

## First Presbyterian Church



## An Affirmation of Faith

### Why Creeds?

At its core, a creed is a statement of basic beliefs or set of guiding principles. Organizations of all shapes, sizes, and persuasions have used creeds to instruct members, guide their decision making, and remind themselves of their core identity while they seek out new ways of being in a world in a constant state of flux. Creeds are crafted to remind people of where they have been while also offering guidance for where they may be going. In this 150th anniversary year of First Presbyterian Church, it seemed a good idea to study some of the creeds that are foundational to the faith we proclaim. During the course of lent, we will take a brief look at a set of creeds that range from ancient to surprisingly modern. We'll learn a bit about their social and historical context and consider what they may mean for our contemporary lives of faith. It is our hope that this study provides depth and illumination for your lenten journey.

### An Affirmation of Faith - First Presbyterian Confirmation Class of 2019

Anyone can write a creed or a statement of faith or a whatever you want to call it. In fact, many theologians would argue that the manner in which we live our lives composes a new statement of faith each day. Perhaps you are familiar with the folk wisdom that insists that if you want to know what a person believes, you ought to watch their feet.

In 2019 the confirmation class of Shannon Rene Canady, Jackson Graves, Eleanor Oliver, Campbell Schukei, and Claire Schwarz wrote a collective affirmation of faith. They were aided in this process by their teachers, Dave Cooke and Neil Riley. The affirmation that they created certainly adheres to and upholds core tenets of reformed theology. It is formatted on a trinitarian structure, upholds the fully human and fully divine nature of Jesus, asserts a belief in the presence and action of the Holy Spirit, and outlines the calling and mission of the Church.

Their affirmation also places an emphasis on the relational nature of the divine. God is described as a creator who listens and comforts, both very relational terms. God is also forgiving and merciful, which in turn inspires humans to love and serve all living beings.

This relational emphasis spills over in their understanding of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Jesus is a savior who also teaches and wants people to be in relationship with him via discipleship. The Holy Spirit is understood to be a facilitator of relationships who connects people to God and also to one another.

Even the Church is understood through a relational lens as it is described as a community and gathering place that helps people, teaches about God, and cares for those outside of its walls.

Anyone can write a creed. Maybe you should try it as well!

### **The Creed**

We believe God is the creator of heaven and earth. God listens to our prayers and comforts us. We believe he is merciful and forgiving toward all humans. He helps us to love all living beings and to serve him faithfully. We believe that God has a plan for each of us, even if we don't fully understand what it is.

We believe that Jesus is the Son of God and is fully human and fully God. He is our savior, who died on the cross to forgive our sins. We believe that Jesus is the human form of God, who taught people about God while he was on earth. He wants us to be his disciples.

We believe the Holy Spirit is part of God within us. The Holy Spirit helps us communicate with God and connects us all. We believe the Holy Spirit is the part of us that will live forever, if we have faith in God and Jesus.

We believe the Church is a community of hope. The Church is a safe gathering place. We believe the Church helps people in need, teaches people about God, and cares for people in the community.

## **Scripture and Prayers**

Each day during the week ahead return to this scripture passage. Read it silently. Read it aloud. Read it to your children, partner, friends, or dog. Read it differently every day if you want but hear the words again and again and let them sink into your being. If you have questions, thoughts, or insights write them down!

Let these words become a part of your life.

### **Matthew 21:6-11**

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!” When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, “Who is this?” The crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.”

### **Monday, April 3**

Gracious God, grant me your immanence. Grant me your presence. Give unto me the sure and comforting knowledge that you are with me, that you hear me, that you know me, that I am not alone. Draw me once more into a fellowship of shared burdens and mutual joys, a community shaped and formed by your Spirit, which gives hope to the hopeless and light to the lost. Come, O God. Enter my life. Shield, guide, and nurture me. Amen.

Contemplative question(s) for the day

When do you know God’s presence? Who shares your burdens and joys?

## **Tuesday, April 4**

The crowds stretched out their cloaks and went looking for branches to prepare a way for Jesus. May we also prepare such a way in our lives. Help us, O God, to open ourselves to your presence. Help us to clear the fear and hesitation that keeps us from truly welcoming you and our neighbors. Give us the audacity to shout out the arrival of the things that we believe. Let us prepare to welcome you into our hearts once more. Amen.

Contemplative question(s) for the day

How can you prepare your heart to welcome God?

## **Wednesday, April 5**

In the distance, O God, I can see the darkening skies. The shouts of the crowd have faded. A new, more furious, rumor is growing in its edge and volume. Soon the joy of the palms will give way to the sorrow of the cross. Soon that which seemed so promising will be gone. Dreams are dashed. Hope fades. Joy recedes and is replaced by mourning. Help me, O God, in the days to come to hold to the hope. Help me, Gracious Lord, in the moments of my own despair, to trust in you. Amen.

Contemplative question(s) for the day

What hope has faded? What hope is growing?

## **Thursday, April 6**

How remarkable, O God, that the one who was fully human and fully divine came not to be served but to serve, not to be loved but to love, not to be lifted but to uplift others. Of all that he taught and of all that he said, let us cling most firmly to this: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." Help us, O God, to keep this commandment. Strengthen us. Encourage us. Enable us to be not only hearers of these words but doers as well. Give us that which we need to be loving disciples of Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Contemplative question(s) for the day

What acts of love have you received? What acts of love have you offered?

*WE  
Believe*

### **Friday, April 7**

The world is still full of places of destruction and despair. These are places where the cross is still known, where the cross is still used. The cross of starvation. The cross of homelessness. The crosses of war and abandonment. The cross of disease. The cross of pollution. The cross of abuse, prejudice, violence and mistrust. If we are people of faith, then we cannot ignore the cross. We must bear witness to the suffering, the pain, and the anguish of our neighbors. But help us, O God, not only to see the crosses of the world but also to work at taking them down. Amen.

Contemplative question(s) for the day

Where do you see pain and suffering in the world? What would relieve that anguish?

### **Saturday, April 8**

I believe, O God, that the Church is a thing of hope. I believe that it calls me to faith in the face of desolation, renewal in the midst of expiration, and love in the shadow of hate. I believe, O God, that this is a day of hope. Though the shadow of the cross lingers, I hear Jesus say, "There is yet more." Though the stone and the grave loom, I feel the Spirit insist, "This is not the end." Though the world seems so full of violence and mistrust and fear mongering, I know you declare, "Light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it." Thank you, O God, for hope in the silence. Amen.

Contemplative question(s) for the day

What is your Easter hope?

Thoughts and Notes From the Week

## **Holy Week**

**Maundy Thursday - April 6 at 7 p.m.**

Honoring the Last Supper - Sanctuary

**Good Friday - April 7 at 7 p.m.**

The Shadow of the Cross - Sanctuary

**Prayer Vigil - Good Friday through Easter Morning**

Chapel or at Home

**Easter Sunday - April 9 at 8:30 & 10:30**

Both services to feature choir, bells and brass

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LIVING A LEGACY OF LOVE



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
HASTINGS, NEBRASKA

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