



# The Episcopal Story

## Birth and Rebirth

**VOLUME 2** in the **Church's Teachings for a Changing World** series

# Study Guide for Individuals and Groups

Developed by Thomas C. Ferguson



### BEFORE YOU BEGIN

## Mutual Invitation

Series co-editor Eric Law developed a process called Mutual Invitation that ensures everyone in the group will have a voice. Try this process with a group of five to twelve people, especially if you're reading the book as part of a group.

In order to ensure that everyone who wants to share has the opportunity to speak, proceed in the following way:

- The leader or a designated person will share first.
- After that person has spoken, he or she then invites another to share. You need not automatically invite the person next to you.
- After the next person has spoken, that person is given the privilege to invite another to share.
- If you are not ready to share yet, say "I pass for now," and we will invite you to share later on.
- If you don't want to say anything, simply say "pass" and invite another person to share.

Continue in this manner until everyone has been invited.

## CHAPTER 1

# Jesus and the Birth of Christianity

1. pp. 3–7: Christianity was shaped by a very diverse political and religious environment. What are some ways you see Christianity being shaped by our current context? How are these influences similar to or different from the forces shaping Christianity where you are?
2. pp. 7–10: Were there aspects of Jesus' teaching or the early spread of Christianity that surprised you? Which aspects do you see most present in Christianity today?

## CHAPTER 2

# Globalization 1.0: Christianity Goes Global

1. pp. 14–15: Christianity adapted in unique ways to its encounter with the Greek world. How do you respond to the way Justin Martyr wove Platonic concepts into Christianity?
2. p. 17: Why were Christians considered enough of a threat to be persecuted? Do you notice parallels to the ways people are being persecuted for their religion in different places around the world today?

## CHAPTER 3

# Christianity in a Time of Transition

1. pp. 18–20: Many followers of Jesus were faced with impossible choices during the persecutions of the third century: flight, trickery, martyrdom, or chance. Imagine, as much as it is possible, how you might have responded to such challenges.
2. pp. 20–22: Most Christian communities were small, local “house” churches like the one at Dura Europa. Where do you see smaller communities like today? What might their role be in Christianity today?

## CHAPTER 4

# Christianity and Christendom

1. pp. 23–24: What might Christianity have looked like if Constantine had never converted and started to favor the church? What might be different? What would have remained?
2. pp. 24–27: Christianity in the early centuries was quite diverse. At Nicaea we see Christianity beginning to draw boundaries. Do the choices Christian leaders made at the time make sense to you? What do you think the church's role should be in drawing theological boundaries?

## CHAPTER 5

# The End of the Beginning: Early Medieval Christianity

1. pp. 30–33: How did monasticism present an alternate way to be a Christian? What would be appealing about this practice and vision?
2. pp. 33–35: Notice how the papacy rose and developed in these early years. How is this different from the way you have seen it in more recent years or the way you see it now?

## CHAPTER 6

# Christianity Goes Medieval

1. pp. 36–38: Describe the relationship between church and state during the early medieval period. Contrast that relationship with the one you see operating in your context now.
2. pp. 40–42: How did new learning challenge aspects of the medieval church? How have advances in learning in our own time challenged Christianity?

## Reformations without End

1. pp. 45–47: One historian has said Luther critiqued medieval Christianity where it was weakest, on its theology of grace. What do you think of Luther’s overall critique? Which of his concerns most resonates for you? With what might you disagree?
2. pp. 48–49: During the Reformation many leaders and movements challenged fundamental aspects of Christianity. Which of these figures or groups stands out most for you? What religious groups do you see posing the most important challenge to Christianity in our day?

## This Thing Called Anglicanism

1. pp. 53–58: What issues in Anglicanism did the Elizabethan Settlement “settle”? What did it not settle?
2. pp. 59–63: Richard Hooker clarified or introduced theological elements that are central to Anglicanism today: the authority of scripture, tradition, and reason; participation; and national or cultural identity. How do you see each of these making its mark on Episcopal life today?

## Anglicanism Comes to America

1. pp. 65–69: What are some ways the early colonial period shaped Anglicanism? Where do you still see these influences?
2. pp. 69–73: What parallels do you notice between the formation of Anglicanism in the 1500s in the previous chapter and the formation of The Episcopal Church in the 1780s in this chapter?

## Modernity's Challenge: The Early Episcopal Church

1. pp. 74–77: The Oxford Movement had a great impact on The Episcopal Church. What do you think were the positive and negative influences?
2. pp. 78–79: Make a list of some of your favorite hymns. Do any of them reflect the theology of the evangelical revival?

## A Church with a Mission: The Nineteenth-Century Episcopal Church

1. pp. 80–83: The Episcopal Church was decidedly ambivalent about the presence of African Americans and the institution of slavery. What do you think and feel as you consider the church's history? Do you see these positions informing the church's current stand and experience of diversity?
2. pp. 83–87: What do you think of when you read the word "missionary"? What images come to mind? Should The Episcopal Church engage in missionary work today? If so, what kind?

## History in the Making: The Episcopal Church and Anglican Communion in the Twentieth Century

1. pp. 88–93: Which of the changes in the twentieth century—structural change, Civil Rights, Prayer Book reform, women's ordination, human sexuality, globalization—do you see as significant for shaping the church in the twenty-first century?
2. pp. 93–98: Given the developments in church life in the 2000s and 2010s, and given what you have seen of the development of Anglican and Episcopal history so far, what do you imagine the church might look like as we move further into the twenty-first century?