

Study Guide for the Student

The Early Church

Second Year

Deacons & Priests

The Rev. Daniel K. Dunlap, PhD

Description of the Course

In Year Two, students will undertake a survey of the history of the Christian church from its first-century beginnings to modern times. Of particular interest will be how Christians of various ages and contexts have interacted with and responded to biblical, theological, social, political, intellectual, economic, gender and cultural factors. Each unit is designed to provide a general knowledge of Christian history for a specific period and context, set up according to the classical periods (i.e. Early Church, Imperial Church, Medieval Church, Pre-Reformation England, English Reformation, Continental Reformation, The 17th-19th century English Church, Modern World, The American Episcopal Church, and Contemporary Society). The overall objective is to give students a general foundation from which to understand and interpret Christian spirituality, faith and practice today, both within and outside of The Episcopal Church.

Description of this Unit

This unit surveys the history of church from its first-century beginnings to the dawn of the imperial age in the fourth century, with attention given to significant individuals, movements, contexts and ideas. The student will not only become acquainted with the story of early Christianity in this seminal era, but will also be challenged to integrate the heritage of the church to the student's life and experience.

Study Guide

Required Reading:

Dairmaid MacCulloch. *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*. Penguin Books, 2009. (ISBN: 0670021261)

- From Chapter 2 A Crucified Messiah: "The Jewish Revolt and the End of Jerusalem" (pp. 106-111)
- Chapter 4 Boundaries Defined (pp. 112-154)
- Chapter 5 The Prince: Ally or Enemy? (pp. 155-188)

Recommendations for Study (bulleted)

- Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, eds., *Documents of the Christian Church*, Oxford University Press, 1999, 3rd edition. (ISBN: 0192880713)

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Study Guide for the Student

- Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity, Vol. 1: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*. HarperOne, 2010. (ISBN: 006185588X)
- J. Stevenson and W.H. Frend, editors, *A New Eusebius: Documents Illustrating the History of the Church to AD 337*. Baker Academic, 2013. (ISBN: 0801039711)
- “Early Church Fathers” (<http://www.ccel.org/fathers.html>)

Class Objectives

At the end of this session, the students will:

1. Gain a general knowledge of the early history of the Christian church up to the imperial age;
2. Be able to identify and rank significant individuals, movements and groups relevant to early church history and to the development of Christian thought;
3. Understand the history of Christianity topically as well as chronologically, particularly the historical and theological factors that led to the emergence of a catholic Christian identity in contradistinction to other alternative Christian identities.