



VOICE OF GRACE

Grace Lutheran Church, Atlanta

June/July 2017

THE NICENE CREED AND OUR FAITH IN THE TRIUNE GOD

By: Micah Miller

As Lutherans, we sometimes skip all the way from the New Testament to Luther and the Reformation, but the 1500 years in between were of great importance for the church. Much of our theological and liturgical thought was formed in the 500 years or so after Christ; in fact, basic church teachings like the Trinity were articulated during this early period in church history. This is not to say that the early church invented the doctrine of the Trinity—God is always Triune—but the early church interpreted Scripture to provide the best explanation of God's identity. The theologians who helped form what we today consider orthodox Christian faith are known as Church Fathers, and their thought still shapes the church today.

If you thumb through the first few pages of the Lutheran Hymnal (xii-xiii), you will come across a list of commemorations—a list of saints whom we celebrate as having made a significant contribution to our faith. I encourage you to look through this list and find out more about those we celebrate. Many of those listed in the hymnal are early Church Fathers. They are responsible for formulating and explaining some of the most important church teachings. For example, the early Church Fathers articulated the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the two natures of Christ. The early Church Fathers established many of the ways that we speak about God in our language and how we worship him in our liturgical practices. One of the most visible ways that the early Church influenced our faith is through their teachings on the Trinity.

Each Sunday, whether in the words of the Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, or Athanasian Creed, we confess that we believe in the Trinity, the one God made of three distinct Persons. The Trinity is one of the central doctrines of the orthodox church, but there are few verses in Scripture that speak of the three Persons, and even fewer that explain how they might be related. The early church baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as Christ commands his disciples in Matthew 28:19. However, when early theologians began trying to articulate the relationship between each of the three Persons, they began offering theologies that other early theologians thought went against Scripture



Icon depicting the Emperor Constantine, accompanied by the bishops of the First Council of Nicaea (325), holding the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381

and the teaching of the Apostles. Some of the early theologians taught that Christ was a created being who was created before all other creatures. Other early theologians taught that Christ had come from the Father's being, but was in some way less than the Father. Still others thought that the Father and Son were two different modes or aspects of the same being. All three of these positions would eventually be condemned by the ecumenical church councils at Nicaea and Constantinople, but each of the positions was, for a time, supported by certain prominent members of the early church.

The early Church Fathers chose to articulate their Trinitarian faith through the words of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, which we today call the

Nicene Creed. In order to show just how the Nicene Creed articulates our faith in the Triune God, I'd like to walk through portions of the creed and show just what the early Church Fathers were trying to communicate through the language of the creed.

"I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible."

The first article of the Nicene Creed confirms that Christians believe in one God and that the Father created all that exists.

"And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made."

In the second article, the early Church Fathers explained how the Son is related to the Father. The word "begotten" is borrowed from Scripture and is used to show that the Son was not created, but is eternally generated from the Father in a way that humans cannot understand. The use of the phrases "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God" illustrate the closeness between the Father and Son (they are both God, Light, etc.), as well as their distinctness (there is mention of both the Father and Son in the statements). Finally, the statement that the Son is "of one substance with the Father" demonstrates that the Son and Father share the same substance (substance is a technical term that means a real existent being). They are not two separate beings, but both possess the divine substance. The statements in the second article, therefore, work to attest to both the unity between the Father and Son, as well as the distinctness between them.

"And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [and the Son], who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets."

The third article explains the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Father and Son. At first glance, it might appear that the Holy Spirit possesses a lesser status than the Father and Son. In fact, he is not called God at all in the third article. However, only the Godhead is worshiped and glorified so, by writing that the Holy Spirit "with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified," the creed is implying that the Holy Spirit is also God along with the Father and the Son. The use of the word "proceeds," like the word "begotten" in the

second article, is found in Scripture and attests to the fact that the Holy Spirit was not created but is eternally generated from the Father in a manner that humans cannot understand.

The language of the Nicene Creed works to illustrate both the unity and the diversity in God—God is one, but God is also three distinct Persons. To put it another way, we are able to say that God is three and one, but we are not able to say how God is three and one. The Athanasian Creed, which we recite on Trinity Sunday, illustrates this fact by emphasizing God's Triune nature without offering an explanation for how or why this is the case. By using the Nicene Creed (as well as the Apostles' Creed and the Athanasian Creed), we confess the same truth that Christians have confessed for generations, and it is thanks to the early Church Fathers that we have these creeds as statements of our faith.

JOE WARNKE INSTALLATION

For the past four years, Grace has sponsored Joe Warnke through Concordia Seminary's Adopt-A-Student program.

He proudly invites Grace to his ordination into the Office of the Holy Ministry and his installation as Pastor of Christ Our Savior Evangelical Lutheran Church on Sunday, July 16 at 4pm. The address is 3235 Teamon Road, Griffin, GA 30223.

There will be a dinner to follow the service. In order to plan for seating, parking, and food, the congregation is requesting that you RSVP by July 3. You can RSVP directly to Joe at joe@joewarnke.com.

Your presence will make this event a memorable experience for Pastor-Elect Warnke and his congregation!

VBS VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

This year's Vacation Bible School theme is titled "A Mighty Fortress," where kids learn that God is their refuge and strength.

The program will run July 24 - 28. Specific dates and times are TBD. We're looking for volunteers to help run this year's VBS. If you're interested, please let Liesl Beaton or Danielle Durgin know.

THE PASTOR'S CORNER

"Summer afternoon—summer afternoon; to me those have always been the two most beautiful words in the English language." — Henry James

Soon summer will arrive with all of its glory. Summer has its own character, its own rituals. People will be traveling; more meals will be eaten cooked from the grill; there will be fireworks and bug spray, swimming pools, and cool drinks on porches. The excitement of summer seems nearly palpable when it is just around the corner. But, sometime soon after its arrival it will get hotter and hotter. People will forget the magic of the season and will set their eyes to look for cooler days.

In many ways, the season of Pentecost is the same. How exciting it is to hear of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that first Pentecost. The Holy Spirit gives lavish gifts to the Apostles and the early Church as they set out to make known the good news of God's Kingdom, that Christ has died, Christ has risen, that Christ will come again. Trinity Sunday will come soon with the season, and we will hear the mystery of the Triune God proclaimed. Each week, we will gather together in celebration of the goodness God has shown to us in giving us His Son as our Savior.



But soon into the season, the green days of Pentecost might drag on. You might find yourself in anticipation of the more exciting seasons like Advent, the "cooler" holidays such as Christmas. It is kind of funny that one name for this season of the church is "Ordinary Time."

But do not be fooled; there is nothing ordinary about what happens as we gather this season. This Pentecost, Jesus Christ will meet us by His promise every Sunday. This season, sins will be forgiven by the command of Christ. This season, we will sup on the living body and blood of our Lord as we gather around His altar. This season the Holy Spirit will continue to speak to us as we hear the Word of God. This Pentecost, the invasion of God's Kingdom into this world will continue as we continue to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ.

So let us dive into this season of the Church head first and relish in all the rituals it has to offer to us. If we should travel, let us make every effort to not take a vacation from the promises of Christ proclaimed in pulpits around the country. If we should feel distracted by the activities of the summer, let us remember the blessings offered to us at the altar of our Lord.

If we should find the days of Pentecost a bit humdrum and boring, let us remember that this the season kicked off by the very outpouring of the same Spirit that has stirred up your faith in Christ. Every time you gather with the saints of Christ, he promises to be there to sustain you in faith, to forgive you your sins, and to send you out with the good news ringing in your ears. This is indeed a season to be excited about.

- Pastor Adam Ellsworth

PORTALS OF PRAYER

Pick up your FREE *Portals of Prayer* for July - September in the Narthex.

IN OUR PRAYERS

- » **Our homebound members:** Irene Rosenkoetter and Marjorie Hunecke
- » **Continued healing:** Arlene Kateen and Jan Ellison
- » **For our mission partners:** Rev. Joseph Song, Stepping Stone, and Lutheran Services of Georgia

UPCOMING EVENTS

Camp Carter: June 5-30

Camp Carter begins on Monday, June 5 and runs all month. Our church will be used 8:30am-2pm daily as they build friendships and memories during their summer vacation. Proceeds benefit the church.

Second Sunday Lunch: June 11

Join us for food and fellowship after the service at Doc Chey's (1424 N Highland Ave).

VA-Highland Civic Association: June 12, 6:30pm

Elders' Meeting: June 13, 7pm

BBQ + Movie Night: June 17, 4pm

Join us at Grace starting at 4pm. We'll fire up the grill at 5pm and serve burgers and hot dogs. Attendees are asked to bring a side dish to share. After dinner, we'll settle in for a movie and popcorn. We will be showing two movies: one for adults ("Cool Hand Luke") and one for kids (TBD).

Church Council Meeting: June 27, 7pm

Piety by the Pint: June 29

We'll be gathering for fellowship, service, and great conversations at Orpheus Brewery. The service project will be "Baby Dolls and Soccer Balls," which we will be collecting for refugee children.

Second Sunday Lunch: July 9

Join us for food and fellowship after the service at Varuni Napoli (1540 Monroe Dr NE).

VA-Highland Civic Association: July 10, 6:30pm

Youth Dinner Service Project: July 17

Volunteers are needed to serve food to 100 youths at Faith Lutheran in Marietta. Contact Jason Howells for more information.

New Member Sunday: July 23

We will be welcoming Jeremy Adams and Jordan Boeck as new members at Grace.

Vacation Bible School at Grace: July 24-28

Piety by the Pint: July 27

Location and time TBD.

NOTE: CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL AND ADULT BIBLE STUDY WILL NOT MEET DURING JULY.

SERVICE ASSISTANTS

- » **6/11:** Zach Simpson (Acolyte), Patrick Kane (Reader), James Smith and Karleen Smith (Ushers)
- » **6/18:** Jeff Raymond (Worship Assistant), Sheila Schutt and Sarah Hocut (Altar Care), Lee Anderson and Adam Ozgo (Ushers)
- » **6/25:** Thurston Howells (Acolyte), Sara Howells (Reader), Jason Howells and Thurston Howells (Ushers)
- » **7/2:** Don Collins (Worship Assistant), Kelley Wiedenmann and Blaire Wilson (Altar Care), Bob Chambers and Mary Chambers (Ushers)
- » **7/9:** Sechan Tak (Acolyte), Fred Wiedenmann (Reader), Mal Simpson and Zach Simpson (Ushers)
- » **7/16:** Worship Assistant TBD, John Kateen and Arlene Kateen (Altar Care), James Smith and Don Collins (Ushers)
- » **7/23:** Cassie Howells (Acolyte), Jonathan Plowman (Reader), Jason Howells and Thurston Howells (Ushers)
- » **7/30:** Worship Assistant TBD, James Smith and Karleen Smith (Altar Care)

WEEK AT GRACE

- » **Mondays: Nicotine Anonymous, 7pm**
- » **Tuesdays: Yoga Exercise Class, 6pm**
- » **Wednesdays: Supper and Bible Study, 6pm**
- » **Thursdays: Alcoholics Anonymous, 7pm**
- » **Saturdays: Yoga Exercise Class, 10am**

WEEKLY WORSHIP

- » **Children's Sunday School, Sundays 9:45am**
- » **Adult Bible Study, Sundays 9:45am**
- » **Confirmation, Sundays 9:45am**
- » **Worship Service, Sundays 11am**

CONTACT US

www.gracemidtown.com | 404-875-5411
1155 N. Highland Ave., Atlanta, GA 30306

@GraceLutheranATL 