



THIS WEEK'S ALTERNATE CREED:
**A STATEMENT OF FAITH OF THE
UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA**

We are not alone,
we live in God's world.

We believe in God:
who has created and is creating,
who has come in Jesus,
the Word made flesh,
to reconcile and make new,
who works in us and others
by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:
to celebrate God's presence,
to live with respect in Creation,
to love and serve others,
to seek justice and resist evil,
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,
our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death,
God is with us.

We are not alone.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

WEEK 2

A NOT SO HOLY EMPEROR CALLS A CHURCH MEETING

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2025

I. Opening Prayer and Scripture Reading

- A. Recite the Canadian Statement of Faith
- B. Acts 15:1-21 (The Council of Jerusalem)
- C. Review: What is a creed? What is Generous Orthodoxy? In what ways do the creeds preserve mystery?

II. Historical Context: The Roman Empire and Constantine

- A. The state of the Roman Empire in the early 4th century:
 1. Widespread religious plurality and persecution of Christians.
 2. Constantine's rise to power and the significance of the Edict of Milan (AD 313).
- B. Constantine's motivations:
 1. Political unification through religious harmony.
 2. His interest in Christianity and the role of the emperor in Church affairs.
- C. Discussion Point: How do political leaders influence religious movements today?

III. Theological Controversies Leading to Nicea

- A. The rise of Arianism:
 1. Arius' teaching: Jesus as a created being, not co-eternal with the Father.
 2. Ditty: "There was a time when the Son was not."
 3. The implications of Arianism on the doctrine of salvation.
- B. Opponents of Arianism:
 1. *Homoousias* vs *homoiousios*
 2. Athanasius of Alexandria and his defense of Christ's divinity (Athanasius against the world.)
 3. Ditty: "As he was in the beginning he now and ever shall be, world without end, Amen."
 4. The early development of Trinitarian theology.
 5. St. Nicholas of Myra—A funny story about Santa Claus
- C. Discussion Point: Why is the divinity and humanity of Jesus essential to Christian faith?

IV. The Council of Nicea

- A. Convening the council:
 1. Date: AD 325.
 2. Attendees: Approximately 300 bishops from across the empire.
- B. Major outcomes:
 1. Unity in the Church—First Ecumenical Council
 2. The formulation of the Nicene Creed.
 3. The affirmation of Jesus as "begotten, not made" and "of one substance with the Father."
 4. Contributions toward canonization by Constantine funding five Bibles

THE NICENE CREED

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit
and the Virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified
under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son
is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic* and
apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism
for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

*universal

- C. Political dynamics:
1. Constantine's role as a convener. Constantine spoke but did not vote.
 2. Arians were seated
 3. The tension between theological integrity and political expediency.
- D. Reflection Question: How can we balance the desire for unity with the need for doctrinal truth?

V. Expansion and Refinement of the Creed: Councils of Constantinople and Chalcedon

A. Council of Constantinople (AD 381):

1. Convened to address the Macedonian heresy, which denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit.
2. Resulted in the expansion of the Nicene Creed to affirm the full divinity of the Holy Spirit.
3. Key addition: "We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father..."
4. The Cappadoician Fathers: Gregory Nazianin (presider, "Let me be as the Prophet Jonah"), Gregory of Nyssa, and Basil the Great. Don't forget Macrian the Younger .
5. Gregory of Nan
6. Trinity and Ethics—Slavery and gender equality

B. Council of Chalcedon (AD 451):

1. Convened to resolve Christological debates regarding the nature of Christ.
2. **Nestorian Heresy:** The Nestorian heresy, attributed to Nestorius, emphasized a division between the divine (*Logos*) and human (Christ) natures of the Son. It taught that Mary should be called "*Christotokos*" (Christ-bearer) rather than "*Theotokos*" (God-bearer), suggesting a separation between Christ's humanity and divinity.
3. **Monophysite Heresy:** The Monophysite heresy asserted that Christ had only one nature, primarily divine, following the Incarnation. This view minimized or denied the coexistence of a true human nature alongside His divine nature.
4. **Orthodox Position:** The Council of Chalcedon (451) affirmed the orthodox doctrine of Christ having two natures, fully divine and fully human, united in one person "without confusion, change, division, or separation," preserving the mystery of the Incarnation. Resulted in the Chalcedonian Definition, affirming that Jesus is fully God and fully human, with two distinct natures in one person (the hypostatic union)
5. The Chalcedonian Definition further clarified and upheld the doctrine established at Nicea.
6. It made the Nicene Constantinopolitan Creed as the center of Christian doctrine

- C. Reflection Question: How do these later councils help us better understand the person and work of Christ?

