

Timeline of Events ---

BCE through First Century

1. The Jews are a monotheistic people, meaning they believe in one God (as opposed to Egyptian, Greek and Roman gods and goddess). The Jews are nearly always oppressed by powerful empires, be it Egypt or Rome. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the prophet Isaiah foretells that a Messiah, a savior who will deliver the nation of Israel out of oppression, will come out of the region of Judea. **(Prop: Torah-style Scroll of Isaiah)**
2. Two thousand years ago, a baby is born in a stable. He grows to be a rabbi, a Jewish teacher, who preaches a radical message of love, justice, and forgiveness. At the age of 33, he is crucified by the lower Roman courts. According to Christian scripture, this teacher rises from the dead three days after his death. **(Prop: Nativity set)**
3. Forty years after Jesus' death, Paul is the first prominent Christian missionary and travels the eastern Mediterranean Sea spreading the gospel message that Jesus was the Messiah and that his teachings are the way to salvation. **(Prop: Boat)**
4. In the first two centuries following Jesus' teaching ministry and death, his message and the teachings of early Christian theologians travel mostly through letters to small religious communities scattered around the Mediterranean. The four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are written down for the first time. **(Prop: Pen and paper)**
5. Early Christians are perceived as a religious cult. Believers are hunted and persecuted, often stoned to death in both public and secret executions. **(Prop: Stones)**

Second & Third Centuries

6. The Roman Empire reaches its greatest expanse. Roman rule influences religious practice throughout Europe and the Near East. Romans worship many gods, while Jews and Christians worship one God. **(Prop: Image of Roman helmet)**

7. Early Christians met and lived in hiding, often in catacombs (underground tombs) throughout the Roman Empire. **(Prop: Image of Catacomb/tunnel with skeletons)**

Fourth Century

8. Constantine the Great legalizes Christianity in 313, making it easier to talk about Christianity in public and scholarly settings. Different ideas emerge about Jesus. **(Prop: Crown)**

9. Baptism—Immersion in water representing a cleansing and rebirth—becomes the predominant ritual of conversion into Christianity. **(Prop: Water)**

10. The first in a long line of elected Popes is put in charge of the political and theological growth of Christianity. The word “Catholic” (meaning universal) comes into common use to describe the organized Christian church. **(Prop: Image of papal miter)**

11. **IMPORTANT TURNING POINT IN OUR STORY:** The First Council of Nicaea is held in 325 C.E. The meeting set out to discuss two dominant threads in Christianity: one that worships Jesus as God and another that follows Jesus as a savior sent by God. This critical theological difference becomes the fork in the road where our Unitarian ancestors depart from the doctrines of the church. **(Prop: Fork taped to road)**

12. The Christian philosopher and Egyptian, Arius, argues that the Trinity is impossible, as God had to create Jesus if Jesus was his Son. Plus, there's nothing about a Trinity anywhere in the Bible, says Arius. Early Unitarians are known as Arians. **(Prop: Anti-Trinitarian symbols—no triangles, no #3)**

13. Arius loses the argument. Twenty-two bishops vote that Jesus is God. The **Doctrine of the Trinity** (that God is three in one: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and **Nicene Creed** (statement of belief in these doctrines) are established. The Doctrine of the Trinity spreads far and wide, and Arians are forced into hiding as the Trinitarian Catholic church rises in power. Denying the divinity of Jesus can lead to torture and death. Christians now worship the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Saint Patrick uses the shamrock with its compound leaf to explain the three-in-one trinity. Others use water—which comes in the form of ice, liquid, and vapor—to explain the doctrine. **(Prop: Image of a shamrock and ice cube)**

Sixth Century

14. The symbol of Jesus hanging on the cross first comes into common religious use. **(Prop: Crucifix)**

Seventh Century

15. The first Old English translations of the Christian scripture are written. **(Prop: Bible)**

Twelfth & Thirteenth Centuries

16. The Crusades are fought. European invasion forces seek to take back the Holy Land from Muslim nations. **(Prop: Crusader pennant)**

17. During the Medieval Inquisition, heretics (including Christians who denied the Trinity) are tried and tortured by the Church's courts. **(Prop: Image of stocks)**

Fifteenth Century

18. The invention of a moveable type, the Gutenberg press, in the fifteenth century allows for the first mass printing of Christian scripture. More people have access to scriptures than ever before, making for more religious argument and dissent. Our Unitarian ancestors, reading scripture for themselves, find that the doctrines of the church are not consistent with the Bible's teachings. **(Prop: Stack of Bibles)**

Sixteenth Century

19. According to religious legend, monk-priest-theologian Martin Luther nails 95 theses about the failings and errors of Catholic Christian doctrine to the door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany. The Protestant Reformation begins, protesting against Catholic doctrine and practice, and calling for the reformation of the Church. **(Prop: Hammer and nails)**

20. Protestants, including Christians who don't believe in the Trinity, are imprisoned and burned at the stake by the Inquisition, an effort of the Catholic church to root out heretics. The Unitarian church as we know it emerges as part of this Protestant movement. **(Prop: Kindling and matches)**

21. King John II Sigismund of Transylvania (where Unity's sister church is located), was a Unitarian monarch, and drafted and signed the Edict of Torda—the first official declaration of national religious tolerance. A religious tolerance decree meant people had the freedom to choose whom to listen to as a preacher and practice their chosen religion without fear of imprisonment or death. **(Prop: Map of Transylvania)**