

Statement on Belief and Practice:

Many people find themselves on documents like this when looking for a church community to make sure the church is on the same side of certain issues or beliefs. As you explore Lakeside, we believe this document will answer questions you might be asking, as well as explain how we approach and practice church unity when we disagree.

Let's start with The Nicene Creed.

The Nicene Creed is an ancient church document that Christians have used for almost 2,000 years to root themselves in the faith. It isn't a perfect document, nor is it part of the Bible. It has its own bias and answers specific questions that were most relevant at the time it was written, but it does a great job of summarizing the core beliefs of the church. Christians across time and tradition have looked to this and other creeds as a signpost to point us in the right direction, which makes it useful for us as well. This simple, focused creed gives us a great sense of Christian identity. It is wide enough for nearly all historic Christian churches to find themselves at home in. It makes a lot of claims while still leaving space for diversity and mystery.

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
begotten from the Father before all ages,
God from God,
Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made;
of the same essence as the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven;
he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary,
and was made human.
He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate;
He suffered and was buried.
The third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again with glory

to judge the living and the dead.
His kingdom will never end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life.
He proceeds from the Father and the Son,
and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.
He spoke through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We affirm one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look forward to the resurrection of the dead,
and to life in the world to come. Amen.

Now, when most people read that, they think to themselves, “That’s great... but that doesn’t answer my question about what the church believes about _____ (insert hot topic here).”

That is intentional. Here’s why.

We break our priorities into three different categories, ranked in order of importance, called ***The 123s of Theology***.



CATEGORY 1: WHAT WE BELIEVE

The first category - and most important - is what you read above in The Nicene Creed. These are the parts of our faith that are absolutely core and central to the Christian story.

There may be days when we struggle to believe parts of this creed, but we don't stress out or become fearful. Instead of worrying about whether we "believe enough," we see the creed as something to lean on, something to cling to with even a tiny (mustard seed) of faith. We come to the creed with our individual beliefs and we hold them up to it, allowing it to shape how we see God, community, the church and the world, always pushing us back to our "true north."

CATEGORY 3: WHAT YOU BELIEVE

Don't worry, we'll come back to Category 2 in a moment.

For us, the beliefs that fall into the third category are all the things that good, Jesus-following, Bible-honouring Christians disagree about, or what we call, disputable matters. As you can imagine, this list can get pretty long. It includes beliefs like the proper mode of baptism, how the Holy Spirit works, the role of women and men, the specifics of how the universe was created, divorce and remarriage, sexual expression before and/or in marriage, birth control, pacifism, just war, military service, styles of worship music, styles of prayer, gender, marriage of same sex couples, the rapture, modern day miracles, alcohol use, tattoos ... and so much more.

There are a lot of things that fall into this category. And they matter. A lot.

But unlike Category 1, these are ethical or theological questions **that are not as explicitly clear in scripture**, and that may be interpreted in a number of different ways. It's important to note that differences of interpretation don't necessarily mean that one party believes in the Bible and one party doesn't, but it recognizes that the task of reading, interpreting, and applying scripture is complicated.

Often, the temptation will be to take certain items from the list above (and many others) and say, "but this item is crucial to a Christian worldview."

For us, if it is not in the Nicene Creed, it's a 3.

There are times when we will offer our views or preferences for a particular interpretation of a text or ethical issue and we will share our reasons for doing so while making space for other views. If and when we choose a particular lane of interpretation, with earnestness and humility, we will strive to understand it through the lens – the life, death, and resurrection – of Jesus.

We disagree on 3s, but we never seek to divide over them.

The reason? Category 2.

CATEGORY 2: HOW WE BELIEVE

In our polarized world, the gravitational pull is away from those who are different from us. When Jesus prayed for the Church, he prayed for unity. Jesus said that **our unity would be the sign to the world that we were Jesus' disciples**. Even the apostles **did not define unity as an agreement on all items**, but the centrality of Jesus in the midst of their disagreements. So for us, we believe **unity will always be more important than where we land on personal convictions because the greatest sign to the world is that vastly different people who wouldn't normally find themselves in the same room, are together being transformed by the radical love of Christ, and in turn, loving each other amidst differences**.

It is our commitment to Jesus that compels us to move towards others (Unity). The deeper we grow in the love of Christ for us, the wider our love should extend to people who are unlike us. We call this, **deep faith, wide embrace**.

This will lead to all kinds of theological diversity. You're probably used to all kinds of diversity in the church (socioeconomic, political, generational, ethnic) but theological diversity may be a new one. Christians usually have a small window of tolerance for theological diversity.

For us, theological diversity isn't something to be avoided, but a sign of a healthy Christian community... a sign that our deepening faith is leading to a wider embrace. For Us, Wide Embrace is one of the measures of a growing, maturing disciple.

Here are some questions we regularly ask ourselves to see if we are being transformed by the radical love of Christ:

- Is the number of people we call friends, who we disagree with, growing or shrinking?
- Is the number of people who disagree with our posture and beliefs, but say they feel known, understood, and loved by us growing or shrinking?

We believe a healthy disciple will be growing in their relationships and trust with people who see things differently. Deep Faith, Wide Embrace.

We hope this document has helped you understand our desire is to be a community united around Jesus, with wide theological diversity. If you would like clarity on anything in this document, please feel free to reach out to our pastoral team. They would be happy to connect over email, over the phone or over coffee. Their contact info is available on the website.

Note: We have borrowed and adapted these three categories with permission from Eucharist Church in Hamilton Ontario.