

gifts that are within us and set us free to become the chosen ones you have made and redeemed us to be through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

***SILENT CONFESSION**

Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.

***THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

In Christ, God has made us new creations; in dying to the old, the new is born. Our sin is forgiven, and even now we are being reshaped into the image of God. Friends believe the Good News!

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!

***GLORIA PATRI**

The Hymnal #579

Glory be to the Father, & to the Son, & to the Holy Ghost;

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, World without end. Amen, Amen.

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away. Behold, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and through the Holy Spirit has given us the ministry of reconciliation. Let us share the peace of Christ with one another. The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

Share the peace of Christ with others as you will.

After a few moments, the liturgist will step into pulpit and say...

“At this time I want to invite our kids to come forward for a word from the Lord brought to them by Ms. Kathy.”

The liturgist will take a seat.

CHILDREN’S SERMON

(All Singing)

***Jesus friend so kind and gentle, little ones we bring to thee;
Grant to them thy dearest blessing. Let thine arms around them be;
Now enfold them in thy goodness, from all danger keep them free.***

Draw a picture of a triangle on a piece of poster paper and ask the children if they know what it is called. Write the word "triangle," circle the "tri" and ask them if they know what that means. Then set up a tripod and ask if they know what this is called, and what it is used for. Write the word down and again circle the "tri." Tell them you have a set of books called a trilogy. How many books are there in the set? Tell the children that today is called Trinity Sunday. It is a day when we recognize God as Father of us all who comes to us in different ways. God comes to us as the Holy Spirit, and God came to us as a person in his son, Jesus Christ. The important thing to remember is that God is still God, whether we recognize God as the Holy Spirit or Jesus the Christ. What are some other names we have for God? Savior, Redeemer, Jehovah and Yahweh are some possible answers. God is still God who loves us, regardless of the name we give to God. Dismiss the children by giving each of them three pieces of ribbon about 6 inches in length which are knotted together at the top. Suggest they have someone help them braid the pieces together to make a bookmark or a bracelet as a reminder of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Close with prayer and then dismiss the children.

As the children leave, the liturgist will return to the pulpit and say...

“Would those who are able please stand as we all join together in our second hymn, “Come, Thou Almighty King”, #139 in our *Hymnals*.”

The Liturgist will take a seat until after the hymn.

***HYMN**

“Come, Thou Almighty King”

The Hymnal #139

After the hymn, the liturgist will step to the pulpit and say:

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

We need not be poor to be grateful for God's bounty, nor do we have to be rich before we can share. Everyone can know the blessing of a generous spirit. You are invited to give as God has blessed you as we continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings...

The liturgist will sit down until the Doxology begins to play.

THE OFFERTORY

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

"Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart" –M. Hayes/D.E. Wagner

*DOXOLOGY (In Unison)

The Hymnal #592

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him all creatures here below;
Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

After the Doxology, the liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

*OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray. . . Giver of every good and perfect gift, receive these gifts we bring as symbols of our desire to participate in your work of redemption, creation, and transformation. Use them to push back darkness and despair, and to bring order where there is now only confusion. Accept these gifts and we who bring them that the hungry may be fed, the ill relieved of suffering, and the oppressed set free, all through Christ our Lord, Amen

*THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

The Apostle's Creed

Let us remain standing and reaffirm our Christian faith as it is expressed in the traditional version of the Apostles' Creed printed in our bulletins. Let us say what we believe. . .

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into Hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick & the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Invite the congregation to... "Be seated," and sit down.

THE ANTHEM

"God Is So Good" –Douglas E. Wagner

The Choir

After the Special Music, the liturgist will return to the lectern & say...

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our Epistle lesson this morning, is taken from the first chapter of Paul's Second Letter to Timothy, beginning with the eighth verse. If you would like to follow along, you can find it on page 1038, in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God.

"Do not be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel in the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago, and now has manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For this gospel I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, and therefore I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.

Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus; guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us."

The liturgist will return to his/her seat in the congregation.

Thank you for your service.

When the liturgist finishes, the preacher will step into the pulpit & say...

Our Gospel lesson this morning is taken from the fifteenth chapter of John's Gospel beginning at the eighteenth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #940 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant^[a] is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But

all this they will do to you on my account, because they do not know him who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sinned; but now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates me hates my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sinned; but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. It is to fulfill the word that is written in their law, 'They hated me without a cause.' But when the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me; and you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning."

Leader: ...This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

"I Believe in God"

The Presbyterian preacher's car had run out of gas on a country road. His wife, who was a passenger, remembered seeing a gas pump at a little mom and pop station just a half a mile back down the road. He got out of the car and started to search the trunk of the car for a container, but the only thing he could find was the plastic urinal that had never been taken out of the car from his last short stay in the hospital!

He took the empty container and trudged back to the little station. After filling it, he carefully walked back with his unusual container full of gas and then started to pour its contents into his empty tank.

Driving by just at that moment was a former elder, who had left the Presbyterian Church to join a new church development with a more charismatic worship style. He slowed as he approached the car to see if he could help, only to witness his former preacher pouring the contents of the urinal into the tank.

The man gasped and said: "Praise God! If I'd known that old man had faith like that, I'd never have left his church!"

Imagine what it must have been like as a new Christian in the second century, with a world full of Gods and goddesses, and your own church full of those teaching all manner of strange new doctrines such as that Jesus was only human or only divine, or it is not what you believe that is important, but what you know that really counts with God. What are you supposed to believe?

The Jews had always had as their first Statement of faith the Shema from Deuteronomy, "Hear O Israel, the Lord, YOUR God is One God!" So important was it to the Jews, that their holy men took quite literally the biblical instructions to bind those words to their hands and foreheads so that they might never forget them. So they wrote the Shema on tiny little scrolls, put them in little wooden boxes and tied the boxes to their foreheads and wrists. But, though they remembered the words, it didn't take them long to forget what they means.

In the second century AD, all of the original apostles and most of the first generation of the successors were gone from this world and lying on the bosom of Abraham. So smart boys from all over who wanted to attract a following could twist the words of Scripture, and come up with a new formula for a faith to believe in and follow, a path that would require less than those now gone old men who had given their lives for the church. Heresy after heresy sprang up, and to fight them, and keep their people on the true path to God, the leaders of the early church came up with preliminary formulas for a creed by which the faithful could judge the teachings of these new gospels. over the next 200 years, the creed was refined and taught until it reached pretty much its current form before the end of the 4th century.

So the first known function of the creed was to help the church define itself and its faith that gave it life and purpose.

The Apostles Creed teaches the doctrines of God such as the Trinity. They state their understanding of the person and work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They also present teaching of the authority of Scripture, of salvation, of the church, and so on.

The Creed is intended to bring and maintain unity within the church-- which may well mean that anyone deviating from those teachings may be subject to church discipline. But it also means that in areas not covered by the standards there is still some freedom for diversity in the churches.

Second, creeds are designed to defend the faithful.

Creeds and confessions seek to protect the faithful from false teaching, by providing short, under-

standable summaries of biblical truth. Creeds help protect Christians from the misuse of one verse of Scripture taken out of context. When we are challenged to deny our faith, we must remember that the most basic right of an individual is the right to believe.

In the movie *God Is Not Dead 2*, a young teacher is on trial, trying to keep her job and her teaching certificate. She is accused of proselytizing the Christian faith just because she had had the temerity to answer a student's faith based question about the relationship of using nonviolent action to fight discrimination by Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. with the teachings of Jesus. She had quite rightly answered the student's question from a historical perspective by referencing Jesus' own words from the bible.

She was challenged by everyone to just let it drop, to apologize and, in effect, to deny her faith. Her answer rings out so true: "I would rather stand with God and be judged by the world, than to stand with the world and be judged by God."

What the creed teaches us is so fundamental. It teaches us that God is God, and we are not. We may try as hard as we might, but the day will surely come when HE WILL COME to judge the quick and the dead.

And third, creeds are designed to declare to the world.

Creeds declare to the world what the church believes. They present the biblical interpretation of the Scriptures of a distinctive communion of churches. They summarize clearly what a church believes, not just for the church, but for the world in which it lives and works.

America is home to every conceivable cult: from Mormonism to paganism, from Jehovah's Witnesses to WICCA, and from Voodoo to Scientology. There is even a whole group of UFO cults and the Prosperity Gospellers.

We have them all in the USA, and many of these strange new religions claim to represent authentic Christianity. How then can we separate the true from the false? Measure them by the ancient creeds of the church. For example, do they say, with the Apostles Creed, that there is "Jesus Christ is the only-begotten Son of God."

This is a technique I have used with Jehovah's Witnesses. I have read over a copy of the Creed with them, and they do not believe it. Why?... because they do not believe that Jesus was actually God. I have no hesitation in saying to them, you do not represent authentic Christianity.

Even as short as it is, the Apostles Creed holds a wealth of biblical and theological material, even though, Christians too often neglect them. For some they seem too "doctrinal." For others they are not "practical" or "life-related" enough. But today, nothing is more important for Christians than a clear understanding of the truth of the Gospel. All practical decisions about how to live depend on knowing God and his will and his ways. Creeds and confessions are invaluable resources to define the truth, defend the faithful from error, and declare the truth to the world.

William Sloane Coffin wrote a book entitled *Credo*. In it he said that a creed is that "to which I give my heart." My creed tells the world not just what I believe, but who I love-- **and who loves me more than life itself.**

So what is it that we are giving our hearts to? Career? Pride? Accumulating more stuff? Vanity? Greed? Whatever it is, that is our creed.

The way you live your life depends upon what you believe. Someone may say that he believes in honesty, but if he does not disclose income to the IRS, one would rightly question whether his actions matched his beliefs.

There's an old story, maybe you have heard it. If so, please forgive and bear with me while I share it one more time.

A small farming community had been struck by drought that had extended into some months. As their hopes for any kind of harvest appeared to be evaporating, the elders of the small community church asked their pastor to hold a prayer service asking God's intercession to stop the drought and save what ever crop might still be produced. The Pastor complied and that night at sundown, they met at the church for prayer. The pastor greeted most of them as they filed in.

As he walked to the front of the church to officially begin the meeting he noticed most people were chatting across the aisles and socializing with friends.

When he reached the front his thoughts were on quieting the attendees and starting the meeting.

His eyes scanned the crowd as he asked for quiet. He noticed an eleven year-old girl sitting quietly in the front row. Her face was beaming with excitement.

Next to her, open and ready for use, was a very colorful and extremely large umbrella, much bigger than her in fact.

The little girl's beauty and innocence made the pastor smile as he realized how much faith she possessed. No one else in the congregation had brought an umbrella.

All came to pray for rain. But only the little girl had come expecting God to answer.

Faith enables us to understand what God does. Faith enables us to see what others cannot see. As a result, faith enables us to do what others cannot do.

I invite you to examine what you really believe regarding God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. I believe that getting your beliefs right in regard to who God is and how he is at work in the world can be utterly transforming. And, when the day comes that you have to go through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, it is there that what you really believe will show itself to you and to the world.

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

We thank you, God, for your gift of love in Jesus, given not because we are deserving but because you are God, and you are love. We bless your name for overcoming sin with forgiveness, death with life, sorrow with comfort, prejudice with acceptance, and division with holy unity. We give you thanks for all those who have been, or who are channels of your grace for us.

Pour out your Spirit upon us Lord, to make your church a truly loving community, inviting, inclusive, healing, supportive of one another, and reaching to others. Grant us an increased awareness of Your Spirit at work in us and through us that we may make by word and action a clear witness to the love that is in Christ Jesus. May our prejudice be transformed into acceptance and appreciation, and painful divisions of race, culture, economics be healed. Pour out on all creation the gift of faith to believe that love will indeed prove greater than fear, unity more powerful than disparity, and hope a more lasting companion in life than despair.

Teach us to walk in wonderment, to worship even in our work, to find meaning that builds up our lives, even as we give ourselves over to your mission of rebuilding the lives of others, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray saying...

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Let all of us who are able, stand and join in one voice to sing our hymn of dedication, "**I Believe in God Almighty**", hymn number 2042 in our *Sing the Faith* hymnal supplement.

***HYMN OF DEDICATION**

"I Believe in God Almighty"

Sing the Faith #2042

***THE BENEDICTION**

May the love of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen

***CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE**

"Sanctuary"

Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary, Pure and holy, tried and true;
With thanksgiving, I'll be a living sanctuary for You.