



# FACT SHEET

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
March 2014

**Congregations:** 3,536  
**Members:** 600,000  
**Ministers:** 6,906 approx. 3,254 clergy serving congregations

**Leadership:** General Minister & President  
**Rev. Dr. Sharon E. Watkins**  
Associate General Minister & Vice President  
**Rev. Dr. Todd A. Adams**  
Associate General Minister and Administrative Secretary for the National Convocation  
**Rev. Dr. Timothy M. James**

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## ORIGINS:

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) was born on the American frontier in the early 1800s as a movement opposing the rigid denominationalism imported from Europe and seeking Christian unity on a simple New Testament basis. Its founders were Alexander Campbell in the states of western Pennsylvania and Virginia, and Barton W. Stone in Kentucky. The basic principle was a fellowship built around the Lord's Table and tolerance of widely divergent viewpoints concerning "non-essentials." Counting the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ which gradually separated from the Disciples, the Stone-Campbell development represents an indigenous American religious movement second only to the Mormons in size. Both Campbell and Stone had been Presbyterians.

## ORGANIZATION:

The Disciples have a history of congregational government although in 1968 they adopted a structure that places the church in covenantal relationships in congregational, regional and general ministries. Each expression is considered equal rather than hierarchical and each has its protected rights and identified responsibilities. Each is in covenantal relationship with the other entities and calls or dismisses its own staff and handles its own finance and property. The general ministries are called general rather than national because both the United States and Canada are included in the structure. There are 32 regions, many of them encompassing a single state.

## THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

The representative body of the church meets biennially and may involve 6,000-8,000 persons, about half of them voting representatives from congregations and regions. All persons who register have the right to speak. The voters include all ministers, two lay persons from each congregation (more from larger congregations), regional representatives and the church's General Board. The General Board is a 75-voting-member-body with 50 ex officio non-voting members that meets annually. A 20-member Administrative Committee meets twice annually.

## RACIAL/ETHNIC AND GEOGRAPHIC DATA:

Disciples of Christ membership includes approximately 40,000 African Americans and more than 400 predominantly African American congregations, about 7,000 Hispanics in more than 120 congregations, some 5,000 American Asians in more than 75 congregations, and smaller numbers of Native Americans. There are Disciples congregations in 46 states, the District of Columbia, and five Canadian provinces. The Greater Kansas City region has the highest concentration of Disciples. However, the Southwest region, which includes Texas and part of New Mexico, has the highest number of members and congregations. The next most populous regions are Indiana, Mid-America (which includes Missouri and part of Illinois), Ohio and Kentucky.