

ROOTS OF FAITH

SESSION ONE: Following Jesus

Introduction:

- How many events and people from the history of the Church can you think of?
- Roughly when did these events happen/ people live?
- What are the gaps in our knowledge?

Christians believe that in some sense Jesus is special and has a claim on their lives, setting a pattern for their lives, but they haven't ever agreed completely on what that pattern is.

- What does it mean to you to "follow Jesus"?

SNAPSHOT 1: HUMAN AND DIVINE?

Apology! This is the most complicated snapshot of the whole course!

What does it mean to say that Jesus is human and divine?

Christians believed from the earliest days that Jesus was in some sense unique, and expressed this in the Gospels and Epistles, but precisely what they meant by that wasn't clear.

The first generation of Christians were probably more concerned with the issue of the inclusion of the Gentiles than with the divinity or otherwise of Christ, but through the second and third centuries, arguments about whether and how Jesus was both divine and human raged.

The Council of Nicaea

When the Emperor Constantine became a Christian and Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire the Emperor Constantine decided that this issue needed to be settled. As in any bureaucracy there needed to be an "official" policy!

So he called a Council of Bishops in the Turkish city of Nicaea in 325AD to come up with an agreed statement of faith and settle the arguments between the various different factions in the church.

Meet the ancestors Constantine 1

272 - 337 AD

The first Christian Roman Emperor, Constantine adopted Christianity following a battle between him and a rival for the Imperial throne. He believed the God of the Christians, previously persecuted, had given him victory. Although his own understanding and attitude to his faith have often been questioned, the history of the Church would have been quite different without him.

The main protagonists were Arius and Athanasius **Arius c. 256–336** was probably born in Libya, and was a theologian and bishop. He held the view (not uncommon at the time) that God the Father existed alone before he created Jesus. Although he regarded Jesus as divine, he didn't think he was of "one substance" with the Father. His views were firmly put down at the Council of Nicaea, and most of his writings were destroyed.

Athanasius c.298 – 2 May 373 was Arius' principle opponent. He was from Alexandria in Egypt, a great centre of learning at the time, and became Bishop of Alexandria. He argued that God the Father and God the Son were of the same substance, and had always existed, along with God the Spirit.

Athanasian beliefs won the argument at the Council of Nicaea, but Arius and those who thought like him didn't go away. They continued to spread their message, and there were large numbers of Arian Christians right up until the 8th Century. The Goths, Visigoths and Vandals who sacked Rome in 410 were mostly Arian Christians, not pagans.

The Council of Chalcedon

The Council of Nicaea gave us the Nicene Creed which we say every Sunday, but it didn't tackle the issue of how Jesus could be divine and human.

That was left to the **Council of Chalcedon** in 451, where Church leaders tried to work out how they thought Jesus was human and divine.

Some who followed Nestorius Nestorius (c. 386 – 450) held that the humanity and divinity of Jesus were like oil and water – they were both present, but stayed separate. Others, led by Cyril of Alexandria (376 – 444) believed it was more like water and wine – once mixed they couldn't be unmixed. The statement that came out of that meeting is called the Chalcedonian definition. The Council came up with a statement called the "Chalcedonian Definition", which was 376 – 444 but it didn't really satisfy either side, and there was a split, with both Cyril and Nestorius being denounced. The definition says that Christ was "*made known in two natures without confusion [i.e. mixture], without change, without division, without separation, the difference of the natures being by no means removed because of the union, but the property of each nature being preserved and coalescing in one prosopon [person] and one hypostasis [subsistence]--not parted or divided into two prosopa [persons], but one and the same Son, only-begotten, divine Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.*"

From the Nicene Creed

*... We believe in one Lord,
Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God, begotten, not
made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.*

Western Christianity adopted the Chalcedonian definition, while the Oriental Orthodox Churches continued to follow Cyril of Alexandria. Cyril's followers are sometimes called monophysite or miaphysite churches, (monos and mia both mean

“one”, but with different shades of meaning – for some reason, *monophysite* is taken as rather pejorative, so they prefer to be called *miaphysites*!) Nestorius’ followers are called Nestorians. They were mostly concentrated in the Assyrian Churches, and travelled eastwards, founding Syriac Rite Churches from the Middle East to India, and even into China. Not all of these Churches would now claim to be “Nestorian”, and in practice the real differences between all these theological outlooks is really very small.

- **What do you think of these debates?**
- **Does it matter to you that people ask these questions?**
- **Does it matter to you that we don’t have any definite answers to them?**
- **What would we lose if we thought that Jesus was just human, or just divine?**

BIBLE BASE

Read some accounts of Jesus

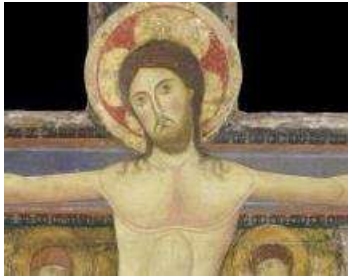
- Mark 4.35-41
 - Luke 10.38-42
 - John 1. 1-18
 - Luke 24.1-12
 - Matthew 23.13-15
-
- **If each story was the only one you had about Jesus what would you say about him?**
 - **What words/phrases would we use to describe Jesus to someone who’d never heard of him?**

SNAPSHOT 2 : IMAGES OF JESUS

Another way of looking at the question of “who is Jesus?” is to ask, what difference does he make to me?

Around 1200 a change started to creep across Europe. For some reason, there was an upsurge in popular interest in spirituality and theology. The growth of cities may have been a factor, with more contact between different people possible. Lay people also started to learn to read and write. There was also a period of poor climate, with lots of challenges to face. Something changed the “mood” of Western Christianity, and new ways of praying started to emerge, focusing far more on the personal and emotional lives of ordinary people. St Francis is credited with “inventing” the Christmas Crib, but it was one of many similar ideas to help people pray more imaginatively, including the rosary, books of hours, and various popular devotions, such as that to the Sacred Heart. One result of this was seen in art, especially in portrayals of the crucifixion. Around 1250, instead of portrayals which show Jesus alive and apparently in control on the cross, we see the dead, or suffering Christ, with his head bowed. This sort of

picture was meant to tug at the heartstrings, and help people realise that Jesus shared their sufferings.



1180-1200 Painted Crucifix,
Alberto Sotio Umbria. V & A



Antonio de Saliba
1490-1500 V & A

- Look at these pictures. How are they different?
- How would you paint Jesus?

FOLLOW UP

This week you could:

- Think about how you would draw Jesus, or actually draw him.
- In prayer, imagine yourself meeting Jesus.
- Think about how you are “following” Jesus, modelling your life on the pattern of his life.
- Pray for unity among Christians, and for the ability and willingness to listen to those who have different beliefs.

Meet the ancestors Perpetua and Felicitas died 203

Perpetua was a Roman woman from a noble family near Carthage in N. Italy. Felicitas was a slave. They were brutally martyred along with a number of other Christians for refusing to make sacrifices to the Emperor. They were *catechumens* (preparing for baptism). Perpetua had a baby, whom she was still breast feeding, and Felicitas gave birth in prison. We know their stories because Perpetua wrote an account from prison, almost certainly genuine, though edited by others. Their commitment to following Jesus cost them their lives, as it did for many others at the time.

ROOTS OF FAITH

SESSION TWO: Prayer

Christians have always prayed, as have followers of every religion. They have prayed in many different ways, however.

- **How many different ways of praying can you think of?**
- **What do you think prayer is for – what difference does it make? Why do you think it matters that we pray?**
- **Do you pray for others? What do you hope will happen?**

SNAPSHOT 1: THE DESERT FATHERS AND MOTHERS

When Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, centuries of persecution came to an end. For three hundred years Christian martyrdom had been regarded as the highest sign of devotion, but now Christianity started to become a stepping stone towards power rather than away from it. Some Christians reacted to this by withdrawing into the deserts, principally in Egypt. There they lived radical, austere, ascetic lives, in which prayer was the main element. There is speculation today that they may have been partly inspired by Buddhism, which had had monks and nuns for many centuries. Some of these men and women lived alone, often eating almost nothing and living very hard lives, but others came together into small communities, with new members living with more established members in a teacher/student relationship. Both men and women adopted this lifestyle. They are known as the Desert Fathers and Mothers. Some of their sayings were written down and passed on.

Their communal settlements formed the first monasteries; the word “monk” comes from the Greek “*monachos*” (solitary), but most monks and nuns have always lived in community, partly for practical reasons, but also because learning to live together, with all its frustrations, is one way in which Christ’s



Beehive huts on Skellig Michael, which was inhabited by monks from the 7th - 12th centuries.

command to love one another can best be explored.

In other parts of the world the Desert Fathers and Mothers example inspired people to find “deserts” of many different kinds. In the British Isles, men and women seeking this kind of lifestyle often withdrew to islands or cliffs like Skellig Michael off the Irish coast. The Desert Fathers and Mothers didn’t see the desert as a peaceful place but as the front line in a spiritual battle, a place of demons.

One of the earliest and most famous of these was a rich young man called St Anthony, who gave up all his wealth in order to live a life of simplicity in the desert. He is often called the father of monasticism.

Amma (Mother) Syncletica, a wealthy Alexandrian woman who went into the desert and lived a life of prayer, dying around 350.

Since then many Christians have felt called to monastic vocations, while others value the chance to make short retreats, living for a few days, weeks or months as part of a monastic community.

- **Have you ever been on retreat? If so, what was it like?**
- **How would you feel if a friend or relative said they wanted to enter an enclosed monastic order and devote themselves to prayer? Would you feel it was a good use of their lives, or a waste?**
- **What gifts might enclosed religious orders give to the Church?**

**Meet the ancestors
St Benedict of Nursia
c. 480 – 543**

Benedict was born to a Roman nobleman, in the aftermath of the fall of Rome to the Barbarians. He initially trained to be a lawyer, but abandoned his training as a young man and went to live in a cave in the hills outside Rome to devote himself to prayer. Soon others came to join him, despite his wish for solitude, and a community formed around him. Benedict wrote a “rule of life” for those who joined him, based on ancient rules from the desert communities. This rule forms the basis of most Western monastic communities today. It and talks about how they should govern their community and resolve their differences and lays down a balanced pattern of prayer, work and study for monks. Benedictine prayer is centred around “lectio divina”, prayerful meditation on the words of Scripture.

BIBLE BASE

Psalm 131

Genesis 3. 9

Exodus 3.1-6

Psalm 84.1-4

Luke 18.9-14

Luke 22.39-46

Romans 8.26-27

- What do these readings tell us about prayer?

SNAPSHOT 2: THE BOOK OF HOURS

Books of Hours were very popular in the Middle Ages. They had developed from the monastic tradition of praying through the Psalter in a regular pattern, along with other Bible Readings and prayers. These were put together into Breviaries – collecting together all the words the monks would need. Eventually, versions of this suitable for lay people were developed, and were called Books of Hours, because they were designed to be used at various set times during the day as part of people's personal prayer.

Books of hours could be simple text, but some were richly decorated.

These are the ones which tend to have been preserved, which might give the impression that they were only for the very wealthy, but many

ordinary people also owned a copy, especially once printing made them more affordable. They were not standardised, and could include many different



The book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves c. 1440.

prayers. Today many people still use set patterns of prayer to mark the day. The Church of England has resources for daily prayer, from books to apps.

- **Do you have favourite prayers which you would want to be included in your “Book of Hours”?**
- **When you pray do you have any particular pattern you follow? Do you think it helps to do so or do you just pray whatever comes into your head?**
- **Do you use other people’s words, or just your own?**

Meet the ancestors

Julian of Norwich c 1342 – 1416

Julian of Norwich was an anchoress, who lived a strictly enclosed life in a small room attached to a church in Norwich. She took her name from the church, dedicated to St Julian – we don’t know her original name. Around 1395 she wrote the first book in English known to have been written by a woman, “The Revelations of Divine Love”. It is an account of visions she had had during a time of severe illness, and is shot through with images of the generosity of God. “All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well” was the overwhelming message, despite living in the midst of the Black Death. At this time, women were not supposed to write theology, so writing accounts of mystical experience was often the only acceptable way they could express their theological ideas.

Julian was also well known as a spiritual advisor. People could talk to her through a window in the wall of her cell. Anchorites – solitary religious living enclosed lives of prayer – were reasonably common at this time.

Follow up

This week you could:

- Think about your own pattern of prayer and try to work out what you could do to help yourself pray.
- Make a “prayer corner” in a part of your home, a place which helps you focus on prayer – it might be as simple as a picture or two, or a candle you can light in a particular place.
- Write out and decorate a prayer you like, or put together a “book of hours” for yourself, with some prayers for the morning and evening.

ROOTS OF FAITH

SESSION THREE: Reading the Bible

We take it for granted that the Bible is a foundational authority in Christian faith, but the Bible we have in our hands has been through quite a journey to get to us, and has been read and understood in many different ways.

- **What part does the Bible play in your life?**
- **Are there any parts of the Bible that are particularly important to you?**

SNAPSHOT 1: FORMING THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE

The first Christians didn't have a book called the Bible to refer to. All they had were a collection of Jewish Scriptures – probably in the Greek translation known as the Septuagint - and the accounts of those who had known Jesus. By the end of the first century, they had begun to gather their own writings – letters from Christian leaders like Paul, Gospels and apocalyptic writing like Revelation. But there was no agreement on which were to be regarded as sacred.

Different churches would have had different collections of writings and would have decided for themselves which were the ones they wanted to base their faith on.

In the mid-second century, a writer called Marcion (who was later denounced as a heretic) kick-started the discussion about forming an authorised list of Christian Scriptures, by producing his own collection which included 10 of the letters of Paul, and a version of the Gospel of Luke (probably heavily edited by himself.) Others disagreed with him, and came up with their own, rival lists.

The early Christians called the lists they came up with “canons” from the Greek word for measuring stick. These were the works they thought “measured up” to their ideas of orthodoxy. What was in that “canon” varied from place to place and

Meet the ancestor St Jerome 347 – 420

Jerome was a priest and theologian from northeastern Italy. He was an ascetic, living as simply as he could, and travelled extensively, especially to the Middle East. He was commissioned by Pope Damasus 1 to revise the Latin translation of the Bible in use at that time, from the Hebrew and Greek originals. By this time, Latin was the common language of the Western Church. He produced a translation which became known as the Vulgate, the standard text used by the Roman Catholic Church throughout most of its history. Jerome is often pictured with his writing implements, and often with a lion, owing to an ancient confusion of him with another saint, Gerasimos, who pulled a thorn from a lion's paw. Jerome, so far as we know, never went near a lion!

person to person, but gradually a consensus appeared during the second century, which included four Gospels. Irenaeus of Lyons (130-202) defended the idea of having four Gospels, saying that since there were four quarters of the earth, and four winds, and four “living creatures” in the book of Revelations there should also be four gospels. *“These things being so, all who destroy the form of the gospel are vain, unlearned, and also audacious; those [I mean] who represent the aspects of the gospel as being either more in number than as aforesaid, or, on the other hand, fewer.”* The fact that he had to make this argument, though, shows that even at this stage, people didn’t readily agree about how many Gospels there should be.

Broadly speaking, authority would tend to be given to works that were thought to be early and to have been valued for a long time, with links to the Apostles. Many of the Gospels which were eventually rejected were late in composition and contained ideas which didn’t fit with what had been long held as orthodox Christianity. These were not copied out and therefore faded into obscurity. In modern times, much attention has been given to what are called “Gnostic gospels”, and conspiracy theorists like to suggest these contained secret knowledge which the Church wanted to suppress. In reality, they were rather late in date, and often portrayed Jesus as a very otherworldly, mystical figure which didn’t accord with the Jesus of the four Gospels we now have.

Even four Gospels were too much for some Christians, though. A theologian called Tatian (110-180) thought that having one account would be neater, so he mashed together the four Gospels into one account, called the *Diatessaron*. It was quite popular, but was eventually condemned in the Western Church and ordered to be destroyed. Attempts to neaten up Christian faith as the *Diatessaron* did usually end up distorting and diminishing it. It continued to be used in Syriac Orthodox churches until the 5th Century, however, and in practice most of us tend to “mash-up” the Gospels, smoothing out or ignoring the differences between them.

Contrary to popular conspiracy theorists like Dan Brown in his “Da Vinci Code”, the emperor Constantine didn’t have anything to do with deciding the canon of Scripture, and nor did the Council of Nicaea, though he did order copies of the Bible to be made and circulated during his reign. The canon emerged gradually over the early centuries of the church, and in fact, has never been entirely agreed on. The Roman Catholic Church includes books (the Apocrypha) which some Protestant Churches exclude, and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has 81 books in it.

- **How do you feel about the fact that the Bible didn’t fall from the sky in one neat volume?**
- **Would you prefer to have just one Gospel rather than four?**

BIBLE BASE

- 2 Tim 3.16
- 2 Chronicles 34.14-21
- Matthew 13.52

- **What do these passages tell us about our attitude to the Bible?**

SNAPSHOT 2: TRANSLATING THE BIBLE

In the late Middle Ages, increasing numbers of people were able to read, but Latin was usually understood only by the clergy. There were growing pressures to translate the Bible into the languages spoken by ordinary people across Europe, but this was fiercely resisted by many in authority in the church. There had been translations of parts of the Bible into Old English, dating right back to the early Middle Ages, without any opposition or concern, but by the late Middle Ages there were all sorts of political and religious reasons why those in power were suspicious of this possibility.

There were concerns about the translation itself. Translation is not a simple or value-free activity. Translators make choices about which words to use when there are several options, words which may change the interpretation of the passages concerned completely. There were also concerns about

the fact that translating would put the Bible into the hands of people who might not consider themselves to be under the authority of the church as clergy were. They might think their own thoughts, which might not be the ones the church or secular authorities wanted them to think! This, of course, was exactly what many of the early Bible translators hoped.

John Wycliffe (c.1320 – 31 December 1384) was one of the earliest translators of this period, producing a translation of the New Testament in 1382 from the Latin “Vulgate” translation of Jerome. He was Master of Balliol College, Oxford, and later vicar of Lutterworth in Leicestershire, but was a fierce critic of the Church, attacking the privileged status of the clergy and the

Meet the ancestors Hannah More 1745-1833

For most of Christian history women were prevented from preaching and interpreting the Bible in many churches – except for work with other women and children. Hannah More, an evangelical campaigner for the abolition of slavery and colleague of Wilberforce, was also an important figure in the beginning of the Sunday School movement. Born near Bristol, she founded Sunday Schools to teach local poor children to read, and in particular to read the Bible. There was a great deal of resistance to this, since it was thought that if the poor could read they would get ideas above their station, but Hannah More persisted. She represents the myriad unnamed and unsung women who have run Sunday Schools and given children their first taste of the Bible, often, ironically, having far more impact on them than the male preachers they encountered in adulthood.

wealth of the church. This was not likely to win him friends in high places, especially as this was the time of the Peasant's Revolt (1381), when there were political moves to overthrow the privilege of the rich. He was widely condemned for his insistence that the Bible should be the ultimate authority for Christians, rather than the Church. He died of a stroke in 1384, but his influence continued. His followers were known as Lollards (which means babblers) and were frequent targets for persecution .

William Tyndale (1494–1536) made his translation from the recently rediscovered Greek and Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible, and he was influenced by the Dutch scholar Erasmus and by Martin Luther. Printing presses using moveable type had only just been invented by Johannes Gutenberg, and this meant that for the first time, multiple copies of Bibles could be produced. Tyndale's dream was that "every ploughboy" could read the Bible for himself, dangerous thinking in a world in the midst of the political and religious tumult of the Reformation. Tyndale fled from England, and from the wrath of Henry VIII, but was arrested in Antwerp and executed by strangulation. His last words were a prayer that "the king of England's eyes would be opened". It was just two years later that Henry broke from Rome, and eventually produced Bibles in English and commanded that they be used in every Church.



Tyndale's work became the basis of every English Bible afterwards, including the translation ordered by King James in 1611, which we know as the King James or Authorised Version. This was the work of a group of 50 translators, and was designed as a compromise Bible which would be acceptable to Anglicans and to Puritans. Translating the Bible still produces arguments. Some translations, for example, use inclusive language (people instead of "men") while others don't. Some may use inclusive language for God, avoiding calling God "he". Some translations are designed to be as simple as possible, but lose depth and meaning as a result.

- **Have you ever thought about the Bible you read? What translation is it?**
- **How can we help people to hear and know Bible stories today?**
- **Protestant Churches tend to be very heavily "word" focussed rather than using symbols, images and action to tell the story. What might we lose by this?**

FOLLOW UP:

This week you might consider:

- Reading the introduction to your Bible – what does it say about what the translator's intentions were?
- Thinking about how you read the Bible. How do you decide which bits of the Bible to read? Do you have a pattern of reading? Do you use notes?

- Would it help you to be more creative about reading the Bible, using imagination, art or journaling, for example?
- Visit <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/sacredtexts/sacredthemesonly.html>

ROOTS OF FAITH

SESSION FOUR: THE CHURCH

Meeting together has always been a vital part of Christian faith. Even those Christians who have taken up a solitary lifestyle, like anchorites and hermits, consider themselves to be part of a wider body. They are supported and nurtured by churches. But there are many different ways of “being the church”, and there have often been tensions within and between churches as a result. Some groups of Christians like elaborate worship, some like simple styles. Some like clear lines of authority, while others are self-governing. Some place higher priority on mystery, others on plainness, some on the Bible, others on Communion or on social action.

- **What churches have you been part of or experienced during your life? What have you found helpful or not helpful about them?**
- **If the Church ceased to exist, what would be missing from your life? What difference would it make to the wider life of our communities?**

SNAPSHOT 1: THE SYNOD OF WHITBY

Christian faith seems to have come to Britain with the Roman army; there is evidence for it at places like Lullingstone Villa and British Bishops are recorded as attending various early councils of the Church. The Roman Army pulled out in 410, because Rome itself was being attacked and the British people, by now thoroughly Romanised, (often called Romano-British as a result) were left to defend themselves. Invading waves of Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Danes, swept into the South East of England, and the Romano- British were pushed back westwards. Those who remained took on the faith of the invaders, who brought with them gods like Woden and Thor.

In the West of England, however, Christianity survived, nurtured by wandering monks and preachers, sometimes from far distant parts of the Church. There is evidence that “Celtic” Christianity was influenced by Ethiopian and Syrian Churches, and the monastic traditions of the Desert Fathers and Mothers seems to have travelled here.

In the fifth Century, St Patrick travelled to Ireland and, legend has it, converted the Irish, who then sent out missionaries like St Columba to Northern England. Monasteries – the centres of influence of the Celtic Church – were founded in places like Iona and Lindisfarne, but the kingdoms of the South and East were still pagan.

Around 590, however, the Anglo-Saxon King Ethelbert of Kent married a Christian Frankish princess called Bertha, and a condition of her marriage was that she could continue to worship as a Christian. She brought her own priests with her, and rebuilt a ruined Roman Church in Canterbury, which was dedicated to St Martin of Tours. Shortly after this, and perhaps encouraged by it, Pope Gregory decided to send some Christian missionaries to England to attempt to re-establish Christianity there. St Augustine of Canterbury arrived in 597 with a small party of other priests, and eventually converted King Ethelbert, which led to the “conversion” of his entire kingdom – the idea of individuals making up their own minds about faith was not one which had much traction at the time.

So now there were two “Christianities” in the British Isles, one looking to the Bishop of Rome for its authority and one looking to the monasteries of Iona and Lindisfarne.

They had slightly different ideas about, for example, how to calculate the date of Easter, and how monks should wear their hair, but these were really just markers for a deeper divide about who had authority over the Church in this part of the world. It was rather like the current debates about whether the UK should or shouldn't be part of Europe. Where do we belong? Who has the power to define how we should live?

Eventually the situation became critical, when King Oswiu of Northumberland, who had been raised in the Celtic tradition of Iona and Lindisfarne, married Eanflaed, a Kentish princess, who followed the Roman Christianity brought by Augustine. Because the dates on which they kept Easter varied, one half of the couple, with their servants and family would be feasting at Easter while the other would still be keeping the Lenten fast.

Meet the ancestor Pope Gregory the Great c 540-604

Pope Gregory I (Gregory the Great) was the son of a wealthy Roman family, and Prefect of Rome. He turned his back on his career in the civil service to become a monk, believing that the collapse of the Roman Empire was a sign that *“the world was growing old and hoary, hastening to its approaching death.”* Gregory was soon headhunted though, to be first an ambassador for the western church to Constantinople, and then eventually to be pope. He tried to evade this by running away from Rome hidden in a basket, but he was found and returned!

He became a great reformer, arguing that the wealth of the church belonged to the poor, and inviting 12 paupers to join him for dinner each day. He rebuilt parts of Rome, reformed worship, introducing a new style of plainchant, still known as Gregorian chant and was a renowned teacher and preacher.

Eventually Oswiu called a gathering of the two Churches – a synod – at the double monastery of monks and nuns headed by St Hilda at Whitby in 664. The Roman position was put by St Wilfrid, abbot of Ripon; St Colman, Bishop of Lindisfarne, spoke for the Celtic Church. Wilfrid won, arguing that since St Peter, whose shrine was in Rome, had the keys of the kingdom of heaven, his power trumped St Columba's, the founding father of the Celtic Church.

- **Which side do you think you would have been on in this debate?**
- **Is the church better led locally, by its own congregation, nationally or internationally? What are the strengths and weaknesses of these different models?**

BIBLE BASIS

Hebrews 10. 24 -28

John 15. 1-12

Ephesians 4.1-16

- **What do these passages tell us about how and why Christians should gather together as the Church?**

SNAPSHOT 2: EUCHARIST AND REFORMATION

The Eucharist has always been central to Christian worship. In the early Church it took the form of an extended meal – the Lord's Supper - which Christians shared equally, putting them on the same footing as each other across divides of wealth and status. Gradually, as congregations grew too big for this, the meal became symbolic, and by about 200, the full fellowship meal happened only occasionally after the Communion service.

The "meaning" of Communion wasn't agreed at this point, except that it was about coming together in unity with one another and with God. It was also perceived as in some sense a sacrifice or thank-offering, like the offerings and sacrifices of pagan Romans. Once Christianity became the official religion of the Empire the Communion service became ever more elaborate and splendid, and theologians started to argue about what "happened" to the bread and wine. By the sixth

Meet the ancestor

Margaret Fell

c. 1614 – April 23, 1702

The splintering of the western church at the Reformation meant that many different ideas about how churches should be run and organised proliferated. Among the new models for being the church was the "Society of Friends" formed out of the preaching of George Fox (1624 – 1691), better known as the Quakers. It had no paid leaders or ministers, and believed that anyone, if inspired by the Spirit, could pray and preach, including women. Margaret Fell was one of the earliest Friends, wife of an MP, who first heard Fox speak in 1652, in the time of Oliver Cromwell. Despite being imprisoned several times – the Quakers were heavily persecuted - she continued to speak out, and wrote a defence of women's ministry called "Women's Speaking Justified", outlining scriptural arguments for women to be allowed to lead worship and preach.

A monstrance, in which the blessed "host" is displayed to be venerated.



century there was a general understanding that Christ was present in the bread and wine of Communion, but there was no agreement about how this was so. Arguments rumbled on through the early Middle Ages about whether Christ was present in the bread and wine alongside its “breadness and wineness” – consubstantiation - or whether his substance replaced it – transubstantiation – or whether this was a symbolic or memorial meal. Those arguing for transubstantiation were fond of claiming “Eucharistic Miracles” in which the wafer was seen to bleed, or in which people said that the bread had become flesh in their mounts. As the bread and wine became more and more venerated, however, they were less and less actually eaten and drunk. People would go to hear and see the Mass taking place, but did not receive the elements out of fear that they were unworthy. In 1215 the fourth Lateran Council decreed that everyone should receive Communion at least once a year at Easter. There was also a custom recorded in England, the priest would distribute bread called “pax bread” to the congregation instead at the end of the service. It had been blessed, but was not the bread of communion, as it had not been “transubstantiated” and therefore was safe

Gradually any position other than that of transubstantiation came to be regarded as heretical, and this was one of the accusations against scholars like John Wycliffe, who rejected it. Beliefs and practices around Communion were one of the primary sources of conflict at the Reformation, but the reformers varied in their understanding of Communion. Martin Luther (1483-1546) believed something akin to consubstantiation. Jean Calvin, (1509-64) Luther’s rival reformer in Switzerland, believed that God’s strengthening power was received through the Eucharist. Luther’s disciple, Ulrich Zwingli, (1484-1531) who became a prominent reformer in Zurich, took a more extreme view, stripping the churches under his influence of all decoration and moving the altar (which he regarded as simply a table) down into the body of the church. He believed that the meal was a purely symbolic one, a memorial of the Last Supper, intended to bring the community together, but nothing more. The newly formed Church of England held all these views all at once, and has continued to wobble between them ever since!

FOLLOW UP: You could

- Consider what your ideal church would look like and do, and then ask yourself what has influenced your preferences and beliefs about the church.
- Come to a service at Seal which you don’t normally attend, or go to one in another church (but please come back again...!). What do you like or dislike about

ROOTS OF FAITH

SESSION FIVE: SHARING THE GOOD NEWS IN WORD AND ACTION

From the outset, Christianity has been an active faith, with an emphasis both on helping others and on spreading the message of the Gospel. It is an “Apostolic” faith – apostolic means “sent out” -, not just because it looks back to the lead of the early Apostles, but because every Christian is “sent out” to spread the message in word and action. Jesus was very active in his ministry; he didn’t wait for people to come to him, but went to where they were. Mission has never just been about telling the Christian story, though. It has also always been about caring for those in need, providing schools, healthcare, and challenging injustice.

- **How did you first come to hear about Christian faith?**
- **Who helped you grow in faith?**
- **Have there been times in your life when Christians have given you help and support?**

SNAPSHOT 1: THE MORAVIANS

Before Luther started his Protestant Reformation in the 16th Century, unrest had been growing for some time and further to the east in Bohemia, in what is now the Czech Republic, groups of Christians challenged the power of the Roman Catholic Church. Some of these followed Jan Hus (1369 –1415) who had been influenced by John Wycliffe. After Hus’s execution for heresy, his followers fought on, partly for religious reform but also for an independent Czech state. Some Hussites believed in the need for armed rebellion, but others were pacifist.



Jan Hus

Some Hussites continued to be persecuted over the following centuries. They had to leave Catholic Moravia in 1722 because of this persecution, but were able to settle in Hernhut in Saxony on the land of the devout pietist* Lutheran Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf. There their community developed an intensely personal, but also outgoing faith. They began to send out missionaries across the world – ordinary people who talked about their faith as they supported themselves in their trades, much as the early Apostles had done. The Moravian Church was the first Protestant movement to send out missionaries across the world. Within 30 years of arriving at Hernhut they had sent hundreds of missionaries to places as far apart as the Caribbean, North and South America, the Arctic, Africa, and the

Far East. They were also the first to send lay people (rather than clergy) as missionaries, the first Protestant denomination to minister to slaves, and the first Protestant presence in many countries. The founders of Methodism, John and Charles Wesley, met with Moravians on an early, rather disastrous, trip to America, and the lively faith they encountered in them was vital in shaping the religious movement which became the Methodist Church. It was at a Moravian meeting in London that John Wesley found his heart “strangely warmed”, and what could have been a dry and academic faith became the urgent and compelling force which had such an effect on ordinary working people in the rapidly industrialising cities of Britain.

Moravians today hold to five main principles: simplicity, happiness, unintrusiveness (they do not feel the need or desire to interfere with the way in which other Churches or Christians practice their faith), fellowship, and the ideal of service. It also gave us the Christingle, originally just a candle with a ribbon tied around it. The first Christingle service was in 1747.

- **How do you feel about talking about your faith?**
- **What reactions have you had from others – family, friends, workmates – when they find out that you are a Christian?**

Meet the ancestors

John Wesley 1703 - 1791 & Charles Wesley 1707- 1788

John and Charles Wesley, were ordained as Anglican clergy. While at university they organised a Christian society called the Holy Club, but were quickly dubbed “Methodists” by others because of their “methodical” and serious approach to their faith. They were “high church” in their outlook and valued the beauty of liturgy. Their contact with the Moravian Church, however, introduced them to a style of worship and belief – intensely personal and warm – which shaped early Methodism.

The Church of England, still operating on the pattern of the medieval parishes, had not kept pace with the rapid growth of cities in the Industrial Revolution, but the Wesley’s preached wherever they could, often in the open air, living lives of great simplicity. John’s energetic preaching and Charles’ rousing hymns (he wrote over 6000) greatly endeared them to ordinary working people, and although they Wesley’s never officially left the Church of England, by the time they died they had effectively established an entirely new denomination.

BIBLE BASIS

Matthew 28: 18-20

Matthew 25: 31-46

2 Timothy 4.1-2

James 2.14-18

- **What do these readings tell us about how we communicate faith?**
- **Do actions speak louder than words?**
- **How do word and action fit together to convey the message of God's love?**

SNAPSHOT 2: THE OXFORD MOVEMENT

The Medieval revival and Romantic movements of the early 19th century grew up as a challenge to the a rapidly industrialising nation. In the church too there were people who wanted to revive older and richer forms of worship than the rather stripped down Protestantism of the Church of England. In 1833 a series of tracts (pamphlets) were written by John Keble, John Henry Newman, and Edward Pusey, who taught at Oxford University (which is why this is sometimes called the “Oxford Movement”). The movement emphasized the continuity of the Anglican Church with its pre-reformation roots. They adopted many of the rituals and dress of the Roman Catholic Church, which caused great alarm among many people – Roman Catholic men had only been given the vote and allowed to sit in parliament in 1829. Some of the founders, like John Henry Newman, eventually became Roman Catholics.

The Oxford Movement not only revived more ornate and complicated forms of worship, with incense, vestments and ritual, but also renewed interest in ministry among the urban poor. Many of the Victorian churches built in the worst slums of England were Oxford Movement Churches – eventually this movement became known as Anglo-Catholicism. Their builders argued that the poor had very little beauty in their lives and that this was one way of giving them dignity. The poor often seem to have agreed with them, and these churches were and in some cases still are, hugely popular. They produced generations of “slum priests” often men of great devotion and energy. The movement also led to the establishment of new Anglican Religious orders. Between 1841 and 1855, several religious orders were begun, usually with a focus on some sort of social care or health work. The Community of St John the Divine, immortalised as “St Nonnatus” in the BBC drama “Call the Midwife” is a typical example. It was founded to provide healthcare in the East End of London in 1848. There was opposition to and suspicion of these new orders, but they soon became much loved by those among whom they worked, and are now an important, if small, part of the Church of England's life.



Two St. John's Sisters circa 1850

- **Monastic orders, conventional or unconventional, are one way in which people have lived out their Christian calling. Every Christian is called to live out their faith, whether in their families and work places, in communities, or through some sort of authorised lay or ordained ministry. Have you ever considered what you are called to?**

Meet the ancestors The Beguines

13th – 16th Centuries

By the late Middle Ages, women who wanted to pursue a calling to some sort of Christian ministry had only one choice. They had to become nuns, taking lifelong vows, in enclosed, contemplative communities, under the direction of male bishops and clergy.

Some women were not happy to consent to this, however, and formed their own communities, living simply together in clusters of houses, following a rule of life and serving the poor. They were called Beguines. They took temporary vows, and could leave to marry if their families needed them to. Many were educated, and they produced a number of significant theologians, whose writing is very distinctive, including Mechtild of Magdeburg, Hadewijch, and Margerete Poree. The Catholic hierarchy was very suspicious of them, however, and the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 ordered that they either join a conventional order or go home to their families. Most complied, but some found ways of continuing their lifestyle. Attempts to suppress them continued sporadically under various Popes, and the Reformation, which swept across their heartlands of Northern Europe finished most of them off. However the Beguine way of life did survive in some places and the last traditional Beguine, Marcella Pattyn, died on 14 April 2013 in Kortrijk at the age of 92. Many Northern European cities, like Bruges, Antwerp and Amsterdam have a Beguinage or Beguinhof, though they don't always make much of their history.

New monastic movements, like the Community of St Anselm, founded by the Archbishop of Canterbury, to give young people “a year in God's time”, could be said to owe something to the inspiration of the Beguines.

Follow up:

- During this course, is there anything that has struck you anew about your faith? What can you do to follow this up?
- What questions has this course made you ask yourself?

A drawing of a Beguine from *Des dodes dantz*, printed in Lübeck in 1489.

