

Timeline of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Historical Precursors:

- 1) “Popular” Reformation, i.e. from Peter Waldo to Jan Hus (12th-15th centuries):
 - communion in “both kinds” e.g., the loaf AND the chalice (hence Disciples logo),
 - a priesthood of all believers (including women),
 - use of vernaculars and local cultures,
 - social (distributive) justice.
- 2) Germanic Reformation in general (16th century):
 - authority of scripture alone, *sola scriptura* (vs. scripture & “tradition”),
 - faith in saved by grace alone, *sola fide* and *sola gratia* (vs. good works/deeds/merit),
 - only because of Christ, *sola Christus* (vs. other human beings or institutions),
 - one is simultaneously saved and sinner, *simul iustus et peccator*.
- 3) Huldrych Zwingli of the Reformation in Zurich (16th century):
 - communion a meal of remembrance of Christ’s supper and of one’s baptism,
 - no “real presence” of Christ at the Table, but rather symbolic.
- 4) Anabaptists movement of the Radical Reformation (16th century):
 - adult or “believers” baptism (by immersion),
 - non-hierarchical governance system – congregational or “low church” authority.

1801 – Presbyterian minister and abolitionist from Maryland-Virginia area, Barton Stone, is formative in the multi-day, racially integrated **Cane Ridge Revival** in Kentucky during the Second Great Awakening (1790s-1840s).

1804 – Stone and four other Presbyterians close their presbytery in Kentucky and write the **“Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery”** in which they declare: *“We will, that this body [the Springfield Presbytery] die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the Body of Christ at large; for there is but one Body, and one Spirit, even as we are called in hope of our calling.”*
He forms **the “Christian” movement** or association. This marks the beginning of formal ecumenism in the U.S. along with other efforts by Methodists (e.g., James O’Kelly in Virginia) and Baptists (e.g., Elias Smith in New Hampshire).

For the full text see:

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Last_Will_and_Testament_of_The_Springfield_Presbytery

1807 – Thomas Campbell emigrates from Ireland to Pennsylvania.

1809 – Thomas Campbell writes his **“Declaration and Address”** of the 13 propositions for “restoring” the church in which he states:
“That the church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one; consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ.”
This not only marks the beginning of the Restoration Movement or “Second Reformation” but will also serve later as a theological “blueprint” in the twentieth century for the Federal Council of Churches in 1908 (which later becomes the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S. in 1948), the Canadian Council of Churches in 1944, and the World Council of Churches in 1948.

For the full text see:

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Declaration_and_Address_of_the_Christian_Association_of_Washington

After studying for a year at the University of Glasgow, Alexander Campbell, Thomas Campbell’s son, emigrates to the U.S. Independently, they both come to the conclusion that the historical creeds are divisive among Christians and, as a result, they denounce denominationalism and cease being Presbyterians.

1811 – Thomas and Alexander Campbell promote their creedless Christianity in the **Brush Run Church**, loosely related with the Baptists, where they advocate:

1. Christ alone is the head of the church and host of the table,
2. Bible (and not tradition or creeds) is sole authority on matters of faith,
3. baptism is to be by consenting adult believers and by immersion (like Jesus did it),
4. celebration of the Table at every worship (usually weekly), and
5. congregational leadership with no distinction between clergy and laity.

late 1820s – Walter Scott emigrates from Scotland and works with Campbells; develops the **“five-finger exercise”**:

1. faith (as the rational ascent to belief),
2. repentance of sin(s),
3. baptism (our move toward God and membership into God’s church)
4. forgiveness of sin(s) (God’s response to our move), and
5. gifts of the Holy Spirit (i.e. eternal life, but not enthusiasms or charisms).

1830 – “Campbellites” ousted from the Baptists – form the **“Disciples” movement**.

In his publication *The Millennial Harbinger*, Alexander Campbell denounces the disenfranchisement of the Cherokee Nation by business interests in Georgia.

1832 – the joining of Alexander Campbell (with 12,000 “Disciples”) and Barton Stone (with 10,000 “Christians”) for a combined movement but not a “denomination.”
(Note: a sizeable portion of the Christian Association will not join the Disciples; this part of the “Christians” will later join the Congregationalists in 1931 to form the Congregational Christian Church and then later help form the U.C.C. in 1957).

- 1834 – first autonomously chartered African American congregation within the Stone-Campbell movement – Colored Christian Church of Midway, Kentucky – spearheaded by Alexander Campbell (no relation to the Campbells Thomas or his son Alexander from Ireland) who was an African American slave who converted to Christianity at the Cane Ridge revival and went on to establish numerous predominantly African American congregations.
- 1849 – establishment of the **American Christian Missionary Society** with Dr. James and Mrs. Julia Barclay as the first missionaries, they are sent to Jerusalem.
- 1840s-1860s – the Disciples of Christ the only U.S. church to not split over the issue of slavery but for the sake of promoting ecumenism and unity, slavery is deemed a personal “opinion” rather than a matter of “faith.”
- Barton Stone repeatedly freed slaves sent to Kentucky by family back in Virginia, but his son fights for the Confederacy during the Civil War.
 - Alexander Campbell has slaves in Pennsylvania that he would have freed in his will, but his sister and brother-in-law are active in the Underground Railroad.
- 1854 – Alexander Cross, a freedman, is the second missionary of the American Christian Missionary Society; he and his family are missionaries to Liberia.
- 1858 – former Congregationalist missionary to Jamaica, J. O. Beardslee, is sent again as missionary to Jamaica but by the Disciples’ American Christian Mission Society.
- 1867 – Rufus Conrad and other African Americans form the first “denomination” of the Stone-Campbell movement called the **National Convocation of Disciples**.
<http://www.disciples.org/convo/>
- 1870 – establishment of **South Congregational Church, East 47th Street, Chicago** (will later merge with Community Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in 1974 to form South Community Church of Chicago).
- 1870s – African Americans in the Disciples and Christian movement in southern Mid-Atlantic region form the **Assembly Churches** of the Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ; while always a part of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) they still refer to themselves as the “Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ.”
- 1874 – Disciples women form the **Christian Women’s Board of Missions** for mostly domestic mission work within the U.S.
- 1875 – formation of the **Foreign Christian Missionary Society** by Disciples specifically for work outside of the U.S.
- African American Disciples establish the **Southern Christian Institute** in Edwards, Mississippi (later becomes Tougaloo College).

- 1877 – Disciples women form a network of orphanages, homeless shelters, and homes for the elderly called the **National Benevolent Association** (later becomes Disciples Benevolent Services): <http://www.nbacares.org/>
- 1882 – Christian Women’s Board of Missions and Foreign Christian Missionary Society establish Disciples mission in India.
- 1883 – Christian Women’s Board of Missions and Foreign Christian Missionary Society establish Disciples mission in Japan.
- 1886 – Christian Women’s Board of Missions and Foreign Christian Missionary Society establish Disciples mission in China.
- 1890 – Preston Taylor, an African American businessman, hired by the American Christian Missionary Society to be the “National Evangelist.”
- 1892 – Jeu Hawk, a Chinese minister, is hired by the Christian Women’s Board of Missions to lead the mission in Portland, Oregon among Chinese immigrants (closes in 1923 as a result of the Chinese Exclusion Act).

establishment of the **University of Chicago** and the idea of an ecumenical, non-affiliated **Divinity School** (despite its legacy of the Baptist Theological Union), denominational presence is to be provided through the establishment of Divinity Houses neighboring the campus.

- 1894 – establishment of **Hyde Park Church of Christ (Disciples of Christ), Chicago** (will later become University Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and merge with South Community Church (UCC and CC (DoC)) to form University Church Chicago in 1980).

establishment of **Disciples Divinity House of Chicago** with Herbert L. Willet as the first dean (will later be accompanied by the Disciples Divinity House of Yale University and the Disciples Divinity House of Vanderbilt University); these Houses relate to the denomination and to their neighboring university with the same status as a free-standing seminary with its own dean and governing board as do the numerous Disciples-affiliated colleges and universities:

<http://ddh.uchicago.edu/>
<http://www.helmdisciples.org/>

- 1897 – Christian Women’s Board of Missions and Foreign Christian Missionary Society establish Disciples mission in Congo. (Note: today the Disciples of Christ in the Congo outnumber those in both the U.S. and Canada combined.)
- 1899 – first Disciples missionaries to Puerto Rico and Cuba.

(1899 formation of the Mexican Christian Church in San Antonio, Texas by George cont'd) Ramshaw and pastor Y. Quintero (disbands in 1905 but will become the Mexican Christian Institute or Inman Center in 1913):

<http://www.inmancenter.org/>

<http://www.discipleshomemissions.org/MissionCenters/Inman.htm>

1900s-1940s – rise of the “new liberals” largely based at the University of Chicago, Disciples Divinity House Chicago, and University Church Disciples of Christ Hyde Park (i.e. Herbert L. Willet, Winfred E. Garrison, and Edward Scribner Ames) challenge and provoke conservative reaction throughout the Disciples and beyond with their teachings and publications, academic and popular (e.g., *The Christian Century*); {for example, Ames spearheaded the notion of the “open Table” where baptism or congregational membership was not a requirement for taking or even serving communion – today all but one Disciples of Christ congregation practices some form of “open communion” as a part of worship}.

1904 – Berkeley Japanese Christian Church begins in Berkeley, California.

1906 – Churches of Christ (more prominent in the former Confederate States) and the Disciples of Christ formally split over issues of:

1. use of instrumental music,
2. formation of trans-congregational institutions (e.g., mission societies),
3. development of professional ministry with degrees, title, and authority.

Marks formal split between liberal Restoration via ecumenism and conservative Restoration via “primitivism.”

1907 – Chinese Christian Institute in San Francisco, California established by the Christian Women’s Board of Missions (close in 1923 as a result of the Chinese Exclusion Act).

1908 – Japanese Christian Church established in Los Angeles, California (will later become All Peoples Christian Church and Center as a result of the 1942 internment of Japanese Americans): <http://www.allpeoplescc.org/>

1909 – International Convention for centennial of the “Declaration and Address” draws together 1,250,000 participants.

1910 – establishment of the **Council on Christian Union** (will later become the CC (DoC)’s Council on Christian Unity), the first ecumenical agency of its kind created by a major Christian group: <http://www.disciples.org/ccu/>

1912 – A. J. Hurdle, Disciples minister and freedman, helps establish Northeast Texas Christian Theological and Industrial College (later Jarvis College).

- 1917 – Taylor, William Alphin, and other African American Disciples form the **National Christian Missionary Convention**. In his inaugural address, Taylor critiqued the separatist spirit of Marcus Garvey and others when he stated:
“The Disciples of Christ, strange at it may seem, need the colored people, if for no other reasons, as the acid test of Christian orthodoxy and willingness to follow Christ all of the way in His program of human redemption. For if the white brother can include in his religious theory and practice the colored people as real brothers he will have avoided the heresy of all heresies.”
- 1920 – all of the various Disciples mission societies for both mission work within and outside of the U.S. merge to form the **United Christian Missionary Society** (will later re-divide into Disciples Home Mission and Division of Overseas Ministries).
- 1921 – Red Fox and Black Hawk (two members of the Blackfoot Nation and later First Christian Church of Yakima) along with chief Stire Water of the Yakama Nation have the United Christian Missionary Society establish the Yakima Indian Christian Mission in Washington. (Note: thus making the Christian Church Disciples of Christ the only major church group to not impose schools on Native American reservations with the Bureau of Indian Affairs that contributed to the systematic ethnocide of the Native American populations in the U.S., Hawai’i, or Alaska):
<http://www.disciplesnw.org/yakama/>
- 1920s – Disciples Divinity House of Chicago sells half of its lot on the corner of University Avenue and East 57th Street (purchased at a discount from Marshall Field (the man, not the store)) to University Church of the Disciples of Christ.
- 1923 – University Church of the Disciples of Christ moves to its new location on the corner of East 57th Street and University Avenue, Hyde Park, Chicago.
- 1928 – building of Disciples Divinity House of Chicago completed.
- 1933 – establishment of Filipino Christian Church, Los Angeles, California.
- 1935 – establishment of **Disciples Peace Fellowship**: <http://www.dpweb.org/>
- 1939 – Puerto Rican Disciples establish La Hermosa Christian Church, New York.
- United Christian Missionary Society organizes the Committee for China Relief (this will become the Committee on Relief in 1941, the Day of Compassion in 1941, and the **Week of Compassion** by 1944 which will partner with One Great Hour of Sharing by 1950): <http://www.weekofcompassion.org/>
- 1940 – after over 20 years of ministry, E. S. Ames retires as ministry of University Church of the Disciples of Christ.
- 1942 – National Christian Missionary Convention and United Christian Missionary Society vote to expand mutual partnership (namely between African American and white Disciples, a process that will culminate in 1969).

- 1940s-1950s – ecumenical conversations and agreements begin between Disciples and American Baptists.
- 1950s – formation of the **Panel of Scholars** by Dean Barnett Blackmore of the Disciples Divinity House of Chicago to systematically reflect on the Stone-Campbell movement and possibility of forming an official general denomination.
- 1959 – mission policy **“Strategy of World Mission: Basic Policy of the Division of World Mission of the United Christian Mission Society”**:
- denounces effects of denominationalism, colonialism, and imperialism on church mission work,
 - affirms human dignity, freedom, and economic justice as legitimate concerns of the Christian faith,
 - calls to abandon “old possessiveness” to pursue mission ecumenically,
 - declares that mission work should relate to the life of the people by aiding development of indigenous forms of worship, leadership, organization, and theology.
- 1960 – Commission on Brotherhood Restructure formed to explore formal formation of a denominational church and structure.
- 1961 – ecumenical conversations and agreements begin between Disciples and the UCC.
- 1962-1965 – Dean Blakemore of the Disciples Divinity House and member of University Christian Church attends the Second Vatican Council in Roman as an officially invited ecumenical observer.
- 1966 – 1st Consultation on Hispanic Ministry (includes Hispanic Disciples ministers in the U.S., Mexico, and Puerto Rico) (will later become the ethnic-linguistic ministry called the **Central Pastoral Office on Hispanic Ministries**):
<http://www.obrahispana.org/>
- 1967 – merger and establishment of the Joint Southern Asia Office between the CC (DoC) and the UCC for combined mission work (the Pacific will be added in 1990).
- Charles H. Bayer installed as minister of University Christian Church.
- 1968 – approval of the **Provisional Design** of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) including official merger with the National Convocation of African American Disciples of Christ. By its structure or ecclesiology, the CC (DoC) is:
1. a radically horizontal and non-hierarchical denomination;
 2. composed of three “manifestations” or “expressions” of the church, the:
 - a. individual congregations,
 - b. regional ministries (including Canada as a region), and
 - c. general unit ministries (including the General Minister & President);
 3. with no single one of these units or manifestations consisting of the “church”;
 4. but rather all three together in covenantly cooperation are “church”;
 5. the most authoritative policymaking body is the biannual General Assembly.

For the full text see:

<http://www.disciples.org/AboutTheDisciples/TheDesignoftheChristianChurch/tabid/228/Default.aspx>

(1968 merger and establishment of the Joint Office for Latin America between CC (DoC) cont'd) and the UCC (will be discontinued in 1971 but re-established in 1989).

establishment of **Community Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Chicago** (will later merge with South Congregational Church (UCC) to form South Community Church, Chicago in 1974).

1969 – 1st General Assembly (every 2 years). (Note: there is NOT a “National Assembly” or “National Ministries” as the denomination includes Canada; however Puerto Rico is not included as they constitute their own denomination like Disciples in Mexico, Paraguay, Argentina, Congo, and Australia; Disciples in India, Britain, and English-Caribbean joined ecumenical churches to form new “united” denominations).

1971 – over 650,000 members leave over the formation of the institutional denomination (considered unbiblical) to form the independent Christian Churches.

Charles Harvey Lord installed as co-minister of University Christian Church.

1973 – Charles Bayer retires from University Christian Church.

Margaret H. Stern (UCC) hired as co-minister of University Christian Church.

1974 – establishment of **South Community Church, Chicago** with the merger of South Congregational Church (UCC), Chicago and Community Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Chicago.

1976 – first Korean Disciples congregation, Wilshire Korean Christian Church.

1977 – establishment of the Disciples-Roman Catholic Dialogue (the oldest, continuously running ecumenical dialogue between the Catholic and a U.S. mainline Protestant communion/denomination).

1978 – 1st consultation of American Asian Disciples (later becomes the ethnic-linguistic ministry called **North American Pacific Asian Disciples (NAPAD)**):

<http://www.napad.net/>

University Christian Church dually affiliates with BOTH the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) AND the United Church of Christ.

1980 – merger and establishment of the Joint Office for Middle East between CC (DoC) and the UCC between the CC (DoC) and the UCC for combined mission work.

- (1980 establishment of **University Church of Chicago** (United Church of Christ and cont'd) Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)) with the “marriage” between University Christian Church (Disciples of Christ and UCC) and South Community Church (UCC and CC (DoC)).
- 1989 – formal “ecumenical partnership” established between the CC (DoC) and the UCC.
- 1990 – establishment of first Chinese Disciples congregation since 1923, First Christian Church of Alameda, California.
- 1991 – Don and Ann Marie Coleman hired as senior co-ministers of University Church of Chicago (retire in 2008).
- 1992 – merger and establishment of the Joint Ministry in Africa between the CC (DoC) and the UCC between the CC (DoC) and the UCC for combined mission work.
- 1994 – establishment of the Joint Office for Europe between the CC (DoC) and the UCC for combined mission work.
- 1996 – formation of the **Common Global Ministries Board** with shared resources and staff between the CC (DoC) and the UCC: <http://globalministries.org/>
- 2005 – Sharon Watkins elected General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the first woman to head a mainline Christian denomination.
- 2009 – Watkins preaches at the National Prayer Breakfast for President Barak Obama’s inauguration, Washington, D.C.
- 2010 – Watkins chosen as one of Pres. Obama’s “10 Most Important Faith Leaders,” see: <http://www.usnews.com/listings/obama-faith-leaders/9-the-rev.-sharon-watkins>

Note:

- role of African Americans (and multi-ethnicity in general) since 1801 and women in the building of the movement and its more enduring institutions,
- role of immigrants (Scots-Irish, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Caribbean, etc.) throughout movement since the beginning (remains strong in the present),
- bias against/absence of Native Americans (except with Yakama Nation),
- the priority on ecumenism (even to a detriment, e.g., over slavery and “union”),
- value of intellect and discernment prior to and *with* “experience” and Bible.

Closing note:

A member of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is NOT a “Disciple” – that would be Peter, James, Andrew, and the others who knew Jesus personally – but rather one is a “**Disciples**”; e.g., I cannot say “...as a Disciple...(blah, blah, blah)” but rather I would say “I’m Disciples,” like one would say “I’m UCC” or “I’m Baptist,” etc. Sounds goofy, but that’s what we get with a denomination that likes parenthesis in its name. This little rule, the prayer that Jesus taught that we say at every worship, and the refrain “no creed but Christ” are probably the closest things to “creeds” in this creedless Christian communion.