

Liturgical Notes

June 4, 2023

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As has become custom, during the different liturgical seasons of the church (Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and the season after Pentecost), our liturgy – our work and our prayer – often changes. Today you will notice some of these changes as we enter into the season after Pentecost.

Within the liturgy guide you will see sources cited. In this liturgy (which will be changed again in September), you will see *Enriching Our Worship 1* and *A New Zealand Prayer Book*. The Episcopal Church uses “authorized” texts and here at the Advocate we have permission to draw from other sources within the Anglican Communion: thus the use of *A New Zealand Prayer Book*. *Enriching Our Worship 1* is an authorized liturgical text and many of may find the words in this book familiar.

One thing that may not be familiar is the Nicene Creed as found in *Enriching Our Worship 1* and which we are moving to beginning today. In the creed presented here, you will find a slight variations in the text.

<b>BCP</b>	<b>Enriching our Worship 1</b>
For us and for our salvation	For us and for our salvation
He came down from heaven	He came down from heaven:
<i>By the power of the Holy Spirit</i>	<i>Was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary</i>
<i>He became incarnate from the Virgin Mary</i>	
<i>And was made man</i>	<i>And became truly human.</i>
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life	We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life
<i>Who proceeds from the Father and the Son</i>	<i>Who proceeds from the Father,</i>
With the Father and the Son is he is worshiped and glorified.	Who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.

But why the change? Why the difference? Some historical context may be helpful:

The original wording of the Nicene Creed, “I believe in the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,” was agreed upon at the fourth-century Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (Ecumenical Councils are councils of bishops and theologians of the entire Church). The wording was altered in the Latin half of the Church by the addition of the words, “who proceeds from the Father *and the Son*,” a change expressed in Latin by one word: *filioque*. This addition was made at a sixth-century regional synod meeting in Toledo, Spain. In this region many Christians had originally been Arians who denied

the full divinity of the Son. The synod apparently believed that the constant liturgical repetition of the *filioque* clause would aid in teaching the faithful that the Son was fully God. The phrase gradually spread until, by the eleventh century, it was in general use in the Latin Church. Its inclusion has never been authorized by an Ecumenical Council and has never been adopted by the Eastern churches.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Anglican theologians were unanimous in claiming that the only true bases of doctrine were Scripture and the teaching of the undivided Church (i.e., the five Ecumenical Councils held between the years 325 and 451). The Church of England taught only what Scripture and tradition taught, they asserted. Not knowing the full history of the *filioque* addition and mistakenly assuming that it had always formed part of the Creed, Anglicans retained the phrase, and some divines even went to great lengths to explain why the Greeks deleted it!

The unilateral altering of a Creed originally authorized by an Ecumenical Council strikes Eastern Orthodox Christians as ecclesiological high-handed and canonically indefensible. The theology of the Holy Spirit which has grown up in the West since the introduction of the *filioque* is a point of serious, but less-heated, misunderstanding between East and West.

In 1976, the Anglican members of the Anglican-Orthodox Joint Doctrinal Commission said in an Agreed Statement that the *filioque* should not be included in the Creed because it had been introduced without the authority of an Ecumenical Council. In 1978 Anglican bishops meetings at the Lambeth Conference recommended that churches of the Anglican Communion consider omitting the *filioque* from the Nicene Creed. The 1985 General Convention recommended the restoration of the original wording of the Creed, once this action had been approved by the Lambeth Conference and the Anglican Consultative Council. The change was then endorsed by the Lambeth Conference of 1988, the 1990 meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council, and the 1993 joint meeting of Anglican Primates and the Anglican Consultative Council. **The 1994 General Convention affirmed the intention of the Episcopal Church to remove the *filioque* clause at the next revision of the Book of Common Prayer.**

—*The Rev. Dr. Ruth Meyers*

So, in many ways we are going back to something old, but may seem new. Something that many have fought over and much ink has been spilled. I invite you to notice the changes, and notice when you are slipping into the familiar. What is this change causing you to think about God? Is this change simply an irritation or is God using change so that you may know God in a new way?

In any case, this creed is the Church's attempt at understand a mystery, and to claim our belief in a Triune God – 1 in 3 and 3 in 1. A mystery that may never be understood on this side of the eschaton (the final days), but one we are invited into and pulled into joining the great dance of God's grace, peace, and salvation.