

Purpose

- To learn about our church

Materials

- Bibles

Background Information

The Disciples and Christians began the very difficult task of joining these two movements into one. They agreed on rejecting all creeds but Christ, practicing baptism by immersion, offering communion to everyone, giving each congregation the right to control themselves, and following the scriptures. By 1840 some congregations were sending members to a gathering for fellowship. The first national convention was held in Cincinnati in 1849. 156 delegates attended from one hundred churches.

Barton Stone died in 1844, Thomas Campbell died in 1854, Walter Scott died in 1861 and Alexander Campbell died in 1866. With the death of all four founders the combined churches entered into a time of great growth, local congregation awareness and more and more differences. Some battles surfaced because of their differences. They disagreed on whether to use instrumental music during worship. Some believed that instruments were not mentioned in the New Testament so they should not be allowed. Another issue that caused some disagreement was the missionary work. There were some other issues that they did not agree upon, but these two were the largest.

It was not until 1968 that the church formally adopted the name Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

DISCIPLES AND CHRISTIAN THOUGHTS*BIBLE*

In Bible times the events that happened were related to others by word of mouth. Jesus' disciples realized that it was important for Jesus' words and these events to be preserved for all mankind in the future. As we learned earlier we have a total of 66 books in the Bible. 39 of these books are in the Old Testament. Here we have a collection of history, law, prophecy, poetry and folklore. It was written before Jesus lived and contains books that describe an "agreement" between God and the Hebrews. 27 books appear in the New Testament. These 27 books contain the gospels, pastoral letters, history, and a vision of the future. The New Testament was written after Jesus lived and describes the "agreement"

between God and the Christians. These 66 books were by a variety of men over a span of more than 1200 years.

Both Stone and Campbell believed that it was faith in God that we need to have, not faith in the Bible. However, only through careful study of the Bible can we learn what the Bible tells us to do. Learning the scriptures can strengthen our belief.

We as Disciples always have scripture to back up what we believe. The Campbells were often heard to say “Where the scriptures speak – we speak. Where the scriptures are silent – we are silent.”

GOD

God is recognized as our creator. God also has many other names: Counselor, teacher, advisor, healer and others. (Ask them to give you some names that we use for God). We believe that it is important to develop a personal relationship with God. God is the first part of the Trinity made up of God, Jesus and Holy Spirit. The Disciples developed an affirmation in 1978 that says, “We rejoice in God, Maker of Heaven & Earth.”

JESUS CHRIST

We recognize that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, sent here on earth to die on the cross for our sins. Only because Jesus died for our sins can we be assured of eternal life once we confess that we believe. The word Christ means anointed one or the Messiah. Jesus became another part of the Trinity. The joining of God with man was done by making Jesus Christ in human form and living in human conditions.

Our founders believed that creeds were of no use. The only creed to need to follow is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a very personal thing and must be done by each person alone. Our Disciples affirmation states, “We confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and proclaim him Lord and Savior of the World.”

HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the third part of the trinity. The Holy Spirit, God and Jesus are one single union. The Holy Spirit is the “energy” of God. This fills us when we confess that Jesus is Lord. The Holy Spirit is what dwells within us and helps us to maintain our Christian spirit as we live in this world.

THE SACRAMENTS

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has two main sacraments. Sacraments are defined as a ritual or ceremony. We do these sacraments to prove that we believe and because God asked us to. Baptism is a symbolic washing away of our sins and starting anew in Jesus. The Lord’s Supper is a way of commemorating that Jesus died on the cross so that we might be saved. Jesus did each of these sacraments while he was here on earth. You will learn more about these in the month of March.

BAPTISM

Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist in the river Jordan. Alexander Campbell, his wife, mother and father were baptized in 1812 in Buffalo Creek, Pennsylvania. When we refer to baptism we are speaking of immersion. Other denominations do what is called “sprinkling.” Sprinkling is when water from a basin is literally sprinkled on the head of one who confesses Christ as Savior. We also believe that each person must decide for himself or herself that they believe Jesus died for them, so we do not baptize until about the age of 12 or 13 when this decision is made. Some churches also baptize babies. We do not baptize children because we feel they need to make that decision and they are under God’s grace until that time.

THE LORD’S SUPPER

Communion and the Lord’s Supper are the same thing. We use the name interchangeably. Jesus and his disciples had the Lord’s Supper together just before Jesus was arrested by the soldiers in Gethsemane. While Thomas Campbell was at the Brush Run Church when he reintroduced the idea of the Lord’s Supper to the entire congregation. As Disciples we have communion every Sunday because we feel that it is the focus of our worship. Other churches have communion four times a year, monthly, or any other timing. This sacrament symbolizes that Jesus bled and died on the cross to save us. He had no sin, but took ours on himself. The bread represents his body, broken. The wine represents his blood, shed on the cross. As Disciples we also believe that communion is only to be taken after baptism has taken place.

SEASONS OF THE CHURCH YEAR

Our church year is divided into five seasons. They always follow each other in chronological order. This represents the orderly progression of the Lord’s life in the church.

- ADVENT (CHRISTMAS)

Advent means “coming.” Advent begins four weeks before Christmas and anticipates Bethlehem and the fulfillment of the promise that God would send his son. Christmas and the eleven days that follow celebrate the birth of Jesus. This occurs from the end of November until early January. Liturgical color for Advent is purple then white from Christmas Eve on. The use of purple means royalty and penitence.

- EPIPHANY

Epiphany means, “appearing.” Epiphany begins the twelfth day after Christmas and lasts through March. During Epiphany we celebrate the visit of the Magi and also the baptism of Jesus. This season tells of the unveiling of God’s gift to humankind. Liturgical color for Epiphany is white. This symbolizes purity, joy and the light of truth.

- LENT

Lent means, “spring.” The Lent or Lenten season begins on Ash Wednesday and lasts forty weekdays up to Easter. This is a time of repentance and self-examination. This is a time for Christians to look back on renewal, rebirth, and reconciliation with God’s will. During this time we study about the Lord’s Supper, the betrayal of Jesus, his trial, death and resurrection. Liturgical color for Lent is purple, except on Good Friday it is red or black. The purple symbolizes royalty and penitence; red or black symbolize black blood and darkness.

- EASTERTIDE

This season begins with Easter and continues for seven weeks until Pentecost. This is a time to have hope and rejoice. We also help to alleviate injustice, exploitation, and the denial of human dignity. Liturgical color is white. This symbolizes purity, joy, and the light of truth.

- PENTECOST

Pentecost is the celebration of the Church’s birthday. This is done fifty days after Easter. This is a time to remember the descent of the Holy Spirit on the new believers and the apostles in Jerusalem. This also makes us think of the Tower of Babel. Liturgical color is green or blue. This symbolizes the life of the earth, nature and hope.

Watch the front of our church for the paraments. Paraments are the cloth that is draped over the communion table. Many times the minister’s stole matches also. These are the colors that fit the seasons of the church.