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# A Faith to Live By: A Resource for Adult Study

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## A Faith To Live By: A Resource for Adult Study

Frederick A. Styles

Toronto: The United Church Publishing House, 1991

142 pages

Much of what is in this book was originally a series of sermons on contemporary faith issues and was published under the title *Developing A Credible Faith*. The current edition, *A Faith To Live By*, is an updated and revised version including several chapters with additional issues being addressed.

The author, Frederick A. Styles, is minister at St. Andrew's United Church in Markham, Ontario. Supplementing each chapter are reflective, probing, stimulating questions and discussion-starters as provided by Marion Parry, senior minister at Gower Street United Church in St. John's, Newfoundland.

What do I believe? What do we believe? What informs those beliefs? What are the words and/or actions through which those beliefs are given expression? How prepared are we to discuss what we believe? These questions are central as this study document leads the reader and/or group participants into the depths of their beliefs about God, Jesus the Christ, the Holy Spirit, Humanity, Sin and Salvation, the Church, the Bible, Baptism, Holy Communion, Life after Death. Included in the subjects explored in this revised edition is also a chapter on Sexuality, as well as one on Leaving, and on Being my Brother's/Sister's Keeper and on Ecological Matters.

With what belief system and with what perspectives do I/we approach these subjects? Do we do so from a perspective of tradition in which the Apostles' Creed in its original version is central? Or do we do so from a more contemporary stance, realizing that things have changed, including how we express our beliefs? The author claims that these are important questions to explore.

In the book itself, Styles explores the United Church of Canada 1968 version (revised and made inclusive in 1980) of the Creed. It reads:

### *A New Creed*

We are not alone, we live in God's world.

We believe in God:

who has created and is creating,  
 who has come in Jesus, the Word  
     made flesh, to reconcile  
     and make new,  
 who works in us and others  
     by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:

to celebrate God's presence,  
to love and serve others,  
to seek justice and resist evil,  
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,  
    our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death,  
    God is with us.

We are not alone.

Thanks be to God. (viii)

The author notes that the way this creed expresses beliefs takes into account that we live in a time of history different from the apostles in Jesus' day. Yet we need to be in dialogue with how beliefs were expressed then in order better to understand our own beliefs and their impact on how we approach "life-and-death" issues. But we also need to claim a freedom to express our beliefs in current figures of speech. "Developing a faith is like embarking on a journey that takes a person from one place to another place. No one can embark on a real faith journey without being different at the end of it than at the beginning" (139). Indeed!

This is a stimulating study document for personal reflection, group discussion and classroom use. Both Styles and Pardy explore the topics with an engaging sense of history and contemporaneity. Although situated primarily within the United Church of Canada, this text has much ecumenical significance. I can readily see it supplemented in discussion with *Faith is a Verb* by Kenneth Stokes (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1989).

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