**On Liturgy and Theology**

**in the**

**Book of Common Prayer**

**8**

**The Creed**

**The Lessons and the Gospel are followed by the Sermon, in which the preacher “breaks open” the Word of God. The Sermon is followed by the Nicene Creed. The old joke goes that the Creed must be said following the Sermon so that the Creed can correct and cover up all the mistakes that the preacher made during the Sermon!**

**In the liturgy of the Holy Eucharist, we say the Nicene Creed. In other liturgies (Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, Holy Baptism, etc.) we say the Apostles Creed. The Apostles Creed is the oldest basic statement of belief in the Church. It was formulated around the year 100 AD and recited by individual catechumens who were to be baptized and initiated into the Church. (Hence, the language “I believe.” It is a personal, individual confession of faith necessary to enter the Church.)**

**But in the two centuries that followed, as the Church expanded, questions arose about the faith that the Apostles Creed did not explicitly answer. What exactly is the nature of God? What exactly is the relationship of Jesus to God? Thus, in 325 AD, at the city of Nicaea in northern Asia Minor (today, northern Turkey) the leaders of the Church formulated the Nicene Creed, which is a statement of Trinitarian theology. That is to say, it expresses the Church’s understanding that the one God is known in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And Jesus of Nazareth, who is the incarnation of the Son of God, is fully divine (“God from God”) and fully human (“incarnate from the Virgin Mary and was made man”). Finally, the Nicene Creed begins not with “I believe” but with “We believe” because the Nicene Creed is said not at the initiation / the baptism of a single person, but at the celebration of the Eucharist by the community.**