

LIFE Talk • October 21, 2026

“...THAT THEY MAY BE ONE.” JOHN 17:21



THEME • Church History: The Good, The Bad & The Ugly

LIFE TALK • The Modern Church

Our journey of Church history comes into the modern era, exploring the major developments, movements, challenges, and changes that shaped Christianity from 1700 to present. Take an honest look at the good, the bad, and the ugly and consider what history can teach the Church today.

PRESENTER • Dr. Jennifer Wojciechowski



Dr. Jennifer Wojciechowski is an associate professor of Church History at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN, and she has been teaching at Luther since 2019. Prior to this, she taught in the religion department at Augsburg University. She's the associate editor of the journal Word & World. She is the author of *Women and the Christian Story: A Global History* (2022), *Tending the Garden: A History of Christian Mysticism* (2025), and co-author of the upcoming *A World History of Christianity* (Baker Academic, forthcoming).

Watch replay videos or access online LIFEU brochure at saintandrews.org/lifeu

Email Sue Lennartson to learn about or join a LIFE Group at slennartson@saintandrews.org

LIFE Group Sheet

"...THAT THEY MAY BE ONE." JOHN 17:21



GETTING STARTED

Share in a spiritual practice, discuss an igniter question, and/or begin with prayer.

Creator God, thank you for the opportunity to gather with each person here, to grow in faith and knowledge together, and for the gift of your Holy Spirit. Bless our time, our conversation, and how we care for one another. Amen.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Briefly share (in pairs or 3s) your initial reaction to what you heard in the LIFE Talk. What stood out to you? What is stirring inside of you? What are you thinking, feeling, or wondering about?

DIGGING DEEPER

- One of the most important legacies of American Christianity is the tradition of religious revivals. Do you think it would be possible to have an American religious revival today? If so, what would it look like?
- Over the past century, Christianity's center has shifted from the West to the Global South. How does this change how we think about Christianity, and does this give you hope for the future? Why or why not?
- We have spent the last three weeks learning about Christian history. What topics did you find particularly interesting, and what would you like to learn more about in the future?

CLOSING PRAYER

Offer a prayer to draw your time to a close, using one of your own or the one below.

God of wisdom and beauty, thank you for this time together. Help us as we live out our faith this week and share what we have learned. Make us instruments of your peace and healing love, as we grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus. In Christ's holy name we pray, Amen.



Week 3 Handout
Dr. Jennifer Wojciechowski
Modern Church

Time period: roughly 1700 to present

Annotated Bibliography

General History Texts:

Mark Noll, David Komline, and Han-Luen Kantzer Komline, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*, Fourth Edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002).

(This is a short and accessible introduction to Christian history written around a number of different “turning points” in history. Due to its length, I would not use it in a semester-long class, but I do think it is a solid introduction.)

Dale Irvin and Scott Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement: Earliest Christianity to 1453* (New York: Orbis, 2001).

(This is the textbook I often use for my graduate-level course in early and medieval Christian history at Luther Seminary. The real benefit of this book is its focus on global history. However, it only runs from the first century to 1453 [the year Constantinople fell to the Turks]. There is a volume 2, that is okay, but it only runs to the year 1800. There is no volume that covers the modern church.)

Justo Gonzáles, *The Story of Christianity*, 2 vols. (HaperOne).

(Truthfully, students tend to really like these books. It is an easier read than the Irving/Sunquist volume, though the text has a tendency to neglect non-western and women’s history.)

Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (Viking, 2009).

(This is a great text, but it is dense and very long—over 1000 pages. It is also a bit lacking in both global history and women’s history.)

Douglas Jacobson, *Global Gospel: Introduction to Christianity on Five Continents* (Baker Academic, 2015).

(This is a very basic introduction that is arranged by place, not time. It is an interesting book that does a good job of exploring global Christianity; it tends to preference the modern church.)

Jennifer Wojciechowski, *Women and the Christian Story: A Global History* (Fortress, 2022).

(I wrote this because general history texts tend to ignore the many contributions of women. It helps fill in the history of the church.)

Historical Theology:

Justo González, *A History of Christian Thought in One Volume* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2014).

(This is a book of historical theology. If you are interested in the development of historical thought, this is an excellent resource. I regularly use this as a textbook in my classes at Luther.)

William Placher, *A History of Christian Theology: An Introduction* (The Westminster Press, 1983).

(This is an older book, but it is still a great history of Christian thought.)

Other resources:

The website I referenced regarding women's ordination in the Lutheran tradition:

<https://pages.stolaf.edu/lutheranwomensordination/>