



SPARROWS HI CURRICULUM

Church History & Christian Thought

PURPOSE

The purpose of this framework is to help students understand the story of the Christian Church across two thousand years and to learn from the faithfulness, failures and wisdom of those who have gone before.

Students who understand church history are better equipped to:

- appreciate the depth of Christian tradition;
- recognise recurring patterns in church life;
- evaluate contemporary ideas in light of historic Christianity;
- find encouragement from the cloud of witnesses who have preceded them.

PHILOSOPHY

We are not the first generation of Christians. We stand in a long line of faithful men and women who trusted Christ through extraordinary circumstances.

The Church does not belong to one generation. We are stewards of a faith received and called to pass it on faithfully.

Church history is studied not merely as an academic exercise, but as a source of encouragement, wisdom and warning for contemporary discipleship.

GRADUATE OUTCOME

By graduation, students should:

- understand the major periods of church history;
- identify key figures and their contributions;
- recognise significant theological debates and their resolutions;
- appreciate Christian diversity within orthodox faith;
- draw encouragement from the faithfulness of those who have gone before;
- understand how the gospel has spread and continues to spread.

THE STORY OF THE CHURCH

Students encounter the church story in major eras.

The Early Church

30–313 AD

- Pentecost and the birth of the Church;
- persecution;
- the spread of the gospel;
- the Apostolic Fathers;
- early creeds.

The Ancient Church

313–600 AD

- Constantine;
- the Council of Nicaea;
- Athanasius;
- Augustine;
- the formation of the canon;
- the great theological debates.

The Medieval Church

600–1500 AD

- Monasticism;
- mission;
- Anselm;
- Aquinas;
- the Crusades;
- faithful voices in complex times.

The Reformation

1500–1700 AD

- Luther;
- Calvin;
- Tyndale;
- the English Reformation;
- key doctrines recovered;
- the spread of Scripture.

Modern Missions

1700–1900 AD

- Wesley;
- Wilberforce;
- William Carey;
- Hudson Taylor;
- the global spread of the gospel.

The Global Church

1900 – Present

- Pentecostalism;
- ecumenism;
- global Christianity;
- mission today;
- the Church in the majority world.

KEY FIGURES

Students study selected figures whose lives illuminate Christian faithfulness across different eras, including:

- Paul;
- Polycarp;
- Athanasius;
- Augustine;
- Anselm;
- Francis of Assisi;
- Martin Luther;
- William Tyndale;
- John Calvin;
- John Wesley;
- William Wilberforce;
- William Carey;
- Hudson Taylor;
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer;
- C.S. Lewis;
- contemporary global Christian leaders.

Women of faith including Perpetua, Julian of Norwich, Susanna Wesley, Aimee Semple McPherson and Amy Carmichael are studied alongside male counterparts.

CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

Core Doctrines

Students revisit foundational Christian doctrines including:

- the Trinity;
- the person and work of Christ;
- salvation;
- the Holy Spirit;
- the Church;
- Scripture;
- eschatology.

Historical Theology

Students explore how theological understanding has developed through:

- councils and creeds;
- significant controversies and their resolutions;
- the recovery of biblical truths during the Reformation;
- contemporary theological questions.

The Creeds

Students learn and understand the major creeds of the Church:

- the Apostles Creed;
- the Nicene Creed.

These creeds are studied as summaries of orthodox Christian faith rather than dry historical documents.

LEARNING FROM FAILURES

The history of the Church includes both faithfulness and failure.

Students engage honestly with:

- the Crusades;
- the Inquisition;
- the complicity of some churches in injustice;
- the fracturing of Christian unity.

These chapters are studied with honesty, humility and hope rather than cynicism. The failures of the Church do not disprove the gospel; they demonstrate the ongoing need for grace.

THE GLOBAL CHURCH

Students develop an understanding of:

- the worldwide growth of Christianity;
- Christianity in Africa, Asia and Latin America;
- the persecuted Church;
- praying for the global Church;
- the unity of believers across cultures.

Students should gain a genuinely global perspective on the Church rather than an exclusively Western one.

LEARNING PROGRESSION

The program is structured across three stages of secondary education.

Years 7–8

- The early Church;
- key figures;
- persecution and faithfulness;
- the Apostles Creed.
- Emphasis: discovering the Church as a community across time.

Years 9–10

- Reformation;
- mission;
- major doctrines;
- the Nicene Creed;
- the global Church.
- Students engage with theological depth and historical complexity.

Years 11–12

- Historical theology;
- contemporary issues;
- the persecuted Church;
- apologetics;
- vocation within the Church.
- Students develop mature historical and theological understanding.

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Students should regularly participate in:

- reading primary sources where accessible;
- studying biographies;
- discussing historical events;
- learning selected creeds;
- praying for the global Church;
- hearing from Christians with diverse backgrounds.

History comes alive when students encounter real people rather than abstract events.

ASSESSMENT

Growth is demonstrated through:

- increasing historical understanding;
- theological reflection;
- thoughtful discussion;
- written responses;
- mentoring conversations.

Assessment should encourage curiosity, wonder and deeper faith rather than merely factual recall.

INTEGRATION

Church History and Christian Thought connects with:

- Biblical Literacy;
- Christian Worldview;
- The Life and Teachings of Jesus;
- Discipleship and Spiritual Practices;

- Leadership Development.

Understanding where we have come from helps us know who we are and where we are going.

OUR PRAYER

We pray that students will find in the story of the Church both encouragement and wisdom.

May they be inspired by those who have gone before, honest about the Church's failures, and committed to faithful discipleship in their own generation.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Hebrews 12:1