the Father,” the second page “God the Son,” and the last page “God the Holy Spirit.” Provide markers, stickers, paper to create covers, and the following paragraph copied on paper:

Creeds are statements of faith—we tell others what we believe. Each week in church, we either say the Nicene Creed or the Apostles’ Creed. The Apostles’ Creed was written by A.D. 150 for people about to be baptized. The Nicene Creed was written around A.D. 380 by church leaders who were concerned about false teachers who said that Jesus was not really God. Today, we still say the Creeds to tell the truth to ourselves and to the world about the Lord Jesus.

February Activities

Throughout January and February, give students time for creating covers for their books and then completing them by putting in their own words what the creed says about each page.

Allow students to finish the Creed books they started in January.

Use a little Memory Verse Practice time each week to memorize the Nicene Creed as a class.

Channing Moore Williams

WHEN HE LIVED: 1829–1910
WHAT HE DID: Grew up in Virginia, USA. Went to China in 1856. Lived in Japan from 1859–1908. He was the first Episcopal Bishop of Japan. He cared about bringing the Gospel to Japan. He persisted in learning Japanese well enough to teach and write. Williams established the Episcopal Church of Japan, a hospital, and a university. He also translated parts of the Book of Common Prayer into Japanese.

Hero for Christ: Activity

William’s tombstone bears this inscription: “During his fifty years in Japan, he taught Christ’s ways and not his own.” How do you reflect Christ’s ways in your daily life?
Roman Catholic missionaries were first sent to Japan around 1549. Christianity flourished for many years until, for a variety of reasons, the Japanese rulers began to feel threatened by the Christians. A period of persecution began with the mutilation and crucifixion of six friars and 20 lay Christians on February 5, 1597.

By 1630, Japanese Christianity was driven underground, where it remained until the first Protestant missionary, Channing Moore Williams, arrived in 1859.

**Explore the Word:**
One of the martyrs, a Japanese Christian named Paul Miki said right before he died, “And so I tell you plainly: there is no route to salvation except the one that the Christians teach. My religion teaches me to pardon my enemies and all who offended me. I do gladly pardon the emperor and all who brought about my death, and I beg them to seek Christian baptism.” Now read through 1 Corinthians 13. How did Paul Miki try to live up to this passage in the Bible?
December Activities

Advent (Dec. 4, 11, 18, 22) Set up an additional Before Class Option at a table with Bibles, note cards, and markers. In anticipation of the birth of Jesus, we remember the prophets of the Old Testament. The Nicene Creed reminds us that the Holy Spirit “has spoken through the Prophets.” Look up Isaiah 7:14; 9:6, 40: 3; Micah 5:2, and Hosea 11:1. Encourage youth to create symbols of how each Old Testament prophecy relates to the coming of Jesus. How can you share your faith using your symbol in the coming week? For Christmas (week of Dec. 22), have them create a symbol for Jesus’ birth.

January Activities

Take the month to explore the sections of the Nicene Creed, that deal with God the Father and God the Son, as an alternate Step 3 activity. Have copies of the Creed (Page 13 of this supplement.) as well as markers and mural paper. Using the sheets from the quarterly Creeds activity for Youth, ask your high schoolers to work together to create a mural about the Nicene Creed. Challenge them to be able to explain all parts of the mural and how it is a statement of their faith today.

Use the Youth activity on Introducing the Creeds to Your Sunday School (page 12) on January 15.

February Activities

On February 23, set up a Step 3 table activity with Bibles. You may want to reproduce the Back in Time article to set in the area.

Take the month to finish the mural on the Nicene Creed that was started in January. Have your class share the mural with a confirmation class.

Anne Askew for February 23

A young and zealous Protestant woman, Anne Askew lived at the beginning of the English Reformation. Anne was a noblewoman during the reign of Henry VIII. She loved the Scriptures—studying them diligently and memorizing them.

In the 1540s, England was divided between leaders who envisioned the nation embracing Protestantism and those who thought the country should remain Catholic. Anne ignored the societal constraints on women by publically reading and teaching Scripture as a “gospeller.” Anne’s public espousing of her beliefs were perceived as threats among certain leaders, especially as she moved in influential circles. She was condemned to death. After being tortured on the rack for her political connections in court, Anne was burned at the stake on July 16, 1546.

Explore the Word:
In Anne’s final prayer, she asked the Lord to fight for her and forgive her persecutors. Even though her world seemed against her, Anne clung to her faith. Read John 16:1-3, 2-22, and 32-33. How are Anne’s life and these verses connected? Why might her actions inspire generations of believers?
Introducing CREEDS to Your Sunday School

In the region of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16). Affirmations of faith like Peter’s led to the formation of the Creeds. Use the age-appropriate activity below as an alternate Step 3 activity to tie into your quarterly teaching on the Creeds.

**TODDLER/2 and PRESCHOOL**

**Teacher Prep:** Cut out fish shapes and punch a hole in the mouth end. You will need three fish for each child, crayons, and a foot-long piece of yarn.

**Talk Time:** Show a fish. Peter was a fisherman. One day, Jesus asked Peter, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter said, “You are the Son of God.” In the Creed we say that Jesus is God’s Son. We can use fish to help us remember who Jesus is.

**Explore:** Let the children color crosses on the fish. Write “Jesus is God’s Son” on each child’s fish. Give each child three fish to color. Tie the fish together with a piece of yarn. For older preschoolers write God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit on the fish and have children color a world, a cross, and a dove. (Color doesn’t matter.)

**EARLY ELEMENTARY, ELEMENTARY and UPPER ELEMENTARY**

**Teacher Prep:** You will need Bibles for Elementary and Upper Elementary students; a large copy of the Shield of St. Peter, drawing paper, and markers for each child.

**Talk Time:** Have students find and read Matthew 16:13-19. For younger students, show them the verses in the Bible and read them aloud. Peter confesses his faith in Jesus. Look at the shield. The keys are the “keys of the kingdom of heaven” that Jesus talked about in verse 19. The upside-down cross is there because history tells us that Peter was crucified for his faith but upside down because he felt he wasn’t worthy to die the same way as his Lord.

**Explore:** Give each child a piece of paper. A shield can be a visual picture of a creed. Have each child draw a shield that shows what he or she believes about Jesus.

**MIDDLE SCHOOL and HIGH SCHOOL**

**Teacher Prep:** you will need Bibles, copies of the Creeds (Page 8 of this supplement), pens, and note cards.

**Talk Time:** Have students read Matthew 16:13-19; Acts 4:8-13, and 1 Peter 5:1-4. Peter’s confession in verse 16 led to the formation of the Creeds. How do these passages relate to each other?

Partly because of Peter’s profession in the fishing business, early Christians used the symbol of the fish to show they believed. The word for fish in Greek is IXOYΣ. The first letter I was the beginning letter for Jesus. Χ began the word for Christ. Θ began the word for God. Υ began the word for Son (of God). And Σ began the word for Savior.

**Explore:** Challenge teens to create an acrostic with the word Jesus to show what they believe.
The Apostles’ Creed

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

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

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.

From the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, p. 96

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father 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 this were made. For us and for our salvation He came down from heaven: By the power of the Holy Spirit He became incarnate from 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 Scripture; 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. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He 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

From the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, p. 358