

**Churches of Christ** are autonomous Christian congregations associated with one another through distinct beliefs and practices. Represented chiefly in the United States and one of several branches to develop out of the American Restoration Movement, they claim biblical precedent for their doctrine and practice and trace their heritage back to the early Christian church as described in the New Testament.

*Prior to 1906, all congregations associated with the Restoration Movement had been reported together by the Census Bureau. But as the movement developed, tensions grew between those who emphasized unity and those who emphasized restoration, highlighting differences in the groups' underlying approaches to biblical interpretation. For the Churches of Christ, practices not present in accounts of New Testament worship were not permissible in the church. In contrast, the Christian Church may consider any practice not expressly forbidden*

*For example, the Christian Church uses musical instruments in worship (known as the Christian Church), whereas the Churches of Christ believe a cappella singing to be proper, although some Church of Christ congregations do use instruments. In addition, there was also disagreement over the appropriateness of organizational structures above the congregational level, such as those of missionary societies, funding orphanages and [denominational structure]. The separation of the Churches of Christ and the Christian Churches had been taking place gradually for decades.*

Modern Churches of Christ have their historical roots in the Restoration Movement, which was a converging of Christians across denominational lines in search of a return to an original, "pre-denominational" Christianity. Participants in this movement sought to base their doctrine and practice on the Bible alone, rather than recognizing the traditional councils and denominational hierarchies that had come to define Christianity since the first century A.D. Members of the Churches of Christ believe that Jesus founded only one church, that the current divisions among Christians do not express God's will, and that the only basis for restoring Christian unity is the Bible. They simply identify themselves as "Christians", without using any other forms of religious or denominational identification. They believe that they are recreating the New Testament church as established by Christ.

Churches of Christ generally share the following theological beliefs and practices:

- Autonomous, congregational church organization without denominational oversight;

- Refusal to hold to any formal creeds or informal "doctrinal statements" or "statements of faith", stating instead a reliance on the Bible alone for doctrine and practice;
- Local governance by a plurality of male elders;
- Baptism by immersion of consenting believers in the Name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins;
- Weekly observance of the Lord's Supper on Sunday
  - In British congregations, the term "breaking of bread" is commonly used.
  - In American congregations, the terms "Communion" or "body and blood" are used.
  - Churches of Christ typically offer open communion. offering the bread and fruit of the vine to all present at each person's self-examination.
- Practice of *a cappella* singing is the norm in worship, based on New Testament passages teaching to sing for worship, with no mention of instrumental music (and also that worship in church assemblies for centuries in the early Church practiced a cappella singing) (Ephesians 5:19)

In keeping with their history, the Churches of Christ claim the New Testament as their sole rule of faith and practice in deciding matters of doctrine and ecclesiastical structure. They view the Old Testament as divinely inspired and historically accurate, but they do not consider its laws to be binding under the New Covenant in Christ (unless they are repeated in the New Testament) (Hebrews 8: 7-13). They believe that the New Testament demonstrates how a person may become a Christian (and thus a part of the universal Church of Christ) and how a church should be collectively organized and carry out its scriptural purposes.

The information above is a brief summary cut from Wikipedia. Wikipedia provides significantly more detail.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Churches\\_of\\_Christ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Churches_of_Christ)