

# THOUGHTS ON THE NICENE CREED

*PENTECOST 2025*



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Greetings .....	3
Preface .....	4
We are children of God the Father .....	6
We live with hope through the love of Christ .....	11
We wait for Jesus' return and His everlasting Kingdom .....	16
The Holy Spirit lives in us .....	21
We are part of one worldwide church .....	26
We have one baptism for the forgiveness of sins .....	31
We too shall be resurrected and live eternally .....	36

# GREETINGS

As every year, CLF offers a Pentecost series designed for pastors, lay ministers, elders, Bible study groups, or anyone seeking to deepen their faith. Each piece includes liturgical suggestions, material for reflection, and suggestions for prayer. Pentecost is a special time in the church calendar when we celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit – the power, comfort, and guidance God gives to His people. It is a moment to reflect deeply on our faith, our community, and our calling as disciples of Christ. This year, Pentecost Sunday is celebrated on 8 June. This sermon series is for 1 to 8 June, and we invite you to join us on this spiritual journey of renewal and growth.

This year's focus is on celebrating the Nicene Creed. In 325 AD, following the legalisation of Christianity in the Roman Empire under Emperor Constantine, church leaders gathered for the First Ecumenical Council, known as the Council of Nicaea. The council was convened to address key theological disputes and to define the core beliefs of the Christian faith. One of its most significant outcomes was the formulation of the Nicene Creed, a foundational statement of Christian doctrine. This year, 2025, marks the 1700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this historic event, which continues to shape Christian theology and worship across the world.

This series has been compiled by Chris Weyers, a pastor and pastoral counsellor from Port Elizabeth. With his expertise in mindfulness and retreat facilitation, Chris brings unique insights to help us recognise the work of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives. Amid his busy schedule, Chris also finds joy in simple things, like going for a walk along the beach and becoming aware of God's presence through nature!

We hope this series will inspire and enrich your life, deepening your faith as we celebrate the spirit of Pentecost and the 1700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nicene Creed, together

Dr Mias van Jaarsveld

*Editor*

# PREFACE

This year, we are celebrating the anniversary of the Nicene Creed being 1700-years old. This creed, together with the Apostolic Creed and the Athanasian Creed, are the three creeds that all protestant churches profess.

The origin of the Nicene Creed dates back to the year 325 A.D. to the small town of Nicaea in the old Asia Minor, today known as Iznik in Turkey. During that time the Roman persecution of Christians have just come to an end. For the first time Christians could worship and spread the Gospel without fear. Although the largest part of the creed was written during this time, it was only completed during the Synod of Constantinople in 381 A.D.

As in our day and time, there was much division in the early church – especially regarding certain theological issues. It was emperor Constantine, who then recently converted to the Christian faith, that decided to call together all the bishops of the different faith communities. The purpose of this first synod was to confirm the faith in the Triune God, clarifying how the relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit should be understood.

This creed was in direct opposition to the beliefs of Arius, who in that time taught that Jesus was not of the same substance as God and therefore not God. The Synod of Nicaea therefore declared that God was of one substance with three persons. The Father, Son and Spirit is thus distinguishable, but not separable from each other.

During this series, each sermon we will focus on a different declaration of the creed and ask what this means for us as believers today. Each sermon contains a Scripture reading for the day, suggestions for liturgical acts that can be performed during the sermon, with questions for discussion in small groups, prayer points, and activities, to be done after the service. These suggestions are all aimed at strengthening and internalising the message of the day

May God bless you during your time of contemplation of this creed.

Proponent Chris Weyers  
10 December 2025

## THE NICENE CREED

We believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
begotten from the Father before all ages,  
God from God,  
Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made;  
of the same essence as the Father.  
Through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven;  
he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary,  
and was made human.  
He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered and was buried.  
The third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures.  
He ascended to heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again with glory  
to judge the living and the dead.  
His kingdom will never end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the Lord, the giver of life.  
He proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.  
He spoke through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

We affirm one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look forward to the resurrection of the dead,  
and to life in the world to come.

Amen.

# WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD THE FATHER

SUNDAY MORNING, 1 JUNE 2025

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## READ

### Scripture reading:

*Galatians 3:26 – 4:7 (NIV)*

<sup>26</sup> So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, <sup>27</sup> for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

<sup>4</sup> <sup>1</sup>What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. <sup>2</sup> The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. <sup>3</sup> So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world. <sup>4</sup> But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. <sup>6</sup> Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." <sup>7</sup> So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

### Liturgical Suggestion:

*Sing:*

- A song about God's eternal love
- End the service with the song "Yes, we love you with the love of the Lord" and ask everybody to join hands as a symbol of unity.

*Liturgical Act:*

- Light a red candle at the start of the service symbolising God's eternal love.

# LISTEN

## Introduction:

The first Nicene Creed we will be paying attention too, is about God the Father: “We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.”

This declaration lies at the heart of our relationship with God – that He is our Father, and we are His children. For the past 1700 years Christians have been holding onto this truth. And in today’s world, with all its difficulties and uncertainties, we are challenged, even more so, to also hold onto this truth.

But what does it mean for us today when we declare that God is our Father?

It means that ...

1. we have a new identity
2. we can live in a new relationship with God, and
3. we have received a holy calling.

### 1. We have a new identity

It is widely accepted that people today struggle to discover their own identity. It seems they don’t know who they are. They often seek their value in what they do, what they have, and what other people think about them.

They try to make a name for themselves ...

- by achieving the top positions at work
- by trying to attract the most followers on Instagram
- by trying to make more and more money
- by having the right “connections” in life ...

But the Bible teaches us that our true value is found in the love of the Father. Galatians 4:6-7 says: “But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”

We are children of God. It is our primary and most essential identity. It determines who we are in this world: we are children of “the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible” declares the Nicene Creede.

But if this declaration is true of you and me, then surely it is true of all believers!

Therefore, this declaration also starts with an inherent challenge: to see other believers also as children of God, as His beloved sons and daughters. But not just the faithful. The Bible teaches that all of mankind was created in the image of God and therefore all live under His grace and love. That is why the creed also commands us to love and respect other people.

This first declaration calls us to a radical inclusivity. We are called to invite into our fellowship those who are different from us, those who are normally shunted, those on the fringe of society, those we so easily mock, so that we may all worship our Father together as one family.

## **2. We can live in a new relationship with God**

To be able to call God our “Father” hints of a relationship full of intimacy, trust and safety.

However, for many this is not true of their relationship with their earthly fathers. Amongst us may be those who grew up with an absent father, or who experienced neglect, or had to endure the pain of abuse.

The sad truth is that even fathers with good intentions, make mistakes. Every parent sitting here knows that one day their children will have to forgive them for the mistakes they made.

But our heavenly Father does not make mistakes. He is not like our earthly fathers. He is so much more! He is the perfect Father – full of love and grace, always by our side, reliable to the end, and even after that.

In Jesus’s days it was absolutely unheard of to think about God in this way. Yet Jesus teaches us in Matthew 6 to pray: “Our Father, who art in heaven ...” Jesus taught us that first and foremost God is our Father. He is not our master, but a father, just like He was to Jesus.

In this broken world we live in today, in a world full of danger, pain, and disappointment, this remains our comfort: that we have a Father in heaven who listens to us whenever we call upon Him.

## **3. We have received a holy calling**

Through many Bible stories we have come to know that the heart of God is filled with love for the broken, lost, and weary. Jesus, who came to show us the Father-heart of God, understood His own calling as follows: “... the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10)



And as fellow children of God our calling is the same: we are also called to express the Father's love to all mankind. And we do it by feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, and making sure justice and righteousness is done unto the least.

In a world where we are divided by class, language, race, and who knows what else, we are called to be builders of bridges. We are called to minister God's grace and forgiveness to people who differ from us or may even have hurt us. Because that is who we are. It is our identity: we are children of our Father that does what our Father has done.

### **Conclusion:**

Dear children of our Father, fellow brothers and sisters, when we declare that God is our Father, we confirm God's ability to transform us – from slaves to children.

During Pentecost we celebrate that God has given us his Holy Spirit. In doing that, He has changed our status – from lost sinners to saved children of God – in order for us to live in a relationship with Him. He also changed our total being – from earthly human to carrier of His Holy Spirit – in order for us to enter into His heavenly home.

We are thus people with a new identity, living in a new relationship with God, and with a holy calling

We are His beloved sons and daughters. Let this truth fill us with comfort, and hope, and love, and courage, to live as children of the Father in this harsh and unwelcoming world.

Amen.

# LIVE

## Think and share:

1. Think of (or create your own) picture, image, or situation, which symbolizes God as your loving Father.
  - How does it make you feel seeing yourself in this image?
  - What difference will it make if you are able to think about this image every day, in every challenging situation?
2. Discuss in small groups who you think the rejected people in your area are?
  - Why do you think people reject them?
  - What do you think is their experience of the love of the father? Why?

## Pray:

1. Thank God for accepting you as his beloved child.
2. Ask God to show you which people you reject, gossip about, and hold in disdain?
3. Ask God to manifest his love for all people in your life – especially those who are rejected.

## Do:

1. Draw a picture of God as your loving Father and put it in your Bible for safekeeping.
2. Go talk to someone with whom you would not normally strike up a conversation, in such a way that he/she experiences God's love and acceptance.

# WE LIVE WITH HOPE THROUGH THE LOVE OF CHRIST

SUNDAY EVENING, 1 JUNE 2025

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## READ

### Scripture:

*Philippians 2:5-11 (NIV)*

*<sup>5</sup>In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup>Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; <sup>7</sup>rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup>And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross! <sup>9</sup>Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup>that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,<sup>11</sup> and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.*

### Liturgical Suggestions:

#### *Sing:*

- A song about the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ

#### *Liturgical Act:*

- Have each one write down their current struggles (challenges, fears, needs, etc.) on a piece of paper and place it on/in front of a cross as a token of their faith in Jesus' resurrection (in other words his ability to let them rise up from the quagmire of life).

# LISTEN

## Introduction:

Tonight, we will be contemplating the second truth of the Nicene Creed. It states that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was made human, and died on the cross so that we may be saved.

Faithful followers of Christ have been declaring this truth right across the globe since 325 A.D. This was, after all, the purpose of the General Synod that Constantine called in Nicaea: to determine what the absolute truth is about the Triune God.

However, this declaration about Jesus is much more than just a theological truth. It is a reality that permeates throughout the lives of Christians in today's world.

Let us have a look at what the

1. birth,
2. death, and
3. resurrection of Jesus holds for us today.

## 1. His incarnation

The Nicene Creed starts off the declaration about Jesus with the words: "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God ..." It thus states from the very outset the deepest about Jesus: He is fully God and yet at the same time fully human. Scripture teaches us that in Jesus Christ God became Immanuel, "God with us" (Matt. 1:23) and that He "dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

But what is the significance for us today that Jesus came down to earth and became human?

- **God is with us:** The incarnation of Christ means that He "came down from heaven" (John 3:13; Prov. 30:4) and now dwells on earth with us. It intimates that God isn't only our God in heaven, but also our God on earth. In Jesus God became part of our daily lives.

In so doing He experienced what we are experiencing today. Through His own pain He now understands our pain. Through His own rejection he has compassion for our rejection. Through His own suffering He is aware of our suffering. In a world where we often feel lonely and alone, His incarnation confirms that we are never alone. He, God of heaven and earth, is always with us.

- **We are valuable:** With His incarnation Jesus affirmed the goodness of creation and the value of mankind. In the Genesis 1 story of the creation, God says at the end of each day that His creation was good, but after creating man His creation was "very good" (Gen. 1:31). It points to the value God attached to mankind.

And ultimately God confirmed our value when He sent his only Son to die for all of mankind.

Understanding the incarnation of Jesus in this way, we discover the challenge it holds for us today: to look at other people through the eyes of God, and to see that they are “very good”. Just like you and me, they are also “very good” in God’s eyes. In a world where people are not always valued and protected against exploitation, Christ’s incarnation calls us to value others as He has valued us.

## 2. His crucifixion

The Nicene Creed continues by confirming that Jesus “was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, he suffered and was buried”. This He did for two reasons:

- firstly, in obedience to the Father (Phil. 2:18), and
- secondly, out of love for all mankind. Romans 5:8 explicitly states that “God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”. His death on the cross was the proof of His love for us.

But what does this hold for us as Christians in today’s world?

- **Forgiveness and redemption:** Jesus took all our sins upon Him when He died on the cross. In so doing we received forgiveness of sins and freedom from guilt and shame, knowing we are loved by our Heavenly Father.
- **Love, peace and joy:** The cross is a symbol of Christ’s love for the lost. It is a love that has restored the peace between God and us. It is a love that has enabled us to live with joy in a loving relationship with the Father.

The cross also reminds us that we are called to love others in the same way. In a world where it is “every man for himself”, we are called to live and love like Jesus did.

The love of the cross is a selfless love. It does not mean we have to allow others to walk all over us and be ill-treated in the name of Jesus. Rather, it refers to our choice to forgive others – even those who have wronged us.

It further implies that we choose to defend others who are illtreated, oppressed and marginalized.

### 3. His resurrection

The third aspect of this declaration talks about the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. His resurrection constitutes the foundation of our hope. Because Jesus triumphed over death and ascend into heaven, we can live in the hope that we will also live in eternity with Him. It is because of this profound truth that we can now view this life differently. This entails ...

- **Hope in suffering:** The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus reminds us that suffering and death does not have the last say in this world. Just as Jesus' suffering led to His resurrection, so too will our own suffering lead to our resurrection. Just as Jesus' pain and suffering came to an end, so too will our pain and suffering not endure for ever – even though it might feel like it sometimes.
- **Calling to witnesses:** The resurrection of Christ calls us to witness to His love and forgiveness for all of mankind. It is our calling to spread this good news, in order for hope to come into a hope-less world.

The challenges in life may overwhelm us at times. It may even paralyze us. But the resurrection proves that victory is always possible. If God the Father could resurrect Jesus from the grave, surely then will He be able to save us from the difficult life situations we sometimes get stuck in. That is why there is always hope – hope that God the Father can save you and me, just like He did Jesus, and that victory is imminent.

#### Conclusion:

The declaration that Jesus, the Son of God, became Man, died on the cross, and rose from the grave, is not just a passive statement of faith. It is a statement calling us to live a transformed life. It is a call to love all others, witnessing to His grace and forgiveness in a very tangible way. Let us walk in the footsteps of Christ and love the world like he taught us.

Obviously, we cannot do this by ourselves. In this time of Pentecost, we are reminded that it is only through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that we are able to love like God. It is the Spirit that transforms us, day by day, little by little, to live and love contrary to our human nature. It is only the Spirit that can fill us with a Christlike love for people of whom He said that they are “very good”.

# LIVE

## Think and share:

1. How do these three aspects of Jesus' life affect or influence your life:
  - his incarnation
  - his crucifixion
  - his resurrection

Be honest with God about which of these three you struggle with and ask Him to help you.

2. Share your self-discoveries with your group.

## Pray:

1. Thank God for being with you every day and helping you through the messiness of life.
2. Pray for someone specific whom you know is going through a tough time.
3. Ask God to show you where you could have responded with more Christlike love.

## Do:

1. Do one of the following three tasks before the next service:
  - Help someone in a way that will demonstrate God's love.
  - Step in and stand up for justice
  - Be completely present and demonstrate your understanding with someone who is struggling with the challenges of everyday life.

# WE WAIT FOR JESUS' RETURN AND HIS EVERLASTING KINGDOM

MONDAY, 2 JUNE 2025

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## READ

### Scripture:

*1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 (NIV)*

*<sup>13</sup>But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. <sup>14</sup>For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. <sup>15</sup>For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. <sup>16</sup>For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup>Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever. <sup>18</sup>Therefore encourage one another with these words.*

### Liturgical Suggestions:

#### *Sing:*

- Sing songs about the risen Lord

#### *Liturgical Act:*

- Greet each other with the Pentecostal greeting:
  - “The Lord has risen!”
  - “The Lord has truly risen!”



# LISTEN

## Introduction:

Tonight, we continue with the declaration in the Nicene Creed regarding Jesus Christ. In particular we will be contemplating what it means when we declare “He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom will never end.”

There are three declarations in this truth:

1. Jesus will return
2. He will judge the living and the dead
3. He will reign forever.

Let us take a look at each of these truths and see what difference it can make in our daily lives.

### 1. Jesus will return

When we look at the world around us, we become aware of all the pain and suffering: the wars in the Ukraine, Palestine and Sudan which seem to be never ending. We see the famine in Africa, the maltreatment of animals, disease that leave children homeless. Situations like these tend to leave us thinking that God has left us for good, as if He is sitting in heaven and has left us to our own vices.

The disciples experienced something similar when they stood watching Jesus ascend into heaven and they were left behind. Maybe they also felt alone and forlorn as we sometimes do. However, the wonderful thing is that in that moment God sent two angels to comfort them. “They said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.’”

Years later, when Christian believers struggled with the same doubt, Paul reminds them in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 that Jesus will surely come again: “For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call and with the sound of God’s trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first”.

And so may we, 2000 years later, also wonder why Jesus has not yet come. We may even doubt if He will ever come again.

But Peter has an interesting perspective on our waiting. He thinks it is a sign of God’s patience with us. He says: “The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9-11).

This period of waiting upon God's return can also be a positive time of growth. It can inspire us to persevere in faith, because while we persevere, we are actually growing in faith and in trust that Jesus will certainly return.

## 2. He will judge the living and the dead

The thought of God coming back to judge the living and the dead, often frightens us and fills us with fear. We are scared that God will punish us for our sins and that we will not go to heaven.

However, this is not the meaning of this statement. Rather, it is to remind us of God's righteousness and our responsibility.

- **God's righteousness:** We live in a world full of injustice where corruption, deceit, poverty, and suffering, abound. For those suffering due to this kind of oppression, there is hope to be found in Jesus' return. The promise of his second coming is our guarantee that evil and its minions, will not have the last say. Therefore, we can take courage in the words of Revelations 21:4: "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." This is God's promise that He will do justice to all who are now oppressed.
- **Our responsibility:** We who believe in Jesus Christ as Saviour are God's agents for righteousness. We are the people who are now responsible that justice is served – equally to all. And when Jesus returns, all of mankind will be held accountable for their part in the injustices of this world.

However, for believers it implies that we do not have to live in fear. Rather, it urges us to continuously examine our own actions and intentions and urge us onward to a life of integrity and righteousness, of love and service.

## 3. He will reign forever

The Nicene Creed reminds us that, while earthly kingdoms come and go, God's Kingdom will endure forever. And the reason for this is twofold: 1) He is the Almighty God, and 2) He has opened up His Kingdom to all the nations of the earth.

- **He is the Almighty:** In Matthew 28:18-20 we read of Jesus' last commission to His disciples. He starts this off by reminding them that "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18).

Throughout the Bible, we see God portrayed as the Almighty. For example, in Exodus 14 we read about God saving the Israelites when He parted the Red Sea. Then they sing a song to the glory of God singing “The Lord is my strength and my song” (:2), “Your right hand, O Lord, has become glorious in power” (:6), “And in the greatness of Your excellence You have overthrown those who rose against You” (:7), and “The Lord shall reign forever and ever” (:18). Our God is the Almighty, and no power shall stand before Him.

- **A Kingdom for all:** The survival of God’s Kingdom also lies in the fact that He invites everybody to become part of it. This is also evident in Jesus’ commission to the disciples in Matthew 28:19: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.”

Just a short while later, in Acts 2, we see the first manifestation of the new Kingdom when the Spirit was poured out on “devout men from every nation” (:5), “both Jews and proselytes” (:11).

And in Revelations 7:9 we see a picture of His coming Kingdom: “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, were standing before the throne and before the Lamb.”

As citizens of the Kingdom of God, we are called to invite people to become part of God’s Kingdom. We are called to include, and not exclude, even those who talk, and look, and think, and do, differently from what we do.

### **Conclusion:**

Pentecost reminds us that the unity in the Kingdom and the church is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit that joins us together into one body. “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13).

It is the Spirit of the father and the Son ...

- that fills us with forgiveness and caring in order for us to live in peace and harmony with others,
- that empowers each member of His body with different gifts to be exercised in dependence of one another and to the benefit of the church and the world,
- that binds us all to Christ our Head and cornerstone of His church.

Come, let us allow the Spirit of Pentecost to bind us together in unity and love – no matter how much we may differ from each other.

Amen

# LIVE

## Think and share:

1. What does it mean for you to know that one day you will be resurrected from the dead and live forever in the presence of Jesus?
2. Imagine for a moment:
  - 2.1 What would it look like if Jesus returned from heaven at this very moment?
  - 2.2 What would your reaction be?

## Pray:

1. Praise God for his almighty power.
2. Ask God to help you live a life of integrity and righteousness, and of love and service to all people.
3. Ask God to show you how He is working in and through you so that you may be encouraged to persevere in good works.

## Do:

1. Ask God at the end of each day to show you where you have acted with integrity and righteousness, with love and kindness, and where not.
2. Tomorrow, do an act of kindness to a “neighbour”.

# THE HOLY SPIRIT LIVES IN US

TUESDAY, 3 JUNE 2025

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## READ

### Scripture:

Romans 8:9-17 (NIV)

<sup>9</sup> You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. <sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation – but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. <sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

<sup>14</sup> For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. <sup>15</sup> The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. <sup>17</sup> Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

### Liturgical suggestions:

#### Sing:

- Songs affirming the indwelling of the Holy Spirit

#### Liturgical Act:

- Show a balloon (symbolising man)
  - Talk about the balloon’s calling, usefulness, and accomplishing its mission while it has no air in it.
  - Now blow up the balloon (symbolising God’s breath being blown into man during creation).

- Talk again about the balloon's calling, usefulness, and accomplishing its mission, and how it is now different.
- The message behind the illustration: with God's Spirit in us, we can fulfil our calling, we are useful and ready for service, and we conform to our identity.

## **LISTEN**

### **Introduction:**

The Nicene Creed declares that “we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life. He proceeds from the Father and the Son, and with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified. He spoke through the prophets.”

Knowing that the Spirit of God lives in us and is actively working in and through us, affects everything we do. It changes how we think about ourselves, others, and the whole of creation. We and everybody else around us are not merely made of dust. No, we are much more. In Psalm 8:5 David sings that have been made a little lower than heavenly beings and were crowned with glory and honour.

Having the Holy Spirit reside in us, therefore determines ...

1. our identity,
2. our mission, and
3. our transformation.

### **1. Our identity: we are children of God**

According to Genesis 2:7 God created us as earthly beings made “of the dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature”. In so doing, ordinary, mortal beings could become what Jesus was, a child of God. In Romans 8:15-16 Paul reminds us: “The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.” What an absolutely astounding thought!

And as children of God, we are his representatives on earth. We are the bearers of his presence in this world. We are the manifestation of the intersection between heaven and earth. We are the meeting point where people can encounter God, where they can see who He is and what He does.

Obviously, there are times when I do not fulfil this role completely, times when I say and do the wrong things. Paul himself said that “... I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want, is what I keep on doing” (Rom. 7:19).

It is then that we can hold onto the truth and say to ourselves: I am not the bad things that I am doing, I am not what people think and say about me. I am a child of God because His Spirit lives in me.

## **2. Our mission: to continue to do the work that Jesus did**

The baptism with the Holy Spirit, is not a passive presence in my life. It is an active power that has empowered me to live and do what God asks of me. In Acts 1:8 Jesus promises: "... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses ...".

It is a power that was given to continue doing the work that Jesus did. I am called to be a co-worker of God (1 Cor. 3:9). I am to allow the Spirit to continue doing his work through me. What Jesus did with the help of the Spirit, I am to carry on doing: healing of the sick, restoring lives, proclaiming God's grace, being the living proof of his acceptance and forgiveness. It is the power of the Spirit in us that brings God close to those who are in search of Him.

My mission in life can therefore be compared to the work of a wind turbine that transforms the power of the Spirit in me, into energy for the world, energy that leads to salvation and joy, energy that generates equality and justice. This transformative energy of the Spirit is in fact the gifts of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and faithfulness (Gal. 5:22). These are the powers of the Spirit that change the world through us.

Our transformation: to become more Christlike

The indwelling and work of the Holy Spirit is the key to our own transformation. The Holy Spirit does not only lead and comfort. It does not only impart counsel and wisdom. It also transforms our total being. He makes us holy, in order for us to live according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh (Rom. 8:13).

In 2 Corinthians 3:18 Paul reminds us that "... the Lord – who is the Spirit – makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image". This process of transformation is a lifelong process where I become more and more the way God created me to be.

In a world where the primary focus is on external beauty, the focus of the Spirit of God is creating our inner beauty. He gives in us a soft heart filled with love and kindness, He renews our mind to contemplate pure and holy thoughts, and He transforms our desires to coincide with God's desires for this world.

## Conclusion:

Beloved, in this time of Pentecost, we celebrate the work and indwelling of the Holy Spirit of the Father and the Son. But what difference does that make for us in today's world?

- **We can depend on His power:** We often experience moments of weakness: times when temptation arises, or when we feel we can't go on, or when my inner ugly self takes control of my actions. It is in those moments that we can depend fully on the power of the Spirit, knowing that He is present in us, ready to help us in whatever way necessary.  
And then there are times when it feels as if God is not helping. It is in those times that we are challenged to endure in our faith (Matt. 10:22). We are challenged to keep on believing that God will help, even if it takes Him a little time to do so. And sometimes we must wait because God has something else, something better planned for us (Hebr. 11:40).
- **We build our community:** Although the Holy Spirit was given to each of us individually, it was also given to the church as a whole. That is why we are called to support and encourage one another, and to live as one, as the community of God's people. We are called to seek and discern his will and wisdom together, as one church. We are called to work together for the coming of his Kingdom, as one body.
- **We live as witnesses:** We, the people of God, are called to be witnesses to what God has done for us and in us – nothing more, nothing less. It is as simple as that. In a world longing for love and acceptance, let us share the love and forgiveness we have received. And let us not do it through our words alone, but, especially, through our deeds.

Dearly beloved, let us not make light of the indwelling of the Spirit of God in us. Let us live daily being fully aware that the God of heaven and earth is living in us. Let us treat people in a way that reflects His love, acceptance and forgiveness.

Amen



## **LIVE**

### **Think and share:**

1. What is your experience of the struggle between your sinful nature and the Holy Spirit in you?
2. What is the difference that Paul is trying to illustrate when he refers to “slave” and “child” in Romans 8:15?
3. What are the practical implications knowing that you are a child of God?

### **Pray:**

1. Thank God for making you his child and tell Him what a difference it made in your life today.
2. Talk to God about your personal struggle with regards to Paul’s confession in Romans 7:19 that he does not do the good he wants to do, but the evil he does not want to do, he keeps on doing.
3. Thank God that you do not have to live in fear of condemnation, but that you can serve Him with peace and joy in your heart, even if you make mistakes along the way.

### **Do:**

1. Tell someone about your personal experience of the struggle between your sinful nature and the Holy Spirit in you, and how it makes you feel to know that you do not have to live in fear of condemnation.
2. Make a card stating, “You are a child of God” and write a sentence or two about what you think it means. Then give the card to someone.
3. Write on a card what you have inherited from God as your heavenly Father and save it in you Bible.

# WE ARE PART OF ONE WORLDWIDE CHURCH

WEDNESDAY, 5 JUNE 2025

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## READ

### Scripture reading:

*Ephesians 4:1-6 (NIV)*

*<sup>1</sup>As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. <sup>2</sup>Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. <sup>3</sup>Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; <sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

### Liturgical suggestions:

#### *Sing:*

- Sing a song proclaiming the church as God's work

#### *Liturgical Act:*

- Let someone stand at the door and randomly hand out different fruit as people walk in, e.g. apple, pear, banana, orange, etc.
- At any point during or after the sermon, illustrate the unity of the worldwide church by asking those that have received fruit, to come forward.
  - Explain that each fruit symbolizes a different faith community all over the world (similar to the different people sitting in different places all over the one room).
- Cut each of the fruit (one at a time) into smaller pieces and place it in a bowl. The cut fruit should form different layers in the bowl.
  - Point out that although the different fruit are in the same bowl, they are still separated from each other.
- Mix the fruit to resemble fruit salad.
  - Explain that this is a more accurate image of the unity and diversity of the one worldwide church of Christ.

# LISTEN

## Introduction:

Tonight, we are going to have a look at the amazing declaration about the church, stating “We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church”.

It is important to remember that the initial writers of the Nicene Creed came from different faith communities. It was Emperor Constantine’s initiative to call an ecumenical council representing all the Christian communities of the day. Today the Nicene Creed is the only creed that is accepted by all the Christian denominations of the world. This includes the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern-Orthodox Church, the Anglican Church and all the Protestant churches.

But what does it hold for us today to confess with believers across the globe that we all belong to one church, yet we live in a very divided world and often read about strife and division within the church?

To discover this, let’s take a closer look at the four aspects of the creed, namely

1. one
2. holy
3. catholic
4. apostolic.

### 1. The church is one

The church of which the Bible speaks, is one church, and it was instated by Jesus Himself. He is the Head of the church that binds us all together (Col. 1:18). It is a unity that is derived from the unity between the Father and the Son. In John 17:21 Jesus prays for the church asking God to protect all those who believe in Him and “that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they may also be in us...”.

But this unity does not imply uniformity.

The differences between denominations rather points to the diversity that is found within the unity. This means, that although we may differ from each other regarding less important matters, we do agree on the core beliefs of our faith – truths as declared in the Nicene Creed. We can therefore still be one, even if we do differ on some points.

Take for example our own families. We are one family, even if we differ greatly from each other, because we share the same grandparents. And when Christmas comes around, or a family wedding or birthday, we all come together as one big happy family. We do this because we belong together – even if we do not live in close proximity from one another.

The whole purpose of the Nicene Creed was to declare what we all believe to be the core truths of our faith. It was written to explain what makes us one family – amidst our differences.

This declaration challenges us to embrace our unity with all believers at large. It also implores us to seek dialogue and continue our collaboration in fulfilling the great commission. It urges us to oppose any form of division, while holding onto each other in love and grace.

## **2. The church is holy**

When we declare that the church is holy, we imply that it is holy because God has made it holy. The church is not holy because its' members are without sin. It is holy because Jesus cleansed it through His death on the cross. He sanctified the one worldwide church to God “so that He might present the church to himself in splendour without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27).

Holy also means “set apart for God’s use”. Therefore, the church is God’s church which He uses to do His work after Jesus’ ascension. The church is thus God’s instrument on earth – even if we are not always His best tools.

And because the church was declared holy, we now have the responsibility to live as the holy people of God. We are called to live for Him alone, set apart for God’s use, “a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of the darkness and into his marvellous light” (1 Pet. 2:9).

## **3. The church is catholic**

Calling the church “catholic” is somewhat confusing to many of us because we tend to think of the Roman Catholic Church. However, the Roman Catholic Church was only established some 300 years after the Nicene Crede was written.

The original understanding of the word “catholic” stems from the Greek word meaning “world-wide” or “all inclusive”. It thus refers to the church as a “universal church”. The description of the church as “catholic” tends to remind us that we are part of a larger whole – which stretches throughout the world through all of time. At the same time “catholic” also confirms the diversity of the church as well as its unity.

Therefore, it once again calls us to love one another as part of the one body of Christ – irrespective of the smaller differences we might have. We are to hold onto and cherish the unity which God has given as an expression of the unity of our Triune God.

#### **4. The church is apostolic**

When we declare the church to be apostolic, we in actual fact honour the first apostles on whose work the church was built in the early years after Christ's ascension. The creed confirms our conviction that the church is built on the faith handed down over generations of believers – starting with the very first apostles.

And if we think of the church as a building, then we confess Christ as the cornerstone on which the Apostles built the foundation (Eph. 2:20).

Being apostolic in today's world, means that we are called to remain faithful to the Word of God while engaging with contemporary culture. The challenge is to proclaim the Gospel in such a way, that the modern-day listener experiences the truth and value of this Good News. This entails that we acknowledge the challenges of the current situation while we reflect on the implication of the historic Word of God for today.

#### **Conclusion:**

When we declare that we belong to one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, it confirms our calling to seek the unity with all Christian denominations in our country and across the globe. It calls us to love and respect all believers, even when they differ from us. And lastly it reminds us that we are called to work in unison with other faith communities in order to fulfil our mission to bring hope and salvation to a world in need.

Here, in the time of Pentecost, we again acknowledge that this is not something we can do on our own. The building of the church, its continued existence and expansion is done by the Holy Spirit of God. Yes, it is true that God chose to do it through us, the church. That is exactly why we must set ourselves apart for God's exclusive use, in order for His Spirit to build the one church of God.

Amen

# LIVE

## Think and share:

1. Talk about the differences between a prisoner in his cell and a family gathering?
2. What are some of the challenges that believers face in today's world?
3. What is your experience of the diversity and unity in your faith community?

## Pray:

1. Thank God for building His church and continuing to maintain it through his Spirit.
2. Ask God to protect and preserve your faith community against the challenges you currently face.
3. Pray for those who are ostracized and rejected by society – and maybe even by fellow believers.

## Do:

1. Turn to each other during your gathering and ask what the other person's highlight of the week was. (When we share our lives with others, it binds us together and dispels feelings of loneliness.)
2. Go visit someone that might be feeling lonely.
3. Reach out to someone in your community and give a small gift (a few flowers, small chocolate, plate of sandwiches, etc.) anonymously with a card stating that it was done on behalf of God.

# WE HAVE ONE BAPTISM FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

THURSDAY, 5 JUNE 2025

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## READ

### Scripture reading:

*Romans 6:1-5 (NIV)*

*<sup>1</sup>What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? <sup>2</sup>By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? <sup>3</sup>Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus was baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup>We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. <sup>5</sup>For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.*

### Liturgical suggestions:

*Sing:*

- Songs about our baptism and the hope and comfort it provides

*Liturgical Act:*

- Invite the believers to come forward and place their hand in the baptismal font. Have a spiritual leader at the font to remind each believer that the promises and assurances that they received during their baptism as baby/child, is still in effect.
- It may be advisable to have more than one “font” available.

## LISTEN

### Introduction:

Tonight, we will be looking at a creed that has been questioned quite some bit over the last few decades: the baptism. The Nicene Creed declares: “We affirm one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.” With this we state that the baptism plays a central role in our faith and that it is directly linked to the forgiveness of sins.

Some of the questions that are asked today, include:

- How must I be baptised: through sprinkling or submersion?
- When must I be baptised: as baby, teenager, or adult?
- Can I have myself baptised again because I don't remember anything of my baptism as baby?

How does the 1700-year-old Nicene Creed help us today in answering these questions?

Let us take a look at 3 aspects of the creed which might help:

1. The baptism as sign of grace, inclusion, and commitment
2. One baptism, one faith, one family
3. The baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

### **1. The baptism as sign of grace, inclusion, and reconciliation**

Baptism is a sacrament. It is a visible sign of God's invisible grace that is imparted at the moment it is administered. And the grace we have received, is the forgiveness for our sins.

Forgiveness of sins is a gift, because it is not something we can earn. I have not received forgiveness of sins because I have led a good life, or because I have done many good deeds, or because I read my Bible every day. I am a child of God because God made me His child. It was a gift grace that was brought about by Christ's suffering and death on the cross. This is the reason we call the baptism a sacrament – because it makes what God has done for me in Jesus Christ, a reality in my life.

That is why we regard the baptism as a ritual of inclusion. Jesus has called us out of our earthly existence into the family of the Father. In so doing we became part of God's people, of His church on earth.

Baptism is also a ritual of reconciliation. Paul writes in Romans 6:3,4 that it is through the baptism that we are bound to Jesus in His death and resurrection. He later confirms this by saying: "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ ... not counting people's sins against them" (2 Cor. 5:18-19).

Baptism therefor points to the cleansing of sins, our acceptance as children, and our inclusion into the Kingdom of God.



## **2. One baptism, one faith, one family**

The Nicene Creed echoes Paul's words in Ephesians 4:5,6 when he talks about the unity of the church, stating that there is only "one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all". It confirms that the baptism is not concerned so much with the individual, but rather with the collective, with the church as a whole, of which the baptised has now become part. The baptism thus confirms the unity of all believers, of the worldwide body of Christ.

That is why Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:13: "For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body – whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free...". Baptism in actual fact demolishes the dividing walls caused by race, ethnicity, language, status, etc. It confirms that all believers are equal before God through Jesus Christ, our Saviour. We are all baptised with the same baptism, and therefore we are equals.

Paul then continues to focus on the important role of the Holy Spirit during baptism, stating "... we were all given the one Spirit to drink." Here, as in the Nicene Creed, the focus is not on the way the baptism is administered, be it sprinkling or immersion. It also does not refer to the age at which believers are to be baptized, e.g. as baby, teenager, or adult. It is the role of the Holy Spirit as the One who mediates the grace of God, that is emphasised.

Thus, for the sake of clarity we might expand on this declaration, as follows: We affirm one baptism – that is administered by the Holy Spirit. It is the one true baptism, because it is the only baptism that guarantees inclusion into the Church of Christ.

## **3. The baptism for the forgiveness of sins**

At the beginning of the Bible, we read the Old Testament story of the creation and the fall (Genesis 3). The purpose of the story is to confirm that sin is a reality in our earthly existence. It also serves to remind us that sin has an immense impact on our relationship with God, our neighbours, nature, and ourselves. And maybe the most important message of this story is, that sin removes us from the presence of God.

At the start of the New Testament, we once again read about an act of creation – the immaculate birth of Christ, the Saviour. Throughout his story – his birth, life, and death – we are reminded of God's never-ending love for his people. The climax of the story – which at that point might have seemed like an anti-climax – was Jesus dying on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. 2 Corinthians 5:21 states clearly: "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God".

Baptism in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, binds us to Jesus' death and resurrection, which in turn leads to the absolution of our sins. Our baptism therefore plays a key role, because through the baptism we, from confess our faith in Christ's redemptive work.

## **Conclusion:**

In today's world, people often illustrate their worth by what they have and what they do. Baptism serves to affirm that we are forgiven, not because of what we have or what we do, but because of what God has given us and what Christ has done for us. We were given grace and forgiveness of sins, and therefore we are who we are – children of the Almighty and gracious God. And all this was done for us by the mediating work of the Holy Spirit.

During Pentecost we think especially of what the Spirit has done for us. It is the Spirit of God that makes the work of Christ a reality in our daily existence. During Pentecost the invisible work of the Spirit is once again brought to the fore, made visible for us to see what we have received.

In a world struggling to forgive, where people prefer to cling to a lifetime of grudges, our baptism reminds us that we have received the new life in Christ through his redemptive work. That is why our baptism is also a calling to administer the same forgiveness towards all other – even when undeserved.

That is why Jesus teaches us in The Lord's Prayer to forgive our trespassers (Matt. 6:12). But this is not something we can do on our own. During Pentecost we are reminded that we have received the powerful work of the Holy Spirit in us in order to live forgiving lives. Therefore we are also called to prayer – praying for God's help through his Spirit.

It is only by the Spirit that we may live as God has called us to.

Amen

# LIVE

## Think and share:

1. What do you remember about your baptism (what you remember yourself, or what you have been told or seen in photographs)?
  - Do you ever think back on your baptism?
  - What does it mean today that you have been baptised?
  - How have your thoughts on your baptism changed during your lifetime?

## Pray:

1. Thank God for the forgiveness of your sins and inclusion as a child of God.
2. Ask God to help you forgive others as He has forgiven you.
  - 2.1 Is there someone specific that you know you must forgive?
3. Ask God to help you in seeking the unity of all believers and not be one that creates division.

## Do:

1. Go to the person that you know you must forgive and ask for *your* forgiveness. (Do NOT give forgiveness but ask for forgiveness for the wrongs you did to that person.)
2. Draw a picture illustrating the unity in your faith community as you see it. Attach all the drawings to a board for all to see.

# WE TOO SHALL BE RESURRECTED AND LIVE ETERNALLY

SUNDAY, 8 JUNE 2025

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## READ

### Scripture reading:

1 Corinthians 15:50-58 (NIV)

<sup>50</sup>I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. <sup>51</sup>Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – <sup>52</sup>in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. <sup>53</sup>For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

<sup>54</sup>When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

<sup>55</sup>“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”

<sup>56</sup>The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. <sup>57</sup>But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>58</sup>Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.

### Liturgical suggestions:

#### Sing

- Songs amplifying the resurrection of the Lord

#### Action:

- Read the Nicene Creed.
  - Let the believers choose one of the creeds that speak the most to them.
  - Have everyone read it together.

# LISTEN

## Introduction:

Today we will be contemplating the last of the declarations of the Nicene Creed: “We look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and to life in the world to come”.

Where all the previous declarations looked back on what God had already done for us, this declaration focusses on the future, on what lies ahead. It reminds us of what we can look forward to, of what has not happened yet but surely will. It confirms that we can live each day with the expectation that the believers who have already died, as well as those that are currently living, will rise from the dead and live life eternally.

So let us have a look for the last time what this 1700-year-old creed holds for us today in this modern day and age. We will be looking at three aspects of the creed:

1. the surety of the resurrection
2. the meaning of life eternal
3. the call to live life in the light of the resurrection.

### 1. The surety of the resurrection

The resurrection of the living and the dead is one of the pillars of the Christian faith. It is the promise that, just as Jesus rose from the dead, so shall we. If this was not true, our faith would have been futile, says Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:17.

This creed also serves to remind us that our earthly bodies are important. It is to be noted that this creed was written specifically with the current generation in mind. It refers to those that have already passed on, who will, together with us who are currently living, rise from the dead. The creed was thus written with the expectation that the resurrection of Christ might happen any day soon. This conviction stems from this morning's Scripture reading, where Paul writes: “We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed”. (“Sleep” meaning “we will not all have died”.) It is therefore not only the dead whose bodies will be changed. Those still living at the time of Christ's return, their bodies will also be changed so as to be imperishable and immortal (1 Cor. 15:52,53). The point being made is that God will not discard his creation at the end of time. No, He will surely take it back to Him after He has renewed it.

### 2. The meaning of life eternal

We are all familiar with the description in Revelations 21 and 22 of the coming Kingdom: roads of gold, gates made of pearls, the tree of life, and the absence of pain and suffering. And furthermore, we can expect a fully restored relationship with God our Father.

The hope of the coming Kingdom is the prospect that the circle of life will be completed. Genesis relays the story of God, as starting in the Garden of Eden. There we lived in perfect harmony and unity with God. Revelations reminds us that at the end, when Jesus returns, we will once again live in that perfect presence with God. John 17:3 declares it bluntly: “Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”

Now we must remember that the “know” to which John refers here, is something that happens during our earthly life. This implies that we have already come to know God. Therefore, our eternal life is not something that will only happen one day, somewhere in a distant future. It has in actual fact already begun, here on earth.

### **3. The call to live life in the light of the resurrection**

The surety of Christ’s return and life eternal challenges us to start right away living in a new way, because of what we have been promised. And what would that new life look like in the light of the resurrection?

- **It gives us courage and perseverance:** In a world full of challenges, the hope of life everlasting gives us the power to persevere, to carry on and to push forward – no matter how big the challenge may be. “Therefore”, Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 15:58, “my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain”.

Everything, literally everything we do here on earth, everything that is difficult, anything that requires extra effort, those things that sometimes drain us of all our energy, all of these things are worth doing, because we know it is not in vain. It will always glorify God and proclaim His Holy Name.

- **It calls us to live holy:** The promise of the resurrection challenges us to live in a way that honours God. In 1 John 3:2 John writes that we are already children of God. This implies that on the day of the Second Coming, we will be changed (in a flash) to be like Christ – pure. It is therefore pertinent that we heed his call when he admonishes us in verse 3: “All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.”

We are called to live pure and holy, separated for God’s use, to only live for Him and according to His will. We are thus called to make visible Christ’s love, grace, and service in this world.

- **It inspires us to witness to the hope in Christ:** In a world filled with people searching for meaning, we are the ones most equipped to tell of the hope we have in Christ.

In John 13 we read about Jesus washing the feet of His disciples. This was on the eve of His suffering and crucifixion. And amidst this act of kindness, we hear ourselves asking “How did He do it? How could He remain steadfast in His resolve to go through what must have been the most difficult time of His earthly life?” The answer lies in verse 3: “Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God”.

Jesus could persevere because He had the absolute conviction that the Father had already prepared His victory. He was also absolutely convinced that His death would lead Him back to the Father – from where He came. Knowing this empowered Him, gave Him hope, to continue doing what God desired of Him.

Today we can live with the same hope because we know where we come from and where we are going to. And this same hope is available to all others searching for meaning in this earthly life.

### **Conclusion:**

Today, on the Day of Pentecost, we celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. Pentecost reminds us that everything we believe, we believe because the Spirit of God did this work of faith in us.

My faith does not come from me. I do not believe on grounds of my good works. I don't believe because my parents believed. I believe because the Spirit of God led me to agree in my heart with what I have read in the Word of God. Therefore, we can affirm it when Paul writes in Ephesians 2:8: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God”.

But the Holy Spirit does not only let me believe. He also assists me in living through faith each day in very practical ways, as a witness to God's love and grace, his justice and righteousness, his acceptance and inclusion of all people in his Kingdom – on earth and in heaven.

Amen.

# LIVE

## Think and share:

1. Since the earliest of times Christians have been living with the expectation that Jesus will return in their lifetime.
  - What does it hold for you thinking that Jesus might come while you are still living?
2. Share how you think the Second Coming might look like.
3. Tell the others of a time when you had a personal experience of the victory in Christ.
  - Remember that even the small victories glorify God in the same way as do the big ones.

## Pray:

1. Thank God for raising Jesus from the grave, thus giving you eternal life.
2. Ask God to help you so that the hope in Christ will become a reality from which you live each day.
3. Ask God to help you be a good witness that brings his hope to the lost.

## Do:

1. Draw a picture of what the return of Christ might look like to you.
  - Write on the picture that you believe He will return and that you have already received life eternal.
  - Add today's date and place it in your Bible as a reminder.
2. Let each one write on a piece of paper what they believe with regards to Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and receiving eternal life. Let them bring it forward and stick it on a cross / place it in front of a cross.
  - Alternatively, they might just confess to God in silence, and then just write their name on a card and bring that to the cross.
3. Reach out to someone and tell them about the hope you have in Christ.