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***People of Faith* Documentary Presents the Rich History of Christianity in America
More than 400 Years of History on Two DVDs**

As the first nation in the history of the world based on a concept of religious freedom, the United States became a place of unprecedented religious diversity and experimentation. Now, a new documentary series examines the history of Christianity in America, from the first European Christian settlers to the myriad expressions of the faith in the 21st century. Produced with the support of a grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc., *People of Faith: Christianity in America* presents four hundred years of history in three hours. It's a brisk and informative survey of the Catholic, mainline Protestant, and Evangelical Christian people and events that shaped the nation.

The series shows how American Christianity, woven into the nation's fabric from its founding, grew and morphed over the centuries. "America became a religious place from the very beginning...because the people who settled this country had a genius for framing questions in religious terms," says Scott Appleby of the University of Notre Dame, one of many experts interviewed for the series.

People of Faith calls upon a range of top religion scholars, including Martin Marty and Jean Bethke Elshtain, University of Chicago; Mark Noll and Philip Gleason, University of Notre Dame; Thomas Kidd, Baylor University; Darren Dochuck, Purdue University; John Witvliet, Calvin College, and many more. They bring to life the rich pageant of American Christianity, including:

- the nation's founders and their commitment to religious freedom;
- religion as a force for social reform, demonstrated in the abolitionist and civil rights movements and efforts to help poor people, workers, immigrants, and others;
- "home grown saints" such as Jonathan Edwards, Martin Luther King, Jr., Elizabeth Ann Seton, Frederick Douglas, Jane Addams, and Billy Graham;
- developments such as the "Great Awakening," the age of Revivals, and movements such as Pentecostalism and the Jesus People;
- the growth of the "religious marketplace" and the rise of the megachurch;
- the arrival of predominantly Catholic immigrants during the 19th century and the struggle against anti-Catholicism;
- how American society allowed previously marginalized groups like Methodists and Baptists to grow by leaps and bounds, and provided fertile ground for the development of new religious movements, such as the Shakers and Mormons.

The producers of *People of Faith* hope the series will help people understand how American Christianity has come to be so diverse and innovative, says executive producer Larry Eskridge, associate director of the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals at Wheaton College. "Sadly, many Christians are unaware of the development of their neighbors'—and their own—church or faith tradition in the U.S. Often that history represents a significant departure from what had gone on in Europe centuries ago."

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The series also helps viewers understand some of the deep, historic roots for some of the top “culture war” conflicts that divide Americans in issues such as public education, sexuality, and the separation of church and state. “We hope that *People of Faith* might be able to help people better understand our historical context, which in turn might aid conversations about the nature of Christians’ application of their faith to political, social and cultural debates—conversations that have recently tended to generate more heat than light.”

The series concludes by showing how Christians must apply their faith to the challenges of the age. It poses eight questions to its panel of experts on the future of Christianity in America, soliciting their thoughts on issues such as race, human sexuality, environmental concerns, a culture of life, and interfaith relations.

People of Faith was written by Steve Rabey, and produced and directed by Tim Frakes. It was produced by the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals at Wheaton College with the support of a grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc.

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**About Larry Eskridge
Executive Producer, *People of Faith***

Larry Eskridge is the associate director of the ISAE and editor of the *Evangelical Studies Bulletin*. He received his B.A. from Trinity College (IL) and his M.A. from the University of Maryland-College Park and his Ph.D. from the University of Stirling in Scotland. Dr. Eskridge joined the Institute in the role of Interim Administrator in 1988 and has served as its associate director since 1993. Additionally, over the years he has taught a number of courses on American history and the history of American religion for Wheaton’s History department. His primary working interest lies in the intersections between 20th-century evangelicalism, popular culture, and the mass media. With Mark Noll, he was co-editor of *More Money, More Ministry: Evangelicals and Money in Recent North American History* (Eerdmans, 2000). His book on the Jesus People movement of the 1960s and 1970s, *God’s Forever Family: The Jesus People Movement in America*, is in the process of publication with the Oxford University Press.

**People of Faith:
Christianity in America**

- Episode One: Faith in America: From Monarchs to the Marketplace.
- Episode Two: Many Mansions: Religious freedom's fertile ground for new churches, movements, organizations.
- Episode Three: Rebels with a Cause: Believers battle racism and demon rum while seeking to reform the world.
- Episode Four: Challenges and Change: Confronting evolution, pop culture, worship styles and spiritual seekers.
- Episode Five: Home Grown Saints: 10 people who forever changed Christianity in America.
- Episode Six: The Future of Christianity: Faith meets politics, race, sexuality, creation care, and other faiths.

People of Faith: Christianity in America

DVD series - Six 30-minute episodes on two discs - \$29.99

Bonus material includes study and discussion questions, additional interviews with scholars, and script transcripts.

www.peopleoffaithseries.com