

Women of the Early Church:

Faith, Empire, Memory & Service in Greece and Turkey

SEPTEMBER 14–25, 2027

TOUR ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrival in Athens

Arrive in Athens and transfer to the hotel. Gather for a welcome dinner and opening orientation at a local restaurant. Introduce the journey's themes: women of the early church, faith under empire, hospitality, migration, and the continuing role of religious communities in public life.

OVERNIGHT: Athens | **MEALS:** Dinner

Day 2: Athens – Paul, Public Faith & the Orthodox Church Today

Begin with a visit to the Acropolis, Parthenon, and ancient Agora. Continue to Mars Hill, where the Apostle Paul addressed the Athenians, and reflect on speaking faith in a pluralistic public square. In the afternoon, meet with a representative connected to the office of the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, or another Orthodox religious leader, for a discussion on the role of the Church in Greek society today—faith and public life, social service, migration, interfaith relations, and the Church's role in national identity.

OVERNIGHT: Athens | **MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch

Day 3: Corinth – Community, Conflict & Grace

Drive along the coastal highway toward Corinth, stopping at the Corinth Canal. Continue to Ancient Corinth, the city that inspired some of St. Paul's most important letters. Visit the archaeological museum, marketplace, temples, and Bema. Reflect on the early Christian community at Corinth and St. Paul's teachings on grace, spiritual gifts, conflict, and unity. Return to Athens for dinner at the hotel, followed by an evening at leisure.

OVERNIGHT: Athens | **MEALS:** Breakfast, Dinner





ELCA TOUR ITINERARY

Day 4: Service Learning in Athens

Spend the day with a local church or NGO partner serving refugees, migrants, unhoused neighbors, or vulnerable families. Activities may include meal preparation, clothing distribution, welcome-center support, children's programming, or community hospitality. The afternoon reflection connects the service experience to biblical hospitality, Lydia's example, and the challenges of migration in the Mediterranean today.

OVERNIGHT: Athens | **MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch

Day 5: Thessaloniki – Early Christianity in Northern Greece

Transfer to Athens Airport and fly to Thessaloniki. Upon arrival, explore key early Christian and Byzantine sites, including the Church of St. Demetrius, city walls, and significant basilicas. Discuss Thessaloniki as a crossroads of empire, faith, commerce, and migration, and introduce the city's layered Christian, Jewish, and Muslim histories.

OVERNIGHT: Thessaloniki | **MEALS:** Breakfast, Dinner

Day 6: Philippi, Kavala & Lydia

Travel to Kavala, ancient Neapolis, where St. Paul first entered Europe. Continue to Philippi, where St. Paul preached and where Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth, became one of the first recorded Christian converts in Europe. Visit Lydia's Baptistry and gather for prayer and reflection by the river. The day centers on women's leadership, hospitality, and the spread of early Christianity through households and networks of relationship. Return to Thessaloniki.

OVERNIGHT: Thessaloniki | **MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch





ELCA TOUR ITINERARY

Day 7: Thessaloniki – Jewish Memory, Religious Transformation & Migration

Spend a full day exploring Thessaloniki's layered religious history. Begin with a conversation with a Jewish community representative or descendant from one of the few remaining Jewish families connected to a city once known as a major center of Sephardic Jewish life before the Holocaust. Continue with a historian-led session on Thessaloniki's enormous faith shifts across history: Byzantine Christian, Ottoman Muslim, Sephardic Jewish, and modern Greek Orthodox identities. In the afternoon, meet with a journalist who focuses on migration to discuss Greece's role as a gateway to Europe, the human stories behind migration, and how faith communities respond to displacement.

OVERNIGHT: *Thessaloniki* | **MEALS:** *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

Day 8: Veria and Journey to Turkey

After breakfast, check out and travel to Veria, known in the New Testament as Berea. St. Paul and Silas came here after leaving Thessaloniki, and the people of Berea were remembered for receiving their teachings with openness and thoughtful discernment. Visit the traditional site associated with St. Paul's preaching and reflect on the spread of the early Christian movement through communities of teaching, hospitality, and relationship. Continue to Thessaloniki Airport for the flight to Izmir, Turkey. Upon arrival, meet your Turkish guide and transfer to the Kuşadası/Ephesus area. Check into the hotel and have a late dinner.

OVERNIGHT: *Kuşadası* | **MEALS:** *Breakfast, Dinner*





ELCA TOUR ITINERARY

Day 9: Ephesus – Paul, Women and the Early Church

Explore Ephesus, including the Agora, Library of Celsus, Temple of Hadrian, and Great Theatre. Consider the world in which St. Paul taught and organized early Christian communities, as well as the role of women, households, and networks of hospitality in the growth of the early church. After lunch, continue to the Basilica of St. John in nearby Selçuk. Return to the hotel for dinner and an evening reflection.

OVERNIGHT: Kuşadası | **MEALS:** Breakfast, Dinner

Day 10: Ephesus, Mary & Early Christian Memory

Continue with additional time at sacred and archaeological sites. Visit the Basilica of St. John and, if desired, the House of Mary. Discuss memory, tradition, pilgrimage, and the ways Christian communities have honored women's presence in the story of the early church. Conclude with a farewell lunch and closing reflection: What does faithful hospitality look like at home? Then transfer to Izmir Airport for individual or designated group departure flights.

OVERNIGHT: N.A | **MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch

OPTIONAL CAPPADOCIA / ISTANBUL EXTENSIONS

Option A: Istanbul — Travel to Istanbul to explore Hagia Sophia, the Blue Mosque, and the city's layered Byzantine, Ottoman, and Christian heritage.

Option B: Cappadocia — Travel to Cappadocia to visit rock-cut churches, cave chapels, and early Christian monastic landscapes.

Overnight location depends on routing and may be Istanbul or Cappadocia. Meals: Breakfast, Dinner.

