

# What do Disciples believe?



Like most Christians, Disciples affirm:

- **Jesus Christ is the son of the Living God and offers saving grace to all.**
- **All people are God's children.**

**Beliefs and practices usually associated with Disciples include:**

- **Open Communion.** The Lord's Supper, or Communion, is celebrated in weekly worship. It is open to all who believe in Jesus Christ.



## History and Governance

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) was founded in the early 1800s in the United States. The founders envisioned a united church of Jesus Christ modeled on the New Testament. We structure our community around the biblical idea of covenant, emphasizing not obedience to human authority but accountability to one another because of our shared belief in Christ.



Today our 3,600 congregations still share these characteristics:

- Each congregation is self-governing and calls its own pastor.
- Worship services may be formal or informal, and include women and men in leadership.
- Open discussion of issues is encouraged. Diversity of opinion is common.
- We are growing in racial and ethnic diversity.



## The Chalice

The chalice symbolizes the central place of communion in worship. The X-shaped cross of the disciple Andrew is a reminder of the ministry of each person and the importance of evangelism.



**Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**  
IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

- **Freedom of belief.** Disciples are called together around belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Persons are free to follow their consciences guided by the Bible, the Holy Spirit, study and prayer, and are expected to extend that freedom to others. We hold the centrality of scripture, recognizing that each person has the freedom - and the responsibility - to study God's Word within the community of the church.

- **Baptism by immersion.** In baptism the old self-centered life is set aside, and a new life of trust in God begins. Although Disciples practice baptism by immersion, other baptism traditions are honored.



- **Belief in the oneness of the church.** All Christians are called to be one in Christ and to find ways to work together in showing God's love through witness and service. We hear a special calling to make visible the unity of all Christians. In our diversity we belong to one another because we commonly belong to Christ.

- **The ministry of all believers.** Both ministers and lay persons lead in worship, service and spiritual growth. We affirm the priesthood of all believers, rejoicing in the gifts of the Holy Spirit - which include the gift of leadership - that God has given for the common good.

## Our Vision

### True Community

Although each Disciples congregation has its own personality, all have members who care for each other, opportunities to grow and learn, and ways to serve others. As churches grow in true community, they also reach out to include others – encouraging the growth of a diverse community in which all are welcomed and cared for. In Disciples congregations, study and fellowship groups offer opportunities to ask honest questions, share opinions and discover ways to deal with life's difficult issues and to grow in faith.

### Deep Christian Spirituality

Disciples encourage one another in the spiritual disciplines – practices through which we open ourselves to being shaped by God. Those disciplines include prayer, Bible study, worship, stewardship, service, study of the church's tradition and hospitality to strangers. Disciple

congregations meet weekly to worship God and celebrate the Lord's Supper.

### A Passion for Justice

We work to make a difference in our neighborhoods and the wider community. As followers of Jesus we help in soup kitchens and food pantries, shelter the homeless and care for children. We advocate for fairness in laws and public policy. The Christian Church (Disciple of Christ) has committed itself to become a pro-reconciling, anti-racist church. Our shared ministries reach out across North America. We "get dirty for Jesus," repairing homes and community centers, cleaning up after natural disasters and bringing hope where there is despair. Disciples facilities care for abused children and their families, persons with disabling conditions and senior adults. Our higher education institutions educate and train women and men for the ministry and for careers in other fields.