

PARTICIPANT

Apostles' Creed

REVISED EDITION

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**To Know, To Live,
To Grow**

Augsburg Fortress
MINNEAPOLIS

PARTICIPANT

Apostles' Creed

REVISED EDITION

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Session 1

God Our Creator

First Article

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

The English translation of the
Apostles' Creed is prepared by the
International Consultation on
English Texts (ICET), copyright
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Begin by sharing your name and ...

- one thing you've made (created) this past year; or
- one thing that you need right now.

As a group, make a list of your daily needs.

Now, look over your list and write down how these needs are met or who provides these things for you.

Open with prayer.

A creed is a statement about what we believe and what we teach to others. The Apostles' Creed is a brief statement of the beliefs and teachings of Jesus' followers (apostles). This creed is one of the statements of faith in the Lutheran church. During the next three sessions, we'll look at what this creed means, and talk about how it applies to our lives today.

What Happens When We're in Charge

For the next few minutes, think like "God." Form groups of two or three and use the supplies provided to create a world. Brainstorm ideas. Think of what is needed, how it will work, and who will live there. Your world does not need to be identical to the world we live in, but it should be able to support life. For instance, your newly created world must have air for us to breathe, but we may be able to breathe differently than we do now. Get as detailed as you can in the time allowed.

- How was it? Easy? Hard? Exciting? Frustrating? Name three things you liked and disliked about the process.
- What was the goal or hope you had for your world?
- Do you think your world will turn out the way you planned?
- Do you trust the decisions you made as "God"? Why or why not?
- Compared to our world, what would you do differently? What would you do the same?

What the Apostles' Creed Teaches Us

Open your Small Catechism to the First Article of the creed. Read the First Article together. What does the First Article teach us about God?

I believe in God, ...

- Name a few synonyms (words that mean the same thing) for the word *believe*.
- This statement focuses on personal belief: "I believe." Why is this important?
- Why is it important to believe in God?
- Could you say you believed in the "God" of your creation activity? Why or why not?
- How do you make decisions about what you choose to believe?

What God Is Really Like

... the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

Look up the following verses and write down some of God's characteristics:

Genesis 1:1 _____

Psalm 10:16 _____

Psalm 27:1 _____

Psalm 34:18 _____

Psalm 46:1 _____

Psalm 103:8 _____

Psalm 121:7-8 _____

Psalm 145:13 _____

- Can you think of any other characteristics?
- Why is it important for us to understand the characteristics of God?
- Could we substitute the word *mother* in place of the word *father*? Why or why not?
- How is God like a parent?
- Why do we acknowledge God as creator of heaven and earth?
- What was missing in the character of “God” during your creation activity?
- What do you think God is like? How does this make you feel?
- Based on the First Article of the creed, name one thing we are expected to remember about God: _____

Read and discuss the meaning of the First Article in the Small Catechism.

Creation Walk

As a group, take a walk around your church grounds. Look for things God has made. Choose one thing (grass, flowers, a tree) and examine it closely. Try to describe it to another person, and have him or her guess what it is. Then, try to list all of the possible uses of that thing. For example, a twig could be described as brownish, rough textured, about six inches long, and so forth. Some uses for the twig might be starting a fire, building a bird’s nest, composting, and so forth.

Assignment

Rewrite the First Article of the Apostles’ Creed in your own words.

Close with prayer.

Read together the Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed in the Small Catechism.

Session 2

Christ Our Redeemer

Begin by sharing your father's or mother's name and ...

- the best gift you've ever received; or
- one thing someone has done for you to make you feel special.

As a group, make a list of things that make you feel important or special.

Open with prayer.

Discuss

- Why is Jesus important to our Christian faith?
- Why is the cross important in our Christian faith?
- What significance does the heart have in our Christian faith?
- What do these symbols represent?

The Second Article of the Apostles' Creed focuses on God's special gift to us: Jesus. God sometimes seems very far away and bigger than we can imagine. It's hard to imagine that God cared enough for each of us to send Jesus to earth. God, in the person of Jesus Christ, endured overwhelming suffering on our behalf. The sacrifice of a parent losing a beloved child must have been terrible. In addition, Jesus endured the terrible pain of the crucifixion. Truly, God loves each of us as if we were the only person on earth.

Second Article

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 into hell.

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.

How Jesus Died

As you look at the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed, keep God's sacrifice in your mind. While you may not be able to imagine yourself as a parent losing a child, you can think about the physical pain of crucifixion.

- Jesus was whipped and beaten before he was crucified.
- He had to carry his heavy cross through the streets of Jerusalem.
- His hands (wrists) and feet were nailed to the cross with spikes.
- While hanging on the cross, his weight rested on the painful holes in his hands and feet.
- Jesus had to push up on his injured feet in order to take a breath.
- As Jesus grew weaker, it became harder for him to breathe. He probably died of suffocation.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

- What difference will it make if you believe in Jesus?
- Is it important that Jesus was God's Son? Why or why not?

**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 into hell.

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.

Look up the following verses and write down what Jesus said about himself:

John 6:35 _____

John 12:44-46 _____

John 14:6 _____

John 15:5 _____

Look up the following verses and write down what role Jesus has in our Christian faith.

2 Corinthians 5:21 _____

2 Timothy 1:10 _____

1 Peter 2:24 _____

Jesus is not only part of the earthly world, but also of the heavenly world.
What is Jesus' role in heaven? _____

- Based on the Second Article of the creed, name one thing we can learn about God: _____

Read and discuss the meaning of the Second Article in the Small Catechism.

Letters of Affirmation

Write a letter to someone who is special to you. Tell the person:

- how much he or she means to you.
- that you've been thinking about him or her.
- one hope you have for his or her life.
- what you've been up to.
- how you've been feeling and what you're looking forward to.

The next time the group meets, bring your special person's address so that the letter can be mailed. Use a separate piece of paper for your letter.

Assignment

Rewrite the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed in your own words.

Close with prayer.

Read together the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed in the Small Catechism.

Session 3

The Holy Spirit

Third Article

**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.**

Begin by sharing the name of your best friend and:

- a high and low point you experienced in the past week, and
- a time in your life when you were very excited.

As a group, make a list of things that get you excited about life.

Address and mail the letters you wrote last week.

Open with prayer.

Like Birds of a Feather

- What do these items have in common? How useful are they by themselves? What would make these items useful?
- How might these items be similar to a person and our relationship with God?

Discuss

Think of special people you don't get to see often, perhaps a grandparent who lives far away or a special friend who moved.

- When you are with these people, how do you spend your time? What is exciting about being with these people? How do you feel when you are separated from them?
- How might your time with special friends be similar to experiencing time with God?

Everyday life can become monotonous, but every now and then things happen in our lives to pick us up and give us new energy for living. Sometimes it's a chance to be with special friends at a party, or having relatives come to visit. Sometimes it's a surprise call from a friend, or making the team. Sometimes it's a quiet time alone in our room, or seeing the Grand Canyon for the first time. Today we're going to look at the special part of our life that re-energizes us.

Breath of Life

Read together the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed in the Small Catechism.

I believe in the Holy Spirit ...

- Can you see the Holy Spirit? Can you touch, hear, smell, or taste the Holy Spirit? _____

- How do you know the Holy Spirit exists? _____

- How is the Holy Spirit present at a basketball game? A funeral? A rock concert? A parade? A Fourth of July celebration? A contest? _____

- How is God's Spirit alive in you today? _____

- In the Lutheran church, what sacrament celebrates our receiving the Holy Spirit into our lives? _____

- What does it mean to you to know that God's Spirit is alive today? _____

Read Genesis 2:7 and 1 Corinthians 3:16.

- What do these verses say to us about the presence of God in our lives? _____

- Explain in your own words how the Holy Spirit is part of God. _____

As we were formed, God breathed life into us. God promises to fill each of us with life from the day we are born until the day we die. This means the Holy Spirit is with us each and every day, whether we know it or not. The Sacrament of Baptism is the time we celebrate the Holy Spirit coming into our lives. This is our "birth" into the Christian family.

... the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, ...

As we say, "the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints," we are reminded that baptism joins us together as one united church, with those here on earth, those who have gone before us, and those who will come after us. Baptism is a very powerful event in our Christian journey.

Read Genesis 2:18.

- Why is living in community or with other people important? _____

- Name ways the Spirit reveals itself to us through other people. _____

- Name some people who have influenced your faith. _____

The purpose of the church, or Christian community, is to help one another live lives connected to God. As a community, we often hurt each other and ourselves. Communities need forgiveness. Christ came offering us forgiveness that we might live together in harmony; that we might be restored with each other and God. When we are baptized, not only are we filled with the Holy Spirit, but we are also connected to the forgiveness Christ offers us through his death on the cross. We receive eternal life with God.

... the forgiveness of sins ...

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.

- What importance does Christ have in our community? _____

- What is our role in the Christian community? _____

- How can we "see" the actions of the Holy Spirit? _____

When we say we believe in the Holy Spirit, we are acknowledging God's presence in each of us, our connection to other Christians, Christ's death and resurrection, and our belief in the forgiveness he offers. We are stating our belief that we will have eternal life with God.

... the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Read Romans 8:1-4 and Philippians 3:17—4:1.

- What role does the Holy Spirit have in our lives? _____

- How does the Holy Spirit lead us? _____

- How do we know that God's Spirit is present in our lives? _____

- Based on the Third Article of the creed, name one thing we are expected to learn about God: _____

Read and discuss the meaning of the Third Article in the Small Catechism.

Go back to your list in the beginning of this session.

- How is the Holy Spirit present in the things that make your life exciting?

Assignment

Rewrite the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed in your own words.

Close with prayer.

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 into hell.
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.

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