

2. In the Apostles' Creed, concentrate on three theological points: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Discuss in each area the theological ramifications of their relationship with one another – their life as Trinity. Ultimately, what are the implications of these theological terms and this fundamental Christian assertion about God for your own life and diaconal ministry?

Creeds are an interesting subject for me. I was raised in Disciples of Christ church, where creeds are deliberately not used, primarily because at its beginning in the early 19th century, interpreting creeds had become divisive. The founders very much wanted to bring all Christians together, reversing the trend of breaking away and starting a new denomination over interpretation of lots of issues in the Church as they knew it. So I grew up with the mantra, “No creed but Christ.”

That made it necessary for me to “make peace” with both of the creeds we use in the Episcopal Church. To my surprise, after nearly two centuries, the Christian community's need to define each word of creeds had declined. It was easier than I expected to become comfortable with the idea that my specific understanding of any part of the wording could vary somewhat from the person next to me. What I learned was important was that each member of the community accept all of the creed as basic belief.

According to Wikipedia, the Apostles' Creed is comes from the early church. Around the middle of the third century, St. Firmilian wrote of the Symbolum (creed) as “Symbol of the Trinity,” and recognized it as an integral part of the rite of baptism. The title *Symbolum Apostolicum* (Symbol or Creed of the Apostles) appears for the first time in a letter, probably written by Ambrose to Pope Siricius about 390 AD.

How it came to be called the Apostles' Creed is unknown. There was a time when many people believed that the Twelve Apostles themselves created this creed, each one contributing one of the twelve statements. That explanation doesn't fit the timeline of history very well. Even translated from Latin, the Apostles' Creed of the third and fourth centuries read somewhat differently than the one used in most Episcopal churches today. For starters, they wouldn't have spoken of the holy catholic (or worldwide) church. Even in the 1928 Book of Common Prayer, the Apostles' Creed reads and is formatted slightly differently than the 1979 version.

Since the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, the Episcopal Church uses an interrogative form of the Apostles' Creed in the rites of baptism. Out of curiosity about the continuous use, I checked a copy of the 1928 Prayer Book. It asks only “Dost thou believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith, as contained in the Apostles' Creed?” of adults and “Wilt thou also on thy part take heed that this Child learn the creed....” of god parents. And it is part of morning Prayer.

It is composed of three statements (or set of statements). Each of the three deals with one part of the Trinity.

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

As a one-time copy editor, I like to visualize a colon after God. This how it reads in my mind. “I believe in God: who we understand as an all powerful parent, and know to be the designer and builder of our universe.” We could probably spend a lot of time amending other qualities we *know* of God into this statement, but those two characteristics of God's nature affirm that our God is the one and only.

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.