

## A WORD FROM YOUR PASTOR FOR SUNDAY APRIL 30, 2006

### WHAT ABOUT THE NICENE CREED?

What are ancient Creeds of the Christian church? Why do we use and say them in our worship service at ECC? Because, there is validity and value of the ancient Christian creeds in the life of the universal church which help us to express our faith and what we believe.

The Nicene Creed, which we are saying today, was written by the early Church and adopted, in a slightly different version, by the Church Council at Nicæa in AD 325. It appears in its present form by the Council at Chalcedon in AD 451 and has remained in use since that time.

The Nicene Creed is the most widely accepted, and used, brief statements of the Christian Faith. In liturgical churches, such as ECC, it can be said every Sunday as part of the Liturgy. It is common ground to Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists and many other Christian groups. The Book of Discipline of the Methodist Church makes clear the doctrinal reliance of the Church on the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. It is an essential part of the doctrine and liturgy of the Lutheran Church. The Lutheran Church gives the option of the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed, suggesting the Nicene Creed as the more festive or solemn of the two.

Many groups that do not have a tradition of using it in their services nevertheless are committed to the doctrines it teaches.

When the Nicene Creed was drawn up, the chief enemy was Arianism, which denied that Jesus was fully God. Arius was a presbyter (elder) in Alexandria in Egypt, in the early 300's. He taught that the Father, in the beginning, created (or begot) the Son, and that the Son, in conjunction with the Father, then proceeded to create the world. The result of this was to make the Son a created being, and subsequently not God in any meaningful sense. It was also suspiciously like the theories of those Gnostics and pagans who held that God was too perfect to create something like a material world, So, he introduced one or more intermediate beings between God and the world saying God created A, who created B, who created C, and so on to who created Z, who eventually created the world. Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, sent for Arius and questioned him. Arius did not back down and was finally excommunicated by a council of Egyptian bishops. He went to Nicomedia in Asia, where he wrote letters defending his position to various bishops. Finally, the Emperor Constantine summoned a council of Bishops in Nicea, across the straits from modern Istanbul, Turkey, where in 325 the Bishops of the Church, with a large majority repudiated Arius and produced the first draft of what is now called the Nicene Creed. Traditional liturgical worship always includes the Nicene Creed whenever there is Communion. It is a corporate proclamation that corresponds to the Schema ("Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one") in the synagogue liturgy.

Faithfully, Pastor BOB+

**THERE IS AN ORDER OF WORSHIP**

In many of the churches where we have worshipped in the past, there has been an orderliness and structure to our worship. Perhaps you never have thought about it, but there is a structure to what we do each and every Sunday morning.

**WE GATHER.** Our minds are brought into the Sanctuary with the words of the Call to Worship given so ably by Dave Curry each week. As Dave has said, “I want to bring their minds in from the parking lot to the Sanctuary of God. This serves to focus our attention upon what we are about to do. Then we have the opening music and the singing of the first hymn. The first hymn is always a hymn of praise to God. An example is our first hymn for today; “Come Thou Almighty King!” which should be sung with enthusiasm and exuberance. Then, while we remain standing, we confess our faith in one great voice as the church has for over 1500 years. Today we are using the *Nicene Creed*, followed by the singing of the *Gloria Patri* affirming the Holy Trinity of God. An explanation of the *Nicene Creed* is on the opposite side of this page. We continue to gather as we welcome our visitors among us, and then;

**PASS THE PEACE** with the ancient words of the church, “The peace of the Lord be always with you,” followed by the person who is being greeted responding, “And also with you”.

After the announcements of our church life together and new prayer concerns, we join our voices in another hymn of the church, usually a hymn which leads us into the next section of our worship.

**THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE.** Here the Pastor leads the congregation in prayers for the church, the nation, the state, the nation, the military, the sick, the dead and any other needs of this people.

**THE OFFERING.** Here is when we bring our tithes and offerings into the storehouse of the Lord for the support of this church and its ministry to this community and beyond.

**THE WRITTEN WORD** is when we take our pew Bible and share together in the responsive reading of a passage of Scripture and then listen to a reading from The New Testament after which the Minister will say, “This is the Word of the Lord”, after which the congregation may respond, “Thanks be to God.” After an offering of special music by a soloist, duet or choir, the Congregation historically stands in reverence as The holy Gospel of the Lord is read aloud. In some traditions, after the Gospel is read, the Minister will proclaim, “This is the Gospel of the Lord”, and the people may respond with “Praise to You, Lord Christ”.

**THE SPOKEN WORD** is the proclamation of The Good News by the Minister who traditionally will preach a sermon, or homily, upon the Gospel lesson taken for that day from the Revised Common Lectionary used by most church who worship in a liturgical tradition, such as our church.

**THE SENDING** is the closing of the worship experience with a song and a Benediction. The service has ended. Go in Peace. +