



THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD

OLD SOUTH CHURCH
IN BOSTON
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

First Sunday of Lent
March 5, 2006

Old South Embarks Upon Lenten Journey

The earliest Christians responded to God's call to be the church in the world by becoming

An Underground Lay Movement

What did it look like and feel like? What was at stake? What are the implications today as we endeavor to respond to God's call to be the church in the world?

Our guide for this first leg of our Lenten journey is Matthew Myer Boulton, Professor of Worship and

Preaching at Andover Newton Theological School.

In his teaching and research, Matthew Myer Boulton explores ways in which Christian worship founds and forms Christian life. This exploration draws together his interests in the history and practices of Christian liturgy; theology and public life; biblical interpretation and proclamation; and the performing arts, including theater, music, and film.



Professor Matthew Myer Boulton

The Associate Pastor of Hope Church (Jamaica Plain) and an ordained minister, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), he is writing a book on worship in the thought of Karl Barth and Martin Luther.

LOOKING AHEAD

March 12	2nd Lent
<i>Protesting & Reforming: the Reformation</i>	
Dr. Mark Burrows	
March 19	3rd Lent
<i>The Congregational Way: the Pilgrims and Puritans</i>	
Dr. Peggy Bendroth	
March 26	4th Lent
<i>An Experiment in Unity: The United Church of Christ</i>	
Dr. Elizabeth Nordbeck	
April 2	5th Lent
<i>An Open Door: Old South Church</i>	
Dr. Peggy Bendroth	

TODAY

- Breaking bread
- Worshipping
- Community Building
- Learning

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As an Underground Lay
Movement: The Early
Days of Christianity

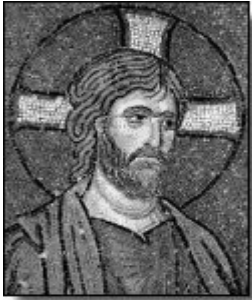
- Closing

*Thank you for your \$3
donation to help defray
the cost of the meal.*

Gathering Chant

Gath-ered here in the mys-tery of this hour, gath-ered here in one strong
bod - y, gath-ered here in the strug-gle and the power, Spir - it draw near.

Community Building (hint: read your placemat back & front)



In every culture where the gospel has been planted, artists have painted Christ with the face of their own people.

Here, a Greek Orthodox mosaic from the ninth century, an icon showing Jesus as an Arab from the 20th century, and a 17th-century Mexican portrait of Mary and the child Jesus.

Christianity: the First Centuries

Finding Jesus

“Trying to find the actual Jesus is like trying, in atomic physics, to locate a submicroscopic particle and determine its charge. The particle cannot be seen directly, but on a photographic plate we see the lines left by the trajectories of the larger particles it put in motion. By tracing these trajectories back to their common origin, and by calculating the force necessary to make the particles move as they did, we can locate and describe the invisible cause. Admittedly, history is more complex than physics; the lines connecting the original figure to the developed legends cannot be traced with mathematical accuracy; the intervention of unknown factors has to be allowed for. Consequently, results can never claim more than probability; but ‘probability’ as Bishop Butler said, ‘is the very guide of life.’”

-Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982)

Finding Christianity

Christianity is many things with many faces, contexts, expressions and world views. But the one irrefutable constant, that which is and must be at the center and core of Christianity, our theological and ethical constant, is the person and work of Jesus Christ.

We can observe how the earliest disciples understood and served Jesus by their actions ... by the trajectories of the projects they put into motion: healing, caring for the ill and poor, radical equality, unity in diversity, and promoting love as societal, as well as a personal good.

When Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” (Matt. 16:15) he was not soliciting opinions. He was inviting his followers to affirm their faith. Peter seems to have understood what Jesus was asking for and confessed, “You are the Christ, the Child of the Living God” (Matt. 16:16). All of Christian theology and discipleship begins and ends

with this question and how we answer it. Whatever trajectories we put in motion should be traceable to this confession.

The earliest Christians made no attempts to chisel teachings about Jesus into stone. However, over time as disputes arose over the meaning of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection (sectarian arguments and heretical attacks), the unity of the faith was threatened. In order to keep peace in the church, testimony about Jesus hardened into tests of faith.

Christianity arrived on the scene two millennia ago amidst a bewildering variety of political, ethnic and religious interests that pulled and pressed imperial Rome. Into this complex cultural milieu, Christian missionaries spoke a confident message about redemption, salvation and Jesus. They spread the message with zeal along trade routes throughout the Mediterranean world. Over time a tiny Jewish sect blossomed into a great world religion.



Apostles' Creed

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son,
our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come again to judge the living
and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

About the Apostles' Creed

The Apostles' Creed evolved into its present form by the seventh century, although much of the text originated in the first century. It is widely used when candidates declare their readiness for membership in the Body of Christ and recited during the Great Vigil of Easter as a reminder of our baptismal covenant. It is frequently used in Protestant churches during Sunday worship, and forms an important part of the orders for daily Morning and Evening Prayer in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer.

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

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.

For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the
Virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified
under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge
the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver
of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is wor-
shipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic
Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the for-
giveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen

(See "About the Nicene Creed" on the next page.)



**OLD SOUTH CHURCH
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We're on the Web!
www.oldsouth.org

Testimonies, not tests of the faith

The United Church of Christ embraces a theological heritage that affirms the Bible as the authoritative witness to the Word of God, the creeds of the ecumenical councils, and the confessions of the Reformation.

The UCC has roots in the “covenantal” tradition—meaning there is no centralized authority or hierarchy that can impose any doctrine or form of worship on its members. Christ alone is Head of the church. We seek a balance between freedom of conscience and accountability to the apostolic faith.

The UCC therefore receives the historic creeds and confessions of our ancestors as testimonies, but not tests of the faith. This does not mean creeds play no role in our life together, or that we can afford to be ignorant about the struggles that shaped Christian belief over the centuries.

Many UCC churches recite one or another of the ancient creeds each week. Others rarely recite the creeds, turning instead to local church covenants.

Don't give something up for Lent, take something on.

The United Church of Christ

The United Church of Christ came into being in 1957 with the union of two Protestant denominations: the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Churches. Each of these was, in turn, the result of a union of two earlier traditions.

- The *Congregational Churches* were organized when the Pilgrims of Plymouth Plantation (1620) and the Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony (1629) acknowledged their essential unity in the Cambridge Platform of 1648.
- The *Reformed Church in the United States* traced its beginnings to congregations of German settlers in Pennsylvania founded from 1725 on. Later, its ranks were swelled by Reformed immigrants from Switzerland, Hungary and other countries.
- The *Christian Churches* sprang up in the late 1700s and early 1800s in reaction to the theological and organizational rigidity of the Methodist, Presbyterian and Baptist churches of the time.
- The *Evangelical Synod of North America* traced its beginnings to an association of German Evangelical pastors in Missouri. This association, founded in 1841, reflected the 1817 union of Lutheran and Reformed churches in Germany.

About the Nicene Creed

Also known as the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, this classic testimony of the faith was the consensus of ecumenical councils in Nicea, 325, and Constantinople, 381. The creed was a response to the “Arian” movement, which challenged the church’s teaching that Christ was both fully human and fully divine. Arians emphasized the humanity of Christ, and therefore believed he was “subordinate” to the Father. But the faith proclaimed in Constantinople was in a Christ who was both, and therefore “of one being” with the Father. This creed is recited in the Sunday worship of the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Anglican churches, and many Lutheran and Reformed congregations also use the creed when they celebrate Holy Communion.