

Diakonia Program – Northern Illinois Synod ELCA

**Early Church History
October - November 2009**

Course Outline

Class Schedule: St. Mark, Rockford: Thursday Evenings, 6:30-9:30 PM; October 15, 22, 29; November 5 & 12, 2009

St Barnabas, Cary: Saturday Mornings, 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM,
October 17, 24, 31; November 7, 14, 2009

Instructor: The Rev. Dr. Timothy V. Olson, BA, M Div., STM, D. Min.
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Course materials: www.makingchristknow.org/adultlearning/diakonia

Purpose of Class: To explore the history of the church from its beginnings to about 600 CE in an effort to: (a) understand and appreciate the beginnings of the Christian movement; (b) understand how the early church has influenced and shaped the church today; (c) encounter Christ and deepen faith through understanding gained from learning the story of the early church.

Required Texts: The Bible (recommended translations: NRSV, NIV, CEV, NJB)

Introduction to the History of Christianity (IHOC) Tim Dowley, Editor
Fortress Press, 2002. ISBN 0-8006-3496-9

A People's History of Christianity (PHC), Diana Butler Bass, Harper One, ISBN 0061448710

Strongly

Suggested Text: *Early Christian Writings (ECW)*, Maxwell Staniforth, Trans.
Reprinted Edition, Penguin Books, 1987. ISBN 0-14-044475-0

Supplementary

Texts: *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought* by Robert Louis Wilken
Yale University Press, 2003 ISBN 0-300-09708-5

The Rise of Christianity by WHC Frend
Fortress Press, 1984. ISBN 0-8006-1931-5

The Early Church, Revised Edition, by Henry Chadwick
Penguin Books, 1993 ISBN 0-14-023199-4

The History of the Church by Eusebius, G.A. Williamson, Trans.
Penguin Books, 1989 ISBN 0-14-044535-8

Early Christian Traditions by Rebecca Lyman
Cowley Publications, 1999. ISBN1-56101-161-4

Doctrine & Practice in the Early Church by Stuart G. Hall
Eerdman's Publishing, 1991. ISBN 0-8028-0629-5

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Attend 5 sessions of class. Come to class prepared and ready to engage.
2. Read assigned material.
3. Complete a research paper on a topic chosen from a list provided by instructor. Paper should be about 5 pages in length and conform to program guidelines. Due at the beginning of fourth class session. Papers may be submitted in print or electronically to instructor's e-mail address above.

OUTLINE

	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reading Before Class</u>
Session 1	1. Introductions: Participants & Course 2. Resurrection, Pentecost & Expansion 3. The Earliest Church in Context	The Book of Acts
Session 2	1. The Context – conclusion 2. Who Shall Lead, Speak & Serve? 3. The Word Preserved as Holy Scriptures	IHOC, pp 1-28; 34-36; 57-81; 103-109; 118-122; 130-136; PHC, pp 1-30; 40-46; ECW pp 19-50, 61-67
Session 3	1. Church as Worshipping Community 2. Church as Moral Community 3. The Blood of the Martyrs	IHOC, pp 29-32; 82-94; 123-129; 152-161 PHC, pp 31-36; 49-57; 59-81; ECW, pp 125-135; 187-199
Session 4	1. Who Is Jesus? 2. Controversies 3. Creeds	IHOC, pp 96-118; 164-186; 204-210; PHC 36-40; 85-95; ECW pp 91-106
Session 5	1. From Persecution to Privilege 2. The Papacy & Monasticism 3. What Does This Have To Do With Us?	IHOC, pp 139-151; 195-203 212-224; PHC pp 97-120; ECW, pp 115-124

FINAL PAPER

The final paper is simply an opportunity to summarize key learnings from the course. It is hoped that such summary may provide a handy resource for review or perhaps a means of sharing your knowledge with others.

The Final Paper is really five short essays which can be written as we complete topics along the way. For each topic summarized, the student should:

1. Outline the history of the particular issue as presented in class;
2. Reflect on key leanings you found most informative;
3. Reflect on what the history of this issue in the early church has to do with life in the church today.

The five topics you will need to summarize:

1. The development of leadership in the early church (pastors, deacons, bishops etc.);
2. The establishment of Holy Scripture;
3. The worship life of the early church;
4. The controversies and councils that led to the Nicene Creed;
5. The establishment of Christianity as the rule of the Empire.

The papers are due on the final night of the class. The paper should be 5-6 pages in length (double spaced) and be written with proper attention to grammar, spelling, etc. Quotations must be noted in some standard form. Papers will be evaluated on content and style. Research should be taken from readings (assigned and supplemental); web sites may be used if they are sound, dependable sites -- Wikipedia is NOT such a site. Any information you get from Wikipedia must be verified by another source. Each student should be prepared to participate in a discussion of what they learned and wrote in our final session.