

I Was Thinking..... September 1, 2025



This year marks the 1700th anniversary of the creation of the Nicene Creed as one of the fundamental statements of belief for Christians. That is saying a lot about its significance that it has survived as a primary doctrine for 1700 years. If you open your Book of Alternative Services to page 188, you will find the Nicene Creed. It is structured in four parts (*God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and the Church*), and this structure is the basis for our sermon series for this fall.

The history of the Nicene Creed is quite fascinating. More than 200 bishops from multiple Christian denominations met in Nicaea in May, June, and July of 325 AD, primarily to discuss their shared understanding of the divine nature of Christ as the Son of God. Having deeply studied both the Old and New Testaments, they came together as the First Council of Nicaea at the request of Emperor Constantine. A priest in the area of Alexandria, Arius, had been putting forward the idea that Jesus was not the Son of God but was, rather, the adopted human son of God; that Christ was not divine. As Arius' ideas began to gain in popularity, Emperor Constantine convened the Council of Nicaea to clarify this issue. Arius was essentially saying that the Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – was not to be considered doctrine because Jesus was simply a human being. After much discussion and debate based on Scripture, the Council crafted the Nicene Creed and it was declared to be the fundamental statement of Christian beliefs about the Trinity and about the nature of the Christian faith. It was also decided that Arius' teachings were to be considered heresy; beliefs that were sacrilegious and insulting to God. It was further declared that those who did not believe in the divinity of Christ should not be taking part in the Eucharist.

Our readings for the month of September will include some of the same passages of Scripture that helped to shape the thinking of the 200+ bishops that were responsible for the creation of the Nicene Creed. As we take this month to better understand this Creed and its meaning, we are essentially walking in the footsteps of those bishops of 325 AD. It is my hope that our sermon series will help us all to take a closer look at this piece of doctrine that is also foundational to our Church.

For Anglicans, the Nicene Creed is typically read out as part of the Liturgy of the Eucharist and also used on major feast days. One of the reasons for this is because it begins with the phrase, "We believe..." which speaks to our shared beliefs. The Apostles' Creed begins

with, “I believe...” which is closely linked to the sacraments of baptism and confirmation and speaks more to the individual’s beliefs in relation to Christian traditions. Before the Nicene Creed was created, the priest would essentially state the beliefs of the Church as the Eucharistic prayer. But that statement of beliefs was typically said so quietly that the people did not usually hear it. And so, in modern times, we say it together to assert what we believe to be at the core of our shared faith.

As we celebrate the 1700th anniversary of the Nicene Creed, we are aware that we need continual reminders that the Trinity includes Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When we proclaim our faith by stating the Nicene Creed together, we are also demonstrating our unity as Christians. We are united across time back to Christ, across the world, and across the various denominations of Christianity.

Wishing you every blessing for a wonderful autumn season,
Reverend Joanne+