

the churches *of* Christ

Independent. Udenominational.

Who are These People?

Perhaps you have heard of the churches of Christ and wondered, “Who are these people?”

What is their view of the Bible?

What is their history?

What is their numerical profile?

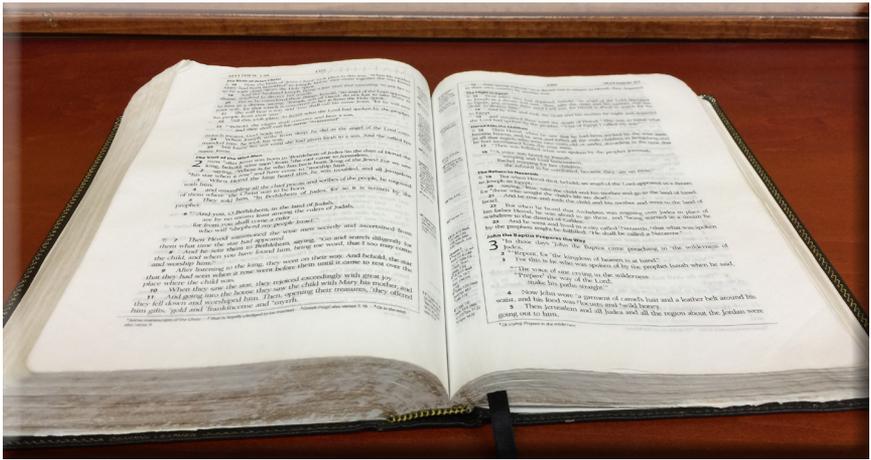
What is their organizational structure?

What are their worship practices?

What are their terms of membership?

Here, in brief, are some answers to those questions.

Revised and edited by Brent Hunter
Based on an original tract by Joe Barnett
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History

The true church of Christ goes back to the Bible and was established on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2: 36-47). Sadly, over the centuries, just as prophesied, many human innovations and apostasies occurred (1 Timothy 4:1-4, 2 Thessalonians 2:3). Eventually, there was the papacy and Roman Catholicism. Around 500 years ago, a number of groups “protested Catholicism” and various Protestant denominations were established. However, toward the end of the 18th century, several leading men in different denominations, from various geographical locations, studying independently of each other, began asking:

- Why not go back to the pattern of the first-century church, prior to the emergence of denominationalism?
- Why not adhere to the Bible only and commit to the apostles’ teaching (Acts 2:42)?
- Why not plant the same seed, the Word of God (Luke 8:11), that first-century Christians planted and be Christians only as they were?

They began encouraging people to relinquish human creeds, abandon denominationalism, and follow only the Bible. They asserted that such action would not establish another

denomination, but would be a return to the original church. They insisted that nothing should be required of people other than what is taught in the Scriptures.

Most congregations who designate themselves as a church of Christ are in agreement with the principles behind the movement those men began, sometimes called the Restoration Movement. With the Bible as our only guide, we seek to discover what the original church was like, and be like that. We feel we have no right to ask people to pledge their allegiance to a human organization, but only the right to ask them to follow God's Word. We do not claim to have arrived, for humility demands we recognize that restoring the New Testament order in our modern day is a process.

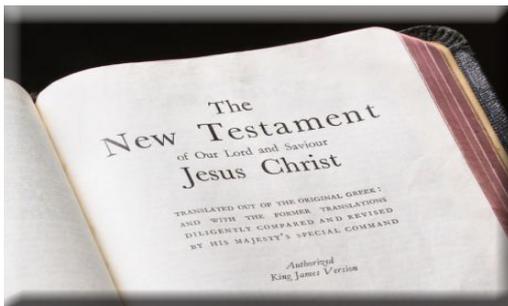
We seek to be faithful to God and His word and to be the church that Jesus Christ said He came to build (Matthew 16:18). Christ's church was established in the first century and predates the Catholic Church, which was not fully developed with a universal pope until the 7th century. We believe that true restoration, true conversion to Christ, and allegiance to God's word alone must take place in the heart of each individual, generation, and congregation. The Kirkland church of Christ is committed to that goal and encourages independent Bible study as each believer comes to their own faith. We encourage all sincere truth seekers to join us as we seek to please God and submit our will to His, not His will to ours, as is so common today.

We do not subscribe to man-made creeds; only to the New Testament pattern. We do not consider ourselves a denomination—not Jewish, Catholic, or Protestant—but simply members of the church Jesus established, having bought it with his blood (Acts 20:28). That is why we usually identify ourselves as churches of Christ—(Romans 16:16)—not used as a denominational designation, but as a descriptive term, indicating that the church belongs to Christ. In fact, instead of using the term “church of Christ” as the only universally accepted designation, many brethren choose to simply refer to themselves as “the church,” or “the Lord's church.” One large

congregation who has chosen to display a sign outside that simply says “Christians meet here.” And why not? There was no one single universally accepted proper name for Christ’s church in the New Testament, so congregations are free to use any Biblical designation. We strive to be faithful to the warning that Jesus gave not to teach human traditions as the commandments of God, because doing so makes one’s worship vain (See Mark 7:7).

Because all authority has been given to Christ (Matthew 28:18) and because He alone has been designated as God’s spokesman in this age (Hebrews 1:1-2), it is our conviction that He alone has the right to say what the church is and what His disciples should teach. Our commitment is not to some church dogma, but simply to be faithful to “sound out the Word of the Lord” (I Thessalonians 1:8). In other words, since the only document that presents Christ’s instructions to his disciples is the New Testament, it alone is our source for religious teaching and practice. This is a fundamental conviction among churches of Christ. We believe teaching the Bible without modification is the only right way to faithfully lead people to become true disciples.

We are saddened by religious division. Jesus prayed for unity (John 17:20-23) and the apostle Paul appealed for unity among those who were divided (1 Corinthians 1:10). We believe the only way to achieve unity is to follow the same blueprint—the Bible. We believe no individual or organization has the right to draw up a set of rules by which people are religiously



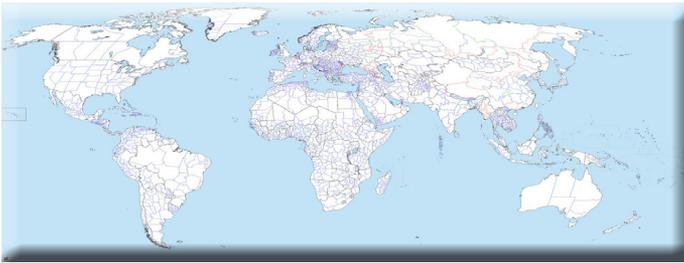
governed. We seek to unite upon Christ, not compromise. Compromise does not bring unity, but following the same book can. It is safe and right to appeal for religious unity on this basis. To subscribe to

any human-authored creed is to promote division.

To reject any New Testament command, or to engage in any practice not authorized by the New Testament is to add to or subtract from the teachings of God, both of which are sternly rebuked (Galatians 1:6-9; Revelation 22:18-19).

This is the reason the New Testament is the only rule of faith and practice subscribed to among churches of Christ.

Profile – *Undenominational.*



Since the churches of Christ are autonomous (independent and self-ruled), no official reporting mechanism exists. Like the congregations in the New Testament, there is no highly structured denominational hierarchy. Therefore we have no idea exactly how many precious souls are members of congregations committed to such principles. Similarly, there is no way for men to discern accurately who is a part of God’s universal body of the saved. Paul told Timothy, “the Lord knows those that are His” (2 Timothy 2:19). The Bible teaches that once one has heard and believed the gospel and obeyed the conditions of God’s grace (Hebrews 5:9), he or she is added to the Lord’s people, or the church (Acts 2:36-47).

However, surveys have been conducted in an attempt to determine where congregations are located and their approximate size. The following figures have been harvested from data published in early 2015: Worldwide there are some 27,500 congregations of churches of Christ, with a total of about 2.4 million adherents. Some of these are small churches of only

a few members, while some consist of several hundred, even a few thousand.

The United States accounts for approximately 12,300 of these churches, with about 1.5 million adherents. There are churches of Christ in all fifty states and in 138 other countries.

Given the fact that all one has to do is to believe and follow the Bible, there are true Christians around the globe that belong to Christ and have been added by Christ to His church, even though they may have no awareness of any of the churches of Christ which were a part of the aforementioned surveys . So, even though we believe in being Christians only, we do not believe that we are the only Christians.

Organization – *Undenominational.*

The churches of Christ have none of the trappings of modern day organizational bureaucracy. There are no district, regional, national, or international governing boards—no earthly headquarters, and no humanly-designed organization.

Each congregation is autonomous (self-ruled) and is independent of every other congregation. The only tie that binds the many congregations together is a common allegiance to Christ and the Bible and the desire to fellowship with those of “like precious faith.”



Brad Rickman



Rick Wagner



Lyle Graddon

The Kirkland Church currently has three shepherds who lead the congregational family.

Each congregation is governed locally by a plurality of elders (where qualified men exist); the qualifications for this office are given in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. There are also deacons in each congregation (where qualified men are found); the qualifications for deacons are given in 1 Timothy 3:8-12. Most also are served by faithful evangelists and teachers who publically and privately proclaim the Word and “equip the saints for the work of ministry for the building up of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12).

Worship – *In Spirit and in Truth.*

In the New Testament worship was something to participate in, not something to watch. Worship was about pouring one’s heart and soul out to God, not entertainment! There was a priesthood of all believers through our High Priest Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:5). No one could perform a saved person’s service or worship for him or her.

Jesus said, “...a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:23-24). To worship God in truth is to worship Him according to his Word, because his Word is truth — John 17:17.

So we must be careful not to exclude any items in our worship that are found in His Word, and equally careful not to include any item in our worship not found in His Word. When we assemble for worship each Sunday our service usually consists of five elements, which were observed by the first-century church: singing, praying, preaching, giving and commemorating Christ’s death in the Lord’s Supper. If you are acquainted with churches of Christ you are aware that in two of these items our practice is different from many religious groups.

Music – *Spiritual and Congregational.*

One of the things people frequently notice is that our singing is a *cappella*—that is, without instrumental accompaniment.

Here's why. We seek to worship according to New Testament instruction.

Since the New Testament does not mention instrumental music in worship, we believe it is best to exclude it. In the



Christian age, instrumental music in church worship did not appear until the sixth century A.D. The very word *a cappella* is from the Latin and means “as done in the chapel.” The early church was universally committed to spiritual worship. They saw the use of instruments as a part the carnal ordinances of the Old Testament which Jesus nailed to the cross, (Colossians 2:14).

There are nine verses in the New Testament that mention music:

- Matthew 26:30
- Acts 16:25
- Romans 15:9
- Romans 15:11
- 1 Corinthians 14:15
- Ephesians 5:19
- Colossians 3:16
- Hebrews 2:12
- James 5:13

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Each mention singing. None mentions instruments.

Thus the use of instruments is without New Testament authority. This is why instrumental music was opposed by religious leaders such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley and Charles Spurgeon.

Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a memorial remembrance inaugurated by Jesus when He commemorated the Passover with His disciples (Matthew 26:17, 26-28). It continues to be observed by Christians in memory of the Lord's sacrificial death (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). The emblems—unleavened bread and fruit of the vine—symbolize the body and blood of Jesus (1 Corinthians 10:16).

The churches of Christ observe the Lord's Supper every Sunday. The reason for weekly observance centers in the determination to adhere to New Testament instruction. Describing the practice of the first-century church, we read, "On the first day of the week we came together to break bread" (Acts 20:7). Some have argued that the text does not specify the first day of every week. This is true—just as the Old Testament command to observe the Sabbath did not specify every Sabbath - simply to "Remember the Sabbath day" (Exodus 20:8). The Jews understood that to mean every Sabbath day. By the same reasoning, it seems to us that the first day of the week means the first day of every week.

Respected historians such as Neander and Eusebius affirmed that Christians in the early centuries observed the Lord's Supper every Sunday. The early Christians wanted to remember Christ's death in the Lord's Supper on the very day he conquered death (Sunday). They saw each Sunday as important and honored Jesus in His supper every Lord's Day, just as the priests in the Old Testament partook of the table of showbread every Sabbath.

Membership

The churches of Christ do not view membership in terms of a formula or list of rules that must be met to be accepted into the church. The New Testament specifies certain steps people took to become Christians. When a person became a Christian he/she at the same time became a member of the church.

The same is true in churches of Christ today. When a person becomes a Christian he/she at the same time becomes a member



of the church. There are no additional rules or ceremonies one must follow to be inducted into the church.

On the first day of the church's existence, those who repented and were baptized were forgiven and saved (Acts 2:38, 40). These were added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:41, 47). Determined to follow this pattern, we do not vote people into the church or require them to complete a prescribed study course. We simply encourage their submission to the following essentials commanded in the New Testament.

- Listening to the gospel message, for “faith comes from hearing the message” (Romans 10:17).
- Becoming a believer, for “without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6).
- Repenting of sins, for God “commands all people everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30).
- Acknowledging Jesus as Lord, for he said, “Whoever acknowledges him before my Father in heaven...” (Matthew 10:32).
- Being baptized, for Peter said, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:38).

The churches of Christ emphasize the importance of baptism. This is because the New Testament teaches that baptism results in forgiveness and salvation (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16).

We do not practice infant baptism because New Testament baptism is for sinners who submit to the Lord in belief and repentance. An infant cannot yet be a believer and has no sin of which to repent.

The only form of baptism practiced in churches of Christ is immersion. The Greek word from which the word baptize comes means “to immerse, to submerge.” The Scriptures describe baptism as a burial (Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12).

The importance of baptism is seen in the purposes and results attached to it in the New Testament:

- Entrance into the kingdom of God (John 3:5).
- Entrance into the church (1 Corinthians 12:13; cf. Ephesians 1:23).
- Forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38).
- The gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).
- Washing away of sins (Acts 22:16; Titus 3:5).
- Connection to the death and resurrection of Christ (Romans 6:3-4).
- Union with Christ (Galatians 3:27).
- Justification (1 Corinthians 6:11).
- Salvation (Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21).



Jesus died for the sins of the whole world; the invitation to experience his saving grace is open to all (Acts 10:34-35; Revelation 22:17). We encourage you to accept the salvation he offers—to come to Him in obedient faith and become a part of His church.



The Kirkland Family

Where Families Build Eternal Homes

Welcome to the

Church of Christ at Kirkland

At Kirkland we are people redeemed by Christ's blood, who seek to worship God reverently in truth. We glorify God through our unconditional love, caring and serving one another. We are growing in knowledge of truth, joy and commitment, sharing our hope with others that God's light is reflected in our lives.

Service Times:

Sunday:

9.30 am: Bible Classes

10.30 am: Morning Worship

5 pm: Evening Worship

Wednesday:

7 pm: Bible Classes

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