

APOSTLES' CREED CURRICULUM FOR YOUTH and ADULTS

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Participants will understand each article of the Apostles' Creed.
 - Participants will apply each article to their daily life.
- Participants will be able to demonstrate creatively what each article means.



RESOURCES AND SUPPLIES NEEDED:

- † Bibles
- † Internet access for videos (or a laptop on which videos can be downloaded);
- † Projection or display capability
- † Butcher Paper or newsprint; Crayons and/or washable markers
- † *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* books (Small Catechism – Apostles' Creed found on ELW p. 1162)
- † If desired, Copies of Martin Luther's Small Catechism are available for purchase from Augsburg Fortress at <http://www.augsburgfortress.org/store/product/13904/The-Small-Catechism>.

SESSION ONE

Welcome everyone to this Apostles' Creed Faith Class where, in preparation for our 500th Reformation Anniversary celebration, we are learning more about our Lutheran identity and faith practices.

OPENING PRAYER (suggested: first prayer listed for Trinity Sunday, ELW page 37).

INTRODUCTION

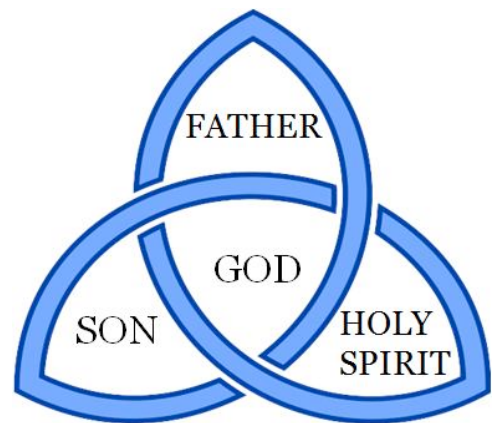
As Lutheran Christians, we join many other Christians in professing our faith using three creeds (statements of belief): the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed. The shortest is the Apostles' Creed, and the form we currently use dates to the 16th century. Although not written directly by the Apostles, it is derived from the old Roman Creed, which was used by very early Christians at baptisms and in worship to convey the apostolic faith. In its simplicity and profound truth, the Apostles' Creed communicates basic Christian beliefs about God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

The Creed has three distinct, yet interconnected parts focusing on the Trinity or Triune God. Through these sessions, we will explore each article in light of our Lutheran understanding and traditions, as explained in the Small Catechism of Martin Luther.

SAY: *The Apostles' Creed is divided into 3 articles. If you look in your Small Catechisms, or on page 1162 of our cranberry ELW's, you will see all three sections entitled:*

1. *On Creation (God the Father).*
2. *On Redemption (God the Son, Jesus).*
3. *On Being Made holy (God the Holy Spirit).*

If you are ever unsure about this basic statement of Christian belief, you can always look in the back of our worship book to find the Apostles' Creed, and its explanations from the Small Catechism.



SHARE

Ask participants to share their memories of the creed, when they first heard it, what images it bring to mind, what questions it raises for you. Did you grow up saying the creed? In the Small Catechism, Martin Luther suggests we begin each morning and end each evening by reciting the Apostles' Creed (along with the Lord's Prayer and other prayers). Was the creed a part of your morning or night-time prayer ritual?

WATCH

An overview of the Apostles' Creed on a Youtube video. Suggestions:

- † <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fc-fSmlr3jY>--entire creed (does not use our exact words, but great pictorial depictions of each article)
- † YouTube: Song=Creed by Rich Mullins <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9LR2hFP1yb4>

ASK

How would you define "creed"? Accept the varied answers and then share what the dictionary says.

CREED: 1. *a brief authoritative formula of religious belief*

2. *a set of fundamental beliefs; also : a guiding principle*

Creed comes from the Latin, "credo" – which has an implication of believing something so deeply that it shapes all your life. Now ask:

- What does it mean for you to say "I believe" something? How is it different from simply "knowing" something?
- *What difference would it make if you heard yourself beginning each article of the creed with these words, "I will shape every aspect of my life around the truth that..."

CLOSING PRAYER (suggested: second prayer listed for Trinity Sunday, ELW page 37).

SESSION TWO

OPENING PRAYER (suggested: *prayer for Creation's Praise, ELW page 81*)

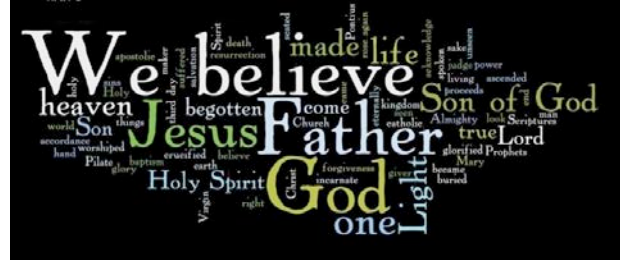
READ

Let's begin by again reading Article One (from ELW page 1162 or your Small Catechism).

The First Article: On Creation

I believe in God, the Father almighty,

Creator of heaven and earth.



CATCH-UP

Have the sheet of butcher paper artwork from last time displayed. IF you used them, post the “Things to Ponder” questions from the end of Session One. Ask participants to share any thoughts or questions that have arisen since Session One (you may also want to have a poster sheet to record any questions, for future discussion by the group).

REFLECT

In this session, we will explore ways to connect our knowledge of God the Creator with our daily lives.

- † What are your earliest images of God?
- † How have your images of God changed over the years?
- † How and where do you see God the Creator at work? What dilemmas and struggles does this raise for you?

Close your eyes and think about a particular place where you spend time. It might be your workplace, the ball field, the locations of your volunteer organization where you serve, your classroom, etc. Now listen again to Martin Luther's explanation of the First Article of the creed from the Small Catechism;

What does this mean? I believe that God has made me together with all creatures. God has given me and still preserves my body and soul: eyes, ears, and all limbs and senses; reason and all mental faculties. In addition, God daily and abundantly provides shoes and clothing, food and drink, house and home, spouse and children, fields, livestock and all property—along with all the necessities and nourishment for this body and life. God protects me against all danger and shields and preserves me from all evil. God does all this out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness of mine at all! For all of this I owe it to God to thank and praise, serve and obey him. This is most certainly true. (Luther's Small Catechism)

SHARE WITH A PARTNER – “Dialogue with Martin!”

Team up with a partner. Share your response to each question.

Luther: God has given me and still preserves my body and soul with all their powers.

Me: How does God do that in the place I thought about?
(*pause for partners to share*)



Luther: God provides me with food and clothing, home and family, daily work and all I need from day to day.

Me: Where is that happening in my life, even if circumstances are difficult? If I'm under- or unemployed?

(pause for partners to share)

Luther: God also protects me in time of danger and guards me from all evil.

Me: How can I believe this about God when I am being hurt by some of the evil in my place?

(pause for partners to share)

Luther possibly thinking as he writes: How can I describe God?

Me: How WOULD I describe God?

(pause for partners to share)

Luther: For all of this I owe it to God to thank and praise, serve and obey....

Me: How do I live out these big 4 responses to God (thank, praise, serve, obey) in my place?

(pause for partners to share)

SCRIPTURE: LISTEN & DISCUSS

1. Have someone **READ** John 6:1-14 (Feeding of the 5000). Discuss the following questions:

How does God use the presence of Christ and his followers to provide for those who hunger?

In what ways does God's love go beyond God's work of creating (providing, protecting, sustaining)?

2. **LISTEN** to John Piper's Romans 8 reading at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i867dGtKIFo>

Where do you see the creation "groaning in labor pains"?

How does God desire to "set creation free"?

How are you called to participate in God's "setting creation free" in your various places in God's world?

CREATIVE EXPRESSION – FIRST ARTICLE (continued):

- † Watch the creative **SKIT**:

<http://2014.youthsource.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/skit-apostles-creed-father.pdf>

- † **ART**: Take some time and encourage participants to make additions to their butcher paper sheet from Session One. Afterward, invite them to share.

If you have additional time, you can read and discuss any of the Bible Verses not discussed in Session One: Genesis 1:1-2, Psalm 33:6-7, Psalm 90:1-2, I John 4:7-8, 19, Lamentations 3:22-23, Numbers 23:19, Psalm 86:15, Leviticus 11:45, Psalm 46:1, Exodus 3:6, 13-14, Romans 8:14-17.

CLOSING PRAYER *(suggested: prayer for Creation & New Creation, ELW page 81).*

SESSION THREE

OPENING PRAYER (suggested: second prayer listed for Christ the King Sunday, ELW page 53).

SHARE

Have someone **READ** Mark 8:27-30.

“Who do people say that I am?” Jesus asks this question to the original disciples - and to us now! In your mind, recall the names you cherish for Jesus, ones that inspire you or speak to the faith God has given you.

ASK the group to share and write their responses on a sheet of poster paper. (Examples: Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God, Son of Man, Son of David, Redeemer, the Messiah, Savior, the Word of God.) Each of these titles reveal something about Jesus, something important for those who have faith in him.

READ AND REACT

*“Let's read aloud **Article Two** of the Creed and its Explanation.”* (Have group read together from ELW page 1162 or their Small Catechisms).

The Second Article: On Redemption

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.



What does this mean? I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true human being, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person. He has purchased and freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil - not with gold or silver, but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death. He has done all this in order that I may belong to him, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in eternal righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he is risen from the dead and lives and rules in eternity. This is most certainly true. (Small Catechism)

Ask for initial reaction: *What phrases stand out for you in the 2nd Article or its explanation? Are there any questions that the 2nd Article or its explanation raise for you?* (Again, you may want to add questions to an ongoing question poster sheet)

SCRIPTURE: LISTEN & DISCUSS

Have someone **READ** Luke 23:32-46 (Jesus' Death).

SAY: “The subject of death has remained one of the last unmentionables in youth-craving North America. Some people take the sting out of mortality by talking about ‘passing away’. Others attempt to quickly leave grief behind by ‘moving on.’ In our death-denying, death-defying culture, Christians need to understand that their faith is about life, new life, powerful live over death. By exploring beginnings and endings in this part of the Apostles’ Creed, we can learn to understand both life and death.” (Nelvin Vos, from *Living Confidently*)



ASK: * *How does your faith alter your perception of death and dying?*

* *In what ways does Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection set you free?*

* *How does it free you to engage in your call to join in God's life-giving mission for the world?*

CREATIVE EXPRESSION – SECOND ARTICLE:

SAY: "As our lives change, a part of us dies. Although there are other balancing "births"—new friends, new varieties of work—we cannot deny that each day we leave a past we cannot recover. Understanding these small births and deaths may help us to ease into questions of life's final death." (Nelvin Vos, from *Living Confidently*)

† **ACTIVITY:** Have the group make a list of endings and new beginnings (on poster sheet).
For example:

Endings	New Beginnings
Less secure job / loss of job	New job
A family member leaving	New family member
Moving/relocating	New friendship
Diminished physical capabilities	Retirement

With a partner encourage discussion of the following questions:

- *What are some new beginnings you see coming into your life in the next year or so?*
- *In what ways to you sense God's ongoing creative work in these beginnings yet to come?*
- *What are some changes you see ahead that will bring some endings?*

Another way to look at New Beginnings and Endings is below (add these to your poster sheet).

Death		Life
Bondage	➤➤➤	Freedom
Rebellion	➤➤➤	Restoration
Alienation	➤➤➤	Community
Guilt	➤➤➤	Forgiveness
Brokenness	➤➤➤	Wholeness

With a partner, share:

- *Which items in this list speak personally to you and your journey of faith?*
- *How has faith in Jesus helped you experience any of these "freeing" transformations?*

† **WATCH:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtYOGDHaUIU> The Catechized Life, Second Article

THINGS TO PONDER:

READ: John 3:16-17. Now ask some of the questions listed below.

- *How was Jesus fully God and fully human?*
- *What did Jesus dying on the cross really do?*
- *Why would he descend "to the dead" when he died?*
- *How does Jesus' resurrection affect us now?*
- *Is Jesus the only way to salvation/eternal life?*
- *When will Jesus come back & what will happen then?*
- *What are your questions...? (also go back to earlier questions that were raised)*

If you have time, you may consider some of these Bible Verses: Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:18-25, Matthew 3:13-17, John 1:1-3, 14, Colossians 1:15-17, Hebrews 1:2-3, Philippians 2:6-7, Hebrews 4:15-16, Luke 4:1-20.



CLOSING PRAYER (suggested: prayer from Committal, ELW p. 285, insert "all our sisters & brothers.")

SESSION FOUR

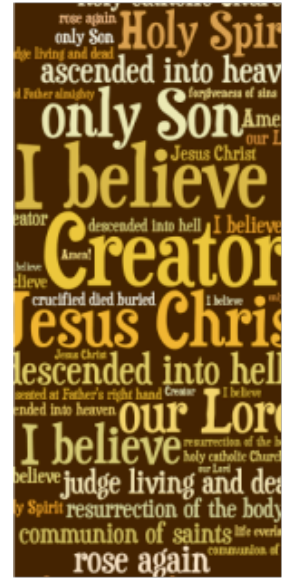
OPENING PRAYER (suggested: either of the two prayers for Good Friday, ELW page 31).

READ

Let's begin by reading aloud together **Article Two** and its explanation (from ELW page 1162 or your Small Catechism).

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

What does this mean? I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true human being, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person. He has purchased and freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil - not with gold or silver, but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death. He has done all this in order that I may belong to him, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in eternal righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he is risen from the dead and lives and rules in eternity. This is most certainly true. (Small Catechism)



CATCH-UP

Ask participants to share any thoughts or questions that have arisen since Session Three (you may also want to re-visit the poster sheets from Session Three, with the participants' question – add any new questions to the list, which may have arisen).

WATCH & REFLECT

View the video clip **"Who is Jesus?"**: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TywLLxR7kQs>

ASK: *Who do people say Jesus is? Who do you say Jesus is?*

*Where do you "see" or sense the presence of the risen Jesus during your week?
(For example, in your work, classroom, family, friends and so forth)*

In whom have you "seen" Jesus? In what ways have you seen Jesus in these persons?

What role does Jesus play in your "worlds"?

Jesus has done everything so that you "may belong to him, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in eternal righteousness, innocence, and blessedness." How does the gift and blessing of Jesus in your life affect your actions, priorities, decisions?

CREATIVE EXPRESSION - SECOND ARTICLE:

† **ACTIVITY:** GIVE EVERYONE A SHEET OF PLAIN PAPER.

1. Instruct participants to fold their paper in half.
2. On one side, ask them to draw a picture of themselves as a young child. With words or thought balloons or a few notes – ask them to show “your relationship with Jesus.”
3. Now, on the other side of the folded paper, ask them to draw a picture of themselves at an adult age (or current age, if a teen or older child). Again, use words or thought balloons or a few notes to show “your relationship with Jesus” at this older stage in life.
4. Talk about the similarities and differences between the two sides/drawings: the relationship between with Jesus at a younger age and at the present age.

SAY: *Our images of Jesus change over time and as we grow in the faith. Your relationship to Jesus may be both a struggle and a comfort. Throughout history, people have had all sorts of reactions to Jesus. Your encounter with Christ tells you as much about yourself as it does about Jesus.*

† **ART:** Display the sheet of butcher paper with participants’ artwork from the First Article. Now, use another sheet of long butcher paper and have participants draw what they believe is being expressed in the second article of the Creed. For example, for Article Two, participants can draw Jesus as a baby in a manger, Jesus as a teacher, Jesus on the cross, Jesus on the road to Emmaus when he appears after his resurrection, Jesus’ presence and affect upon our lives, etc.

† **WATCH YOUTUBE:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TywILxR7kQs>

SCRIPTURE: LISTEN & DISCUSS

1. **READ John 7:25-44** (Suggestion: you read the narration and have your group read aloud the parts spoken by various individuals throughout the passage). Then, ponder together the following questions:

Have you ever “searched” for Jesus and felt him just beyond your reach?

Have you ever felt misunderstood because of your faith? When? What were the circumstances?

Why do you think the world is so afraid of Jesus? Might this apply to us sometimes as well?

Where is the Good News in this passage - for you? for the world?

2. **READ Romans 5** (Suggestion: have a different person read each paragraph/section). Discuss the following questions:

What elements of the life of Christ connect you to him? (for example, his obedience, his suffering or his love.)

When might you have felt like “an enemy of God”? What were the circumstances?

When have you experienced Christ “coming at the right time” in your life?

CLOSING PRAYER (suggested: 2nd prayer for Resurrection of our Lord, ELW – very top of p. 32)

SESSION FIVE

OPENING PRAYER (suggested: prayer for Vigil of Pentecost, ELW page 36).

READ AND REACT

*“Let's read aloud **Article Three** of the Creed and its Explanation.” (Have group read together from ELW page 1162 or their Small Catechisms).*

The Third Article: On Being Made Holy (Sanctification)

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.

What does this mean? I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and made holy (sanctified) and kept me in the true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy (sanctifies) the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith. Daily in this Christian church the Holy Spirit abundantly forgives all sins—mine and those of all believers. On the last day the Holy Spirit will raise me and all the dead and will give to me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true. (Small Catechism)



ASK FOR INITIAL REACTIONS: *What phrases stand out for you in the 3rd Article or its explanation? Are there any questions that the 3rd Article or its explanation raise for you?* (Again, you may want to add questions to an ongoing question poster sheet)

MAKE A LIST – POSTER SHEET: Ask participants to list all the activities of the Holy Spirit, according to the 3rd article's explanation. (enables us to believe, calls, gathers, enlightens, makes holy /sanctifies, keeps the Church with Jesus in one faith, forgives, raises all the dead, gives eternal life, etc.)

NOTE: Explain that the word “catholic” means “universal”. Until the time of the Reformation, the Roman Catholic church was the only Christian church in western Europe and so, was “universal” in a time when travel was not as easy as it is now. Now “Catholic” (note the capital letter) refers to the Roman Catholic Church, and catholic (with a lower case “c”) is a seldom-used word that means “universal.”

WATCH AND DISCUSS Article 3 on Sanctification; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USIFVl6yrUQ>

SAY: “The quest for spirituality is a popular journey today. People take different paths along this pilgrimage. Maybe they are searching for a sense of inner peace or comforting answers. They may be seeking ways to restore their faith in God. In any of these paths there emerge questions of faith, expressed in languages of spiritual realities and languages of faith. In his *Confessions*, Augustine wrote about these questions, this deep hunger, “Thou hast made us for thyself so that our hearts are restless until they rest in thee.” The issue can be

put more directly: *How can I become holy? Do I really want to live a holy life? Do I really want the breath of the Spirit to breathe within me?* The straightforward summary language of the 3rd Article of the Apostles' Creed anticipates these questions and helps us find direction and purpose to guide our lives toward God's will for the world." (Nelvin Vos, *Living Confidently*)

DISCUSS:

What is meant by "being made HOLY"?

- Derived from the Hebrew "Kadosh", meaning "separated," "set apart"
- God's holiness is seen in God's set apartness or "total otherness"
- Worthy of praise and high esteem
- Biblical sense of "holy" – things/people/events that are set apart by God for God's purposes; associated with divine power



SHARE WITH A PARTNER:

- *Whom or what would you classify as "holy"? Persons living or in the past?*
- *What is there about this person that makes her or him holy?*
- *What is the relationship between this person and God's holiness?*
- *What events or things would you consider "holy"? (consider, for example, the Holy Sacraments)*
- *How is the Holy Spirit making YOU "holy"? Setting you apart for God's purposes?*

READ AND REFLECT

READ: Acts 2:1-13; Acts 2:14-21; Acts 2:22-24 & 32-36; Acts 2:37-47

(Suggestion: Have a different person read each of the four sections. Pause after each and ask for any reactions)

ASK THE GROUP:

- *In what ways has the Holy Spirit surprised you?*
- *In what variety of "languages" does the Holy Spirit communicate the Good News of Jesus in today's world? (think beyond literal 'languages' to all forms of communicating/expressing/sharing God's love)*
- *How has the Holy Spirit given you help and comfort?*
- *What barriers in your life have been broken down by the Holy Spirit?*
- *How are you open to the breath of the Spirit within yourself?*

CREATIVE EXPRESSION – THIRD ARTICLE:

- † **ART:** Display the previous 2 butcher paper sheets with participants' artwork from Articles One & Two. Provide a blank 3rd sheet and ask participants to draw what they believe Article Three to mean. For example, participants could draw pictures of the cross, a dove, fire for Pentecost, the universal church, people being called together, forgiveness, rising to eternal life, sharing the Good News, etc.

SOME THINGS TO PONDER

Now ask some of the questions listed below and/or discuss some of the Bible Verses listed.

Bible Verses: John 7:38-39, John 14:16-18, Romans 8:9-11, Ephesians 5:8, Galatians 5:22-23.

- *How would you describe the Holy Spirit (is it a feeling, your conscience, a voice, unexplainable, etc.)?*
- *How can you be attentive to the Spirit's work and presence in your life?*
- *Do signs and miracles of the Spirit still happen today?*
- *How is the Spirit at work in the world through "the the universal Church"?*
- *What does eternal life ("life everlasting") look like?*
- *What questions do you have????*

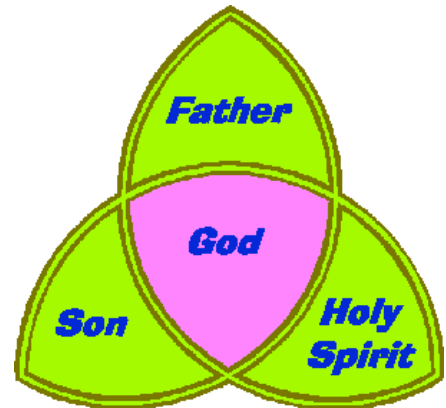
CLOSING PRAYER (suggested: Prayer for Pentecost B, ELW p. 36)

OPTIONAL CELEBRATION

Consider a congregational blessing for those who participated in these sessions, as a milestone of faithful lifelong learning. A possibility is given below....

Faith Milestone: Apostles' Creed:

Brothers and sisters in Christ: Today we seek God's blessing as we gather with thankfulness to bless these disciples, who have partnered in completing another faith milestone in their spiritual journey: growing in their relationship with God through study of the Apostles' Creed. (*Speak names here, if desired.*) May these disciples be steadfast in their life's purpose of passing onto others the truths expressed in the Church's confession of faith!



(If parents have been involved with their children, you may wish to add:)

To those parents here, we give thanks for way in which you seek to fulfill the promise you made to God at your child's Baptism, taking responsibility for teaching your child the Apostles' Creed. May you always remember, Proverbs 22:6 which says: Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it. (NLT)

A reading from Ephesians 3, verses 14-21:

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Let us pray:

*Gracious heavenly Father, we give thanks for these disciples who have completed a milestone of learning and growth in their journey of faith. May they be strengthened in power through the Holy Spirit, as Christ continues to dwell richly in their hearts. Bless their living confession of faith, in all their daily actions and words, so that through them, others may be drawn more deeply into relationship with you, the one holy Triune God, Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit, in whose name we pray. **Amen.***