

What do you believe?

By [David Heim](#)

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While out of town on a recent Sunday morning I found my way to a Lutheran church for worship. After the sermon, when it was time to say the Apostle's Creed, the pastor began with a question: "Who are you people? A secular world, jaded and weary, wonders why you are gathered here today."

To which the congregation responded: "We are the church and we gather in the name of God, to worship God with everything we are, and to offer God everything we have, that we may be sent to serve the world God created, loved, and redeemed through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, his only Son."

The dialogue continued: "Everyone believes something. In what do you believe?" At which point the congregation launched into the creed: "We believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord."

"What do you believe about Jesus?" "He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary..." and so on, with a few more questions to punctuate elements of the creed.

This dialogue struck me as a wonderful reminder that the creed is voiced amid competing creeds: when we recite the creed we are not simply repeating the faith of the church for ourselves and one another, but affirming it in the face of other things that could be believed about God and Jesus and about how one should live. In a liturgically unobtrusive way, the dialogue served both to enliven what can become a routine part of the liturgy and to underscore its countercultural content.

The dialogue, I found out, was written by Kathy Schuen, a worship leader in the North/West Lower Michigan Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and it was used at a recent synod gathering. Schuen said she is interested in how "liturgical pieces can also become a means of dialogue with our secular culture."

“We must now offer our beliefs in the marketplace of beliefs,” she told me. “I think this can actually be a good thing for the church, because it leads naturally to a posture of humility regarding our theological positions and actions.”