

A Brief History

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) traces its roots to the Cane Ridge Revival of 1801. Barton W. Stone was a Presbyterian pastor in Cane Ridge, Kentucky who yearned for the spiritual renewal others were experiencing as revival spread across the American Frontier. With these meetings hosted by the church he pastored, he observed the joyful cooperation of churches, pastors and Christians of many different denominations. Out of this grew the Christian Church movement with a vision for the unity of all Christians.

A few years later, two other than Presbyterian pastors, father and son, Thomas and Alexander Campbell, also had a vision for the unity of the church. Thomas wrote "that the church is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one." By 1830 this movement was known as the Disciples of Christ.

In 1832, these movements joined together, thus known today as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). They were one of the few church groups that did not divide during the Civil War. After the war, a 40 year debate over the nature of the movement that came to be symbolized by the use of instrumental music in worship led to a separation from the Churches of Christ. And in 1926 a group left because they did not want to participate in cooperative missionary organizations, and over the next 40 years came to be known as Independents. Guided by the vision of the unity of all Christians, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) increased its ecumenical involvement. In 1968 they adopted the Design that defined the mission and structure of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) we know today.

Getting Acquainted with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)



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Perhaps you have worshipped with Central Christian Church and tried to figure out just what kind of church we are. Or possibly you have seen the logo and name "Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)" and wondered what those churches were like. Many people have mental pictures for different kinds of churches: Baptist, Lutheran, Bible, Catholic, etc. While churches in these traditions do share some family resemblances, often the mental pictures can be misleading or even mistaken. Maybe your experience with Central Christian Church has left you scratching your head and saying, "They just don't fit the categories I have for churches."

If so, that could mean we are living what God has called us to be. Congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) also have some family resemblances, but the nature of those resemblances can mean that these congregations may be very different from one another. Deeply embedded in the history and identity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is an aversion to dividing and labeling Christians. This brochure has been assembled to help you get acquainted with the family resemblances of congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). If after reading this you have further questions, please call the church to make an appointment with the pastor, who will be happy to take time with you.

Preamble to The Design for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

As members of the Christian Church,
we confess that Jesus is the Christ,
the Son of the living God,
and proclaim him Lord and Savior of the world.
In Christ's name and by his grace
we accept our mission of witness
and service to all people.
We rejoice in God,
maker of heaven and earth,
and in the covenant of love
which binds us to God and one another.
Through baptism into Christ
we enter into newness of life
and are made one with the whole people of God.
In the communion of the Holy Spirit
we are joined together in discipleship
and in obedience to Christ.
At the table of the Lord
we celebrate with thanksgiving
the saving acts and presence of Christ.
Within the universal church
We receive the gift of ministry
and the light of scripture.
In the bonds of Christian faith
we yield ourselves to God
that we may serve the One
whose kingdom has no end.
Blessing, glory and honor
be to God forever. Amen.

Mission Imperative of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

In our quest to embody Christian unity, led and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we believe God calls us:

OUR VISION

To be a faithful, growing church, that demonstrates true community, deep spirituality and a passion for justice. (Micah 6:8)

OUR MISSION

To be and to share the Good News of Jesus Christ, witnessing, loving and serving from our doorsteps "to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

OUR IMPERATIVE

To strengthen congregational life for this mission. (Ephesians 4:11-13, 15-16) To accomplish this, we shall:

- Become the Good News:
 - *Nurturing faith
 - *Practicing and teaching the spiritual disciplines
 - *Fostering Disciples' identity
 - *Renewing congregational life
 - *Developing leaders
- Share the Good News:
 - *Emphasizing ministry with children, youth, young adults and families
 - *Doing evangelism
 - *Establishing new congregations
 - *Creating ministries with older adults
- Serve from "our doorsteps to the ends of the earth":
Engaging in ministries of reconciliation, compassion, unity and justice.

OUR COVENANT

In accepting our Vision, Mission and Imperative, we affirm our need to: be an anti-racist/pro-reconciliation church, strengthen relationships among all manifestations of the church, share mutually and more fully the stewardship of God's gifts of our life in Christ, encourage our growing diversity within our church family and community, work with our many ecumenical and global partners to heal the brokenness of the body of Christ and the human community.

Characteristics of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) was founded in the United States in 1832 with a vision of restoring the life and unity of the New Testament Church. With confidence in the Bible, no other documents, creeds or confessions have been imposed to standardize doctrine or practice. The following themes have characterized the life and development of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

A Concern for Christian Unity

All Christians are called to be one in Christ and to seek opportunities for common witness and service. We understand that the Church of Jesus Christ on earth is essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one. Christian unity is our polar star.

A Commitment to Evangelism and Mission

Unity is not an end in itself. Believing that the world will be won as the Church is one, it is the context of proclaiming the Gospel and serving in the name of Jesus. That commit

ment is shown both by emphasizing the need for personal faith in Jesus Christ and by a concern for peace and justice for all people.

A New Testament Emphasis

We are "people of the Book;" our authority is the Bible, not church traditions or offices. We seek unity and pursue our mission by modeling the life of the New Testament Church in our own time and place.

A Simple Confession of Faith and Freedom of Christian Conscience

Based on Peter's confession in Matthew 16:16, we ask affirmation of only one question of those who seek church membership. "Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God and trust him as your Lord and Savior?" With this foundation, Christians are free to follow their consciences as instructed by the Bible and guided by the Holy Spirit through prayer and study.

Believers' Baptism

We baptize by immersion only those who have reached an age where they can make their own confession of faith in Jesus Christ and choose baptism. In respect for Christian conscience and the unity of the Church, we honor other traditions of Christian baptism.

Weekly, Open Communion

Following the model of the New Testament Church, we celebrate The Lord's Supper (communion, Eucharist) each Lord's Day (Sunday). This meal of grace and fellowship is open to all who are trusting in Jesus Christ.

Congregational Autonomy

We live under the authority of Christ worked out in the local congregation. Each congregation makes its own decisions, calls its own pastors, pursues its own calling from God without pressure from external structures of authority. Congregations voluntarily and joyfully share together in worship, mission and fellowship as practical expression of Christian unity.

Lay Leadership

Believing in the "priesthood of all believers," we practice a mutual ministry in which both clergy and laity lead in worship, teaching, service, governance and spiritual growth.

Diversity

Perhaps our best known slogan is "In essentially unity, in nonessentials liberty, and in all things love." With our commitment to Christian unity and the freedom of Christian conscience, diversity of theology is inevitable. When we are effective in mission, diversity of culture, ethnicity, economics and background result. While diversity brings challenges of division and conflict, we celebrate its richness and affirm our essential oneness in Jesus Christ.

Perhaps you have seen the logo of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and puzzled at what the wine glass (chalice) with an "X" (St. Andrew's Cross) on it might mean. The chalice is a symbol of the cup Jesus used to celebrate his Last Supper with his disciples. It is a symbol of the centrality of celebrating the Lord's Supper (Communion, Eucharist) every Sunday in worship. The "X" is the cross of St. Andrew, one of Jesus' twelve disciples. Legend has it that he was crucified on an "X" shaped cross and that some of his bones were carried to Scotland. In any case, he became the patron saint of Scotland, and the "X" shaped cross is associated with the Church in Scotland. Since the pioneers of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) traced their heritage to Scotland, St. Andrew's "X" shaped cross symbolized these roots of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

