

Apostles Creed Learning Unit:

Unit Description:

The Apostles Creed is commonly recited during many services in churches. In the Lutheran tradition the Apostles Creed is also studied in educational settings such as confirmation, new member classes, bible studies, Sunday schools, or other opportunities. This unit engages the students in various ways of learning including group activities, individual activities, small and large group discussion, individual journaling, take home tasks, as well as story sharing and bible study. It is broken into three sections, each of which focuses on a different article of the creed. Each follow a general outline of Hook It; engaging the students in conversation, stories, journaling, and sharing, Experience It; bringing the students into a hands on activity designed to engage them in the part of the Trinity, Connect It; connecting the students to the formal creed and scripture study, and Live It; an invitation to practice what they have learned. The unit operates with an understanding that the students have a basic grasp on the concept of the "Trinity". If not, be encouraged to add an additional lesson on that concept or tie it into each session as you join together.

Unit Specifics:

- **Community of Learners:** Developed for 9th Grade Confirmation Students but adaptable to other Learners.
- **Learning Objectives:**
 - Students will engage the Apostles Creed through interactive activities and stories.
 - Students will share in the learning and teaching process through group discussion, individual and group projects, and share activities.
 - Students will understand the organization of the Apostles Creed and reasons for the recitation of each section.
 - Students will generate goals for living out what they have learned.
- **Needed Materials and Resources:**
 - Journals with Pencils/Pens for each Person.
 - Luther's Small Catechism and Bibles for each Person.
 - Crayons, Markers, Magazines, Glue, Loose Paper, and Scissors.
 - Poster Boards for Small Groups, Master Board for up front.
 - Post-its and Share and Believe Banner.
 - Paper and Envelopes for letter writing.

Notes for the Teacher:

When creating the environment it is important to create a space where the students feel respected and that their thoughts on deep questions are valid. Be mindful not to dominate the conversation and allow the Spirit to guide the conversation. There will be moments where the students may need guidance, but most of this unit is designed to be students led. There will be many opportunities to engage with the student learning and enjoy the lesson together. Have fun, be playful, and enjoy time with the students. You may be surprised with what they share as well as what you may also learn. Also, be encouraged to adapt any or all parts of the lesson to meet your groups needs.

Notes from Past Experience:

We began creating units of study in this method because of the lack of interest expressed by the students in faith related learning. We realized that the traditional styles of confirmation through lecture were not affective after a long day of school studies. We began engaging the students in multiple activities and styles in each lesson, and saw a distinct change in attitude and receptiveness toward concepts. It is important to begin by setting an environment of respect where each has a voice to speak and an ear to listen. This begins with the teacher trusting in the Spirit to guide the conversation. Live in love, and enjoy the learning.

Apostles Creed Session One:

Hook It: Connections (10 Minutes)

- ❖ **Stories and Sharing:** What is your favorite memory of nature?
- ❖ **Journal Question:** When I think of God the Father or Creator, I think of...?
- ❖ **Sharing Time:** In groups of two share thoughts about God as Father or Creator.

Experience It: Nature Walk (25 Minutes)

- **Experience Nature:** Go together on a nature walk. Invite the students to listen to all sounds around them. They should make note of anything that stands out to them or sounds that make them feel a certain way. Towards the end of the walk find a place to lie down on their backs. Invite them to look at the sky and make shapes out of the clouds. It may also be useful to take a moment to sit with closed eyes and listen. After a few minutes, return to the learning space.
- **Small Group Sharing:** After returning to the learning space, invite the students into groups of three to share their nature walk stories. **Have them create a story board of pictures and words describing their stories.** Inform them that these will be shared with the large group. These could be sounds they heard that interested them, shapes they found in the clouds, stories that came to mind while listening, or anything else that comes to mind. **Ask each group to identify one aspect that was most unique to their group.** This is a time of sharing and bonding.
- **Large Group Sharing:** After small group time is done, return to the large group and invite each group to share each other's stories. Take each story board and hang them on the walls.

Connect It: First Article of the Apostles Creed (15 Minutes)

"I believe in God the father almighty, creator of heaven and earth"

- ❖ **Read the First Article of the Apostles Creed and Description found in Luther's Small Catechism.** (*Invite students to read this or you can read it yourself*)
 - Group discussion: What does this tell us about God the Father? (Creator)
- ❖ **Scripture Reading:** Genesis Chapter 1 – Creation Story (Invite students to read. After each "day in creation" pause and identify what was created.)
 - Group discussion: What does it mean to be "created in God's image"? What is the image of God?

Live It: Sending and Blessing (10 Minutes)

- **Share and Believe Banner:** Invite the students to write on the banner their thoughts about the closing scripture reading and questions. These answers may vary, but give the students the opportunity to safely share their thoughts openly and anonymously.
- **Scripture Reading: Psalm 139: 13-14**
 - Post it Questions:
 - What do I feel when I read that I was "Fearfully and Wonderfully Made?"
- **Thoughts for Living:**
 - **Living for Others:** How should I treat others knowing God created them just as God created me?
 - **Living in Me:** Memorize the First Article of the Apostles Creed and practice saying while listening to sounds in creation. **Find one object in nature that represents you to share with the group next week.**
- **Closing Prayer:** Group prayer opportunity where students can share out loud or in silence.

Apostles Creed Session Two:

Hook It: Connections (10 Minutes)

- ❖ **Stories and Sharing:** Share nature objects with each other.
- ❖ **Journal Question:** When I think of God the Son or Jesus, I think of...?
- ❖ **Sharing Time:** In groups of two share thoughts about God as Son Jesus.

Experience It: Who is Jesus Project? (25 Minutes)

- **Small Group Work:** Break into small groups of 3-4 people. Each should have a bible, pen and paper. Invite the students into searching the scriptures for references to the person of Jesus. **Each group should find 5 references to Jesus.** They may be stories of action in which Jesus did something, stories where other characters talk about Jesus, or anything else they feel describes who Jesus was.
 - For each passage or story answer these questions:
 - Why did you choose this passage?
 - What does it tell you about the man Jesus was?
 - How can you act today similar to how Jesus acted in this passage?
- **Return to Large Group:** After small group time is done, return to the large group and move to the next section. Sharing of each group's findings will come later.

Connect It: Second Article of the Apostles Creed (15 Minutes)

*"I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
And born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius
Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended
Into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into
Heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead."*

- ❖ **Read the Second Article of the Apostles Creed and Description found in Luther's Small Catechism.** (Invite students to read this or you can read it yourself)
 - Group discussion: What does this tell us about God the Son Jesus?
- ❖ **Who is Jesus Project Sharing:** Each group takes turns sharing their scripture findings and how they describe Jesus. Make a list on a group board of characteristics of Jesus found in scripture. This will be used during the Live It section of this study.

Live It: Sending and Blessing (10 Minutes)

- **Share and Believe Banner:** Invite the students to write on the banner their thoughts about the closing scripture reading and questions. These answers may vary, but give the students the opportunity to safely share their thoughts openly and anonymously.
- **Scripture Reading: Luke 24: 13-35**
 - Post it Questions:
 - What would you feel and say if the Resurrected Jesus came to you while you walking?
- **Thoughts for Living:**
 - **Living for Others:** Look for three people that remind you have who Jesus is? (Actions, words)
 - **Living in Me:** Memorize the Second Article of the Apostles Creed and try and act in one way that you remember Jesus acting.
- **Closing Prayer:** Group prayer opportunity where students can share out loud or in silence.

Apostles Creed Session Three:

Hook It: Connections (10 Minutes)

- ❖ **Stories and Sharing:** Share stories of people who remind you of Jesus this last week.
- ❖ **Journal Question:** When I think of God the Holy Spirit, I think of...?
- ❖ **Sharing Time:** In groups of two share thoughts about God as Holy Spirit.

Experience It: Images of God and Spirit (20 Minutes)

- **Small Group Work:** In groups of three create a mural with markers, crayons, paper, and/or magazine pictures. Think about all the ways that the Holy Spirit weaves in and through your life. Think about what give you most joy, and think about where you see good and truth. Then create the mural.
 - Answer these questions:
 - What did you draw? Why did you draw it? Why did you choose the colors or pictures? What do you believe God is?
- **Large Group Sharing:** After each person has generated a mural, hang them up around the room and invite students to view each other's murals. Take time as a large group discussing each mural. Ask students to interpret the pictures and follow it up with an opportunity for the mural's creators to share reasons for their creation.

Connect It: Third Article of the Apostles Creed (15 Minutes)

***"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."***

- ❖ **Read the Third Article of the Apostles Creed and Description found in Luther's Small Catechism.** (*Invite students to read this or you can read it yourself*)
 - Group discussion: What does this tell us about God the Holy Spirit?
- ❖ **Scripture Reading:** John 14: 15-17
 - Group discussion: What do you think about these versus? What does it mean when it says that you will know the Spirit because it will be "in you"?

Live It: Sending and Blessing (15 Minutes)

- **Share and Believe Banner:** Invite the students to write on the banner their thoughts about the closing scripture reading and questions. These answers may vary but give the students the opportunity to safely share their thoughts openly and anonymously.
- **Large Group Discussion Question:** Why do we together say the Apostles Creed?
 - Post it Questions:
 - What does it mean to say "I believe"?
- **Thoughts for Living:**
 - **Living for Others:** Invite the students to make three goals of how they want to live out their faith.
 - **Living in Me:** Memorize the Third Article of the Apostles Creed and share it with others.
- **Letter Project:** Write a letter to yourself including your goals of living out your faith. Include also thoughts of what it means to believe and encouragements to live in the Spirit of God.
- **Closing Prayer:** Group prayer opportunity where students can share out loud or in silence.

Works Cited:

- 1) Apostles Creed: Luther's Small Catechism, Part Two, Pages 9 – 15
- 2) The Harper Collins Study Bible: *New Revised Standard Version*. New York: HarperCollins Publisher, 2006.