

Still Christians Only – A Candid Look at the Conservative Christian Churches/Churches of Christ (1927–2007)

NORTH AMERICAN CHRISTIAN CONVENTION
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Introduction

The title of this paper, "Still Christians Only," will remind many of the classic book written by James DeForest Murch, *Christians Only, A History of the Restoration Movement* (Standard Publishing, 1962). Others may think of the classic slogan (origin unknown), "We are Christians only." Later this was expanded to "We are Christians only, but not the only Christians." From the beginning of the Restoration Movement in America the name "Christian" was favored (although Alexander Campbell preferred "Disciple"). The name "Christian" can be found in at least part of the title of 339 different periodicals published by members of the Stone-Campbell Movement. In 2003, Sam E. Stone, editor of *Christian Standard*, wrote *Simply Christians*, a concise look at the independent fellowship of conservative Christian Churches/Churches of Christ and a brief review of the basic principles of the Restoration Movement.

This paper will take a candid look at these churches that are still striving to be "Christians only" in a post-denominational, post-modern world.

SUGGESTED DATES FOR THE BEGINNING OF THE CONSERVATIVE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES/CHURCHES OF CHRIST

When did the conservative churches emerge from their more liberal counterparts, the Disciples of

Christ? While this paper will favor the year 1927, it will also cite other years suggested by a variety of writers and scholars.

I favor the year **1927**, the year the North American Christian Convention was founded. If you accept that date then this year (2007) marks the 80th anniversary of the emergence of the conservative Christian Churches/Churches of Christ. (Last year marked the 100th anniversary of the departure of the Churches of Christ from the Disciples of Christ.) James B. North (*Union in Truth*, Standard Publishing, 1994) chooses **1926-1927**, "for it was the combination of disillusionment at the Memphis Convention and the convening of the first North American Christian Convention a year later that made obvious the division that had already taken place." Edwin V. Hayden (*North American Gold*, College Press, 1989) cites the Oct. 22, 1927 *Christian Standard*. "A mass meeting of our brethren, held in Memphis, Tenn., Nov, 12, 1926, voiced a widespread and growing sentiment in favor of a general yearly meeting of members of the churches of Christ, such meetings not to be conventions of churches, agencies, or organizations, but assemblies of brethren; not to promote special interests, but for the purpose of defending, reviving and furthering our plea for the restoration and extension of New Testament Christianity."

C. J. Dull, in his paper "The Lost Unity Vision: Merger and Division in the 1940s and 1950s," believes

that **1936**, the year the UCMS became financially solvent and started pushing for a “social gospel,” is “the logical beginning of this period of separation.”

North does not believe that Murch stipulated any particular date, but cites Leroy Garrett who felt that Murch favored **1943**. Murch did point to a policy change at the *Christian Standard* that year to become “a rallying center for all who believe implicitly in the authority of Christ as revealed to us in the divinely inspired New Testament Scriptures.”

Others point to **1948** when the Commission of Restudy of the Disciples of Christ (established by the International Convention of the Disciples of Christ in 1934) made its final report and disbanded.

A.T. DeGroot called **1955** “the birthday” of the independents because it was in that year that the conservatives published what would come to be an annual listing of churches and ministers “independent” of the Disciples, *The Directory of the Ministry*. In 1956 DeGroot labeled the emergent independents as “Church of Christ Number Two” in a book by the same title.

Henry Webb (*In Search of Christian Unity*, ACU Press, 2003) contends that “it is not possible to fix a precise date for this division” but offers several possibilities: **1950**, when the NACC became an annual event; and **1955**, with the publication of *Directory of the Ministry*.

A few historians argue for **1968** as the date conservatives separated from the Disciples. “Restructure” was adopted by the Disciples that year creating a hue and cry to “get out of the (Disciples) Yearbook” among conservatives. (Indeed, 3,500 congregations asked to be removed from the *Disciples YearBook* where they had been listed for years, even though they were not supporters or in sympathy with the programs of the Disciples.)

The latest date that is suggested for the departure is **1971**, the year conservative Christian Churches/Churches of Christ was listed separately in the *Yearbook of American Churches*. North points out that this list-

ing was but a belated acknowledgement of what had happened a long four decades earlier.

A personal note. I was born in 1945 and was baptized in 1958. I grew up in Iowa where the Iowa Supreme Court in 1952 reversed a lower court decision against the Disciples in their effort to gain possession of the church in Eldora, only a few miles from where my grandmother lived. I was taught by stalwart conservatives like Russell Boatman at Pine Lake Bible Camp (near Eldora) and studied for four years (1964-1968) under Donald G. Hunt in a conservative Bible College. In my heart of hearts I knew who “we” were and who we weren’t from the 1960s and on. I concur with James North that **1927** is at least the beginning of the separation of the conservatives from the Disciples.

WHAT LED TO THE EMERGENCE OF THE CONSERVATIVE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES/CHURCHES OF CHRIST?

Prior to the formation of the North American Christian Convention in 1927 there were a number of biblical issues being discussed in the brotherhood. I will list them under three primary headings.

First, there was the matter of a new approach to **Holy Scripture** called “**higher criticism**.” In the years following the Civil War some Disciple leaders began to openly challenge traditional beliefs about the Bible (date, authorship, sources, etc.). In 1869 L. L. Pinkerton renounced the plenary inspiration of Scripture. Twenty years later R. C. Cave denied the virgin birth and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ in a controversial sermon preached in St. Louis. In 1893, recognizing the devastating results of higher criticism, *Christian Standard* invited J. W. McGarvey to write a weekly column, “Biblical Criticism,” which ran until his death in 1911. One year later the Disciple Divinity House was begun at the University of Chicago Divinity School and in 1896 the Campbell Institute was established, also in Chicago. Both institutions were considered by conservatives to be centers of liberalism. H. L. Willet, the first president of the University of Chicago, and a founder of the Disciples

Divinity House, denied the miracles of Jesus in 1908. In 1917, charges of liberalism were leveled by *Christian Standard* at the College of the Bible (today Lexington Theological Seminary). Conservatives responded by making plans to establish Bible colleges that would train ministers in a “liberal-free zone.”

Second, and as a direct result of a liberal view of the Bible, was the issue of **baptism** and “**open membership**.” “Open membership” is the practice of admitting unimmersed believers into the membership of a local church. Today it is the standard practice of most congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) but it is not the practice conservative Christian Churches/Churches of Christ or Churches of Christ (a cappella). L. L. Pinkerton promoted open membership in the 1860s and 1870s, as did J. A. Lord in the 1880s. From the outset *Christian Standard* opposed open membership. In 1885 the Cedar Avenue Church in Cleveland, Ohio, adopted the practice. E. S. Ames introduced open membership to the Hyde Park Church of Christ in Chicago. By 1919 the congregation was practicing all forms of baptism as well. Some U.S.-sent missionaries in England (1878), China (1911), and the Philippines (1926) were also practicing open membership. The UCMS (United Christian Missionary Society), formerly American Christian Missionary Society/Foreign Christian Missionary Society, supported open membership. In 1920 Des Moines minister Charles Medbury introduced a resolution at the International Convention calling for missionaries to discontinue open membership or resign. The resolution passed. P. H. Welshimer, acknowledged leader of the conservatives, announced in 1921 that First Christian Church in Canton, Ohio, was withdrawing financial support from the UCMS if they did not recall all missionaries who practiced open membership. In 1922 the “Sweeney Resolution” urged the UCMS to oppose open membership. All of these resolutions passed with overwhelming support of the moderates and conservatives but were never implemented by the hierarchy of the UCMS. A “Peace Resolution” in 1925 passed by a large margin but was “interpreted” by the UCMS to be creedal and divisive. North notes that the 1926

International Convention in Memphis was the last time the conservatives mounted a serious challenge to the direction of the UCMS. They felt betrayed. Welshimer put the axe to the root of the tree when he wrote in the Dec. 4, 1926 *Christian Standard*, “If you remove the authority of Jesus, you destroy the meaning of baptism. If you eliminate the inspiration and the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures, you take away the meaning and sacredness of baptism...This is a fight for more than an ordinance. It is a fight for loyalty to Jesus Christ and for an appreciation of His authority, the inspiration of His word, and the compliance with stipulated conditions that remission of sins may be granted.”

The third issue that led to the eventual separation of the conservatives from the liberals involved the latter’s “**comity agreements**,” **ecumenicity**, and the move to become a “**mainline denomination**.” “Comity” was the practice of the denominational mission boards to divide up a country where each denomination received an allotted part of the country to carry on their work. Of the comity agreement reached in Mexico, North says, “For the conservatives it meant abandoning the Restoration Movement’s unique teaching on baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, accepting Methodist doctrine and practice, and abandoning local congregational autonomy with its pattern of authority vested in elders and deacons.” Increasingly the Disciples were becoming ecumenical and interdenominational. As early as 1948 Disciple leaders were thinking, “restructure.” Twenty years later (1968) the Disciples voted to become a mainline denomination, changing their name from Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). They are members of both the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches and have discussed merger with the United Church of Christ. In 1985 “Disciple Renewal” was formed to counter the leftward drift of the Disciples, but only a handful of congregations have heeded the call.

A CANDID LOOK AT THE FIRST FORTY YEARS OF THE CONSERVATIVE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES/CHURCHES OF CHRIST (1927-1967)

Following the formation of the North American Christian Convention in 1927, a remarkable number of **conservative Bible Colleges** was established to counter the perceived liberalism in Disciple colleges and universities. Colleges established *before* 1927 that identified with the conservatives were Milligan College, Johnson Bible College, Minnesota Bible College, Kentucky Christian College, and Cincinnati Bible Seminary. The latter institution was formed in 1924 and was a merger of McGarvey Bible College and Cincinnati Bible Institute (1923). Northwest Christian College (1895) lists itself with both groups. In the first 40 years of the conservatives' existence as an "independent" people, 1927 to 1967, I count an amazing total of 35 Bible colleges that were established in the U.S. and Canada. This includes a staggering 17 in the 1940s, *five* in the year I was born (1945). Leery of the liberalism they had seen or experienced among the Disciples, none of these colleges pursued a liberal arts path (Milligan being the lone exception). Only in recent years have they sought accreditation or university status. Having said that, statistics in 2004 show that of 87 Bible colleges accredited by the AABC (now ABHE), the largest number of schools from any religious group were the 17 from the Christian Churches.

The rise of **parachurch ministries** or agencies has also been remarkable, considering that the conservatives were stung by agencies like the UCMS. The 2006 *Directory of the Ministry* lists 1,085 agencies in the United States alone. Notable among them between 1927 and 1967 are

- The Christians' Hour, a national radio broadcast (1943)
- Go Ye Chapel (1948)
- Christian Missionary Fellowship (1949)
- Gospel Broadcasting Mission (1952)
- Church Development Fund (1953)

- Institute of Church Growth, later known as School of World Mission (1954)
- College Press Publishing Company (1959)
- "God is Just a Prayer Away" national radio broadcast (1962)
- Bible Bowl, a division of the NACC (1964)
- Revival Fires national radio broadcast (1964)
- Revival Fires national television broadcast (1965)
- Person-to-Person Ministries (1967)

Notable **Christian journals** and **religious publications** that joined *Christian Standard* (1866), *The Lookout* (1899), and *Restoration Herald* (1925) since 1927 and are still being published include *The Voice of Evangelism* (1946), *Horizons* (1955), *The Banner of Truth* (1962), *The Sword and Staff* (1962), *One Body* (1984), and *Stone-Campbell Journal* (1998).

Several **efforts to reconnect** with Churches of Christ, who parted company with the Disciples in about 1906, took place in the mid-1930s. On the West Coast William Jessup and Judge Ernest Beam led a series of Unity Rallies that lasted, off and on, until Beam's death in 1957. Back east, James DeForest Murch and Claude F. Witty cooperated in a series of National Unity Meetings that continued into the early 1940s.

A major effort to discuss unity between Disciple and Independent moderates was the Disciple-funded Commission on Restudy of the Disciples of Christ that commenced in 1934. It was not a large scale or grassroots effort but consisted of less than 40 participants that met three times a year from 1934 to 1948. The group heard more than 70 presentations. The final report was not printed by any major journal. In 1959 concerned individuals began a Consultation on the Internal Unity of Christian Churches that lasted until 1966.

National initiatives in the formative years of the conservatives would include "The Christians' Hour" in 1943, a national radio program, and the formation of the National Missionary Convention in 1948. In 1950 the North American Christian Convention

became an annual event (it had met ten times from 1927-1948, roughly every other year). Church Development Fund began in 1953 and the Institute for Church Growth was founded in 1954. The first “Directory of the Ministry: A Yearbook of Christian Churches/Churches of Christ” was published in 1955. College Press Publishing Company was launched in 1959. Revival Fires began radio broadcasts in 1964 and expanded to television in 1965. Person-to-Person Ministries started in 1967. These ministries emphasized evangelism, missions, fellowship, church planting, and serious Bible study.

Seminal works that were published during this time frame would include:

- *The Restoration Handbook*, Frederick D. Kershner, 1920
- *Christian Unity*, R. E. Elmore, 1924
- *Adventuring for Christian Unity*, Dean E. Walker, 1935
- *Concerning the Disciples*, P. H. Welshimer, 1936
- *Acts Made Actual*, Don DeWalt, 1953
- *The Church in the Bible*, Don DeWalt, 1958
- *The Unfolded Plan of God*, Donald G. Hunt, 1958
- *Christians Only*, James DeForest Murch, 1962
- *The Restoration Movement*, Enos E. Dowling, 1964

A CONTINUING CANDID LOOK AT THE CONSERVATIVE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES/ CHURCHES OF CHRIST FROM 1968 TO 2007

Time magazine once called 1968 “a knife blade, the year (that) severed past from future.” 1968 was the year of the Tet offensive, the assassinations of MLK and RFK, the SDS takeover of Columbia University, and anti-war forces making a farce of the Democratic Convention in Chicago. One might say that 1968 was also a knife blade that pretty much severed Disciples from the conservatives with an ill-conceived move called “Restructure.” For years liberal Disciples had wanted to restructure into a full-fledged denomination. That is what finally took place in 1968. A new

name was adopted: Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The old name was Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ). 3,500 Independent churches, representing 750,000 members, who had been listed in the Disciple’s *Yearbook* for years (even though they had long ceased to support Disciple’s programs, fearing a takeover of church property, wrote and requested to have their names removed from the roll.

It is significant to me that the year before the Disciples voted to become a denomination, “Bus” Wiseman started Person-to-Person Ministries (1967) That ministry began the Hillsboro (OH) Family Camp, today the largest family camp (4,000 attendees) operated by Independents. And in 1968, Bob Stacy began Christ in Youth, a phenomenal ministry that has influenced multitudes of young people throughout the nation to live for Christ (CIY’s goal is to impact one million youth for Christ in this decade through conferences, service projects, and mission trips.) Independent ministries like these proved far more efficient, economical, and effective than a heavy-handed, slow-moving, top-down denominational structure.

There were not nearly as many Bible colleges founded from 1968-2007 (only a half-dozen or so), but the parachurch ministry movement continued to grow. Among them, to cite but a few, were:

- National Church Growth Research Center, 1972
- American Rehabilitation Ministries (now ARM International), 1973
- International Disaster Emergency Services (IDES), 1973
- Good News Productions, International, 1976
- Pioneer Bible Translators, 1976
- White Fields Overseas Evangelism, 1978
- Team Expansion, 1978
- Literature & Teaching Ministries, 1992
- Peace on Earth Ministries, 1992
- Harvest Prayer Ministries, 1993
- Stadia: New Church Strategies, 2003
- Londen Institute for Evangelism, 2004

The NCGRC, located in Washington, D.C., encouraged church growth through the “Vision Splendid” series. ARM, located in Joplin, MO, is one of the leading prison ministries in the U.S., placing thousands of Bibles, baptisteries, and correspondence courses in hundreds of correctional facilities. IDES has distributed millions of dollars (all contributed voluntarily by individuals or congregations) worldwide to disaster victims. GNPI provides culturally accurate audio-visuals for 111 nations of the world. PBT provides Scriptures in the language of the peoples in 19 language projects. WFOE has planted over 600 churches in 80 countries and baptized over 300,000 people. TE partners has planted 194 churches in 40 countries. LATM has completed 375 book projects, helping produce nearly one million books in 48 languages. HPM equips local churches to pray through conferences, seminars, and resources. Stadia has planted 100 new churches in the U.S. LIFE trains second career people for ministry through distance learning and campus residencies.

Sam Stone has said, “The health and vitality of any group of churches may be understood better by observing their efforts in world evangelism...Christian Churches and Churches of Christ have 1,154 missionaries sent out from the U.S., making them the third largest sending group among all Protestants.” (A Cappella Churches of Christ are fourth in size with 1,014 missionaries.) These figures do not include thousands who go on “short term” mission trips every year or those who are doing mission work in restricted countries and cannot publicize their work.

On September 8, 2002, the *New York Times* reported that Christian Churches/Churches of Christ were the second-**fastest growing religious group in America** between 1990 and 2000. (If you take the Mormons out of the equation, they were the fastest-growing group, growing at a rate of 18.6 percent.) The *Times* article noted that one of the major reasons for their growth was their conservative Bible teaching and practice.

In 1985 an independent initiative called “Double Vision” was launched to double the num-

ber of Christian Churches in America. **Planting new churches** is seen as the best way to reach new people for Christ. From 1993-2003 the Northern California Evangelistic Association started 53 new churches with an average of 15,500 in attendance. (They merged with CDF in 2001 and became Stadia in 2003.) The Chicago District Evangelizing Association started 10 with an average weekly attendance of 2,400.

The rise of the “megachurch” in the fellowship of Christian Churches/Churches of Christ is truly remarkable. There are now 117 congregations from this fellowship who average at least 1,000 in worship. The largest is Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, KY, who averaged 18,417 in 2006 (with 29,386 in attendance for Easter). Total attendance of all 117 churches on an average weekend is 293,191. To help grasp this figure, Churches of Christ (a cappella) in Texas, which number 2,190, average 272,643 in attendance. Eighteen of these churches are in Indiana, 12 in California, and 11 in Ohio. The fastest-growing church since 1997 is Christ’s Church of the Valley, Peoria, AZ, who grew at a rate of 405%.

While the conservative Christian Churches may be known for their emphasis on youth, missions, evangelism, and church planting, it is also evident, at least to this observer, that the **twin principles of Christian unity and biblical teaching** remain constant. In 1983 concerned individuals started the Open Forum. Eventually they began meeting with another Restoration-minded people, the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana). In 1984 a Restoration Summit was held at Ozark Bible College between over 100 brethren from Christian Churches/Churches of Christ and Churches of Christ (a cappella). Restoration Forum XXV will take place this fall on the same campus. The same year *One Body* was begun. In 1985 Disciple Renewal began (a conservative movement within Disciples, now known as Disciple Heritage Fellowship). *One Body* sponsored a series of talks with leaders from Disciple Renewal from 1995-2000. In 1999 a three-stream effort was begun, the Stone-Campbell Dialogue. The 2006 NACC was an amazing “family reunion” of Christian Churches/Churches of Christ and Churches of Christ (a cappella).

Conservative Bible preaching and teaching is a mainstay of this fellowship. A high view of Scripture and Christ is held by nearly all. As I stated at a class here at Pepperdine several years ago, “Scripture is here to criticize us; we are not here to criticize Scripture.” While other groups have divided over issues like the inerrancy of Scripture and the deity of Christ, we have stayed together. A survey of subjects treated in 514 sermons delivered at 50 NACCs during 62 years revealed that Christ (97), the Christian life (83), and the nature of the Church (56) led the list.

Books I consider “seminal” during this time frame, authored by Independent writers, would include the following (I did consult with a select group from both Christian Churches and Churches of Christ):

- *13 Lessons on Christian Doctrine*, Denver Sizemore, 1968 [all-time best-seller of College Press]
- *Studies in the Life of Christ*, R. C. Foster, 1971
- *Acts*, Gareth L. Reese, 1976
- *The Power of the Holy Spirit*, Don DeWalt [4 volumes in the 1970s]
- *Introduction to the Restoration Ideal*, Marshall J. Leggett, 1986
- *Romans*, Gareth L. Reese, 1987
- *Union in Truth*, James B. North, 1994
- *When God Builds a Church*, Bob Russell, 2000
- *The Faith Once For All*, Jack Cottrell, 2002
- *In Search of Christian Unity*, Henry E. Webb, 2003

The challenges we face together. When I was a freshman in college in 1964, I bought a book by Richard M. Nixon, *The Challenges We Face* (published in 1961). Today, Christian Churches/Churches of Christ face several challenges.

The continuing challenge to **balance the desire for Christian unity with biblical truth**. James North contends that these twin concerns were the ebb and flow that created the Restoration Movement. We do not want to sacrifice one for the other. Reuel Lemmons said, “Unity at the expense of doctrine is

unacceptable, and doctrine at the expense of unity is obnoxious.”

The Achilles heal in the Restoration Movement has been our inability to make clear determinations between **matters of faith and matters of opinion**. Some would make a hallmark of faith into a bookmark of opinion, and vice versa. We need to come to our senses and come to a consensus on primary concerns. Carl Ketcherside declared, “I shall make nothing a test of fellowship which God has not made a condition of salvation.”

“Speaking the truth in love” remains one of our greatest challenges. Not enough emphasis has been given to the slogan, “In all things, love.” As Don DeWalt said, “There is too much ‘hell’ in some people’s ‘hello’.” We need to “forbear one another in love.” Donald G. Hunt said, “It is impossible to forgive until you learn to forbear.” Forbearance is putting up with people we’d like to put down.

Another balancing act is **respecting our heritage while forging into the future**. The average Methodist knows more about his or her religious heritage than a member of the Christian Church. While we should not worship our ancestors, neither should we ignore them – “historical amnesia.” We all can see farther today because we stand upon the shoulders of giants.

My personal opinion is that our churches, in general, are **less biblically indoctrinated** than they were a generation ago. This may be due to extended praise and worship time, leaving less time to preach. Some preaching is based more on “how to” than “thus says the Lord.” Many churches have eliminated the Sunday evening and Midweek service – where biblical teaching was a mainstay. I suspect that the summer Christian service camps do not spend as much time on biblical indoctrination as they did when I was a kid.

Pragmatism (whatever works) versus subjective truth (whatever God says) is also a growing challenge.

The changing face of the church – what the church looks like and acts like – is also a great challenge. Some churches are choosing not to use the name “Christian Church” or “Church of Christ.” Some are adopting the title “pastor” for those who do the preaching. Many large churches are led by the senior minister (or “pastor”) while smaller churches are led by the elders. Different styles of worship (traditional/classic and contemporary) are a continuing concern. The role of women in the church (including teaching and preaching) will be at the forefront of discussion in the future.

The ordinances of the church – baptism and the Lord’s Supper – are being reexamined by some. A few churches have dispensed with observing the Lord’s Supper on Sunday morning and more than a few are now offering a communion service on Saturday evening. While all churches (to my knowledge) still practice baptism by immersion, some are not emphasizing “baptism for the forgiveness of sins” with the same intensity that they once did.

Being a “New Testament church” in the 21st century is a continuing challenge. Can we – should we – recognize the personal faith of devout evangelicals? How far can we go in participating in inter-church activities in the community? Should “outside speakers” be invited to the NACC? Should we pursue unity with estranged brethren from our own heritage? Questions like these – and more – should be discussed in a Christian manner.

I find it more than interesting that the issues that led to the formation of the conservative Christian Churches/Churches of Christ in 1927 (a high view of Scripture, the role of baptism in the conversion of a sinner, and being a New Testament church versus becoming a denomination) are still at the forefront in 2007. May we approach them, and discuss them, in the spirit of Christ.

TIMELINE

- 1793 – Name “Christian” adopted by Republican Methodists
- 1801- Cane Ridge Revival
- 1804 – “Last Will and Testament”
- 1809 – “Declaration and Address”
- 1816 – “Sermon on the Law”
- 1824 – Stone and Campbell meet for first time
- 1830 – *Millennial Harbinger* begins
- 1832 – Unity achieved at Georgetown
- 1840 – Bethany College founded
- 1845 – American Christian Bible Society organized
- 1849 – American Christian Missionary Society formed
- 1855 – *Gospel Advocate* begins
- 1859 – L. L. Pinkerton introduces instrumental music at Midway, Kentucky
- 1861 – Civil War begins
1st ACMS loyalty resolution
- 1863 – 2nd ACMS loyalty resolution
- 1865 – Civil War ends
Standard Publishing formed
- 1866 – A. Campbell dies
Christian Standard begins
- 1869 – Louisville Plan for organizing missions (dissolved in 1895)
Pinkerton renounces plenary inspiration of Bible
- 1873 – Pinkerton advocates open membership
- 1875 – ACMS becomes Foreign Christian Missionary Society
- 1881 – Missouri Christian Lectureship begins
Milligan College formed
- 1882 – *Christian-Evangelist* begins
- 1889 – Sand Creek “Address & Declaration”

- R. C. Cave denies virgin birth and resurrection of Christ
- 1893 – J. W. McGarvey writes “Biblical Criticism” column for CS (until 1911)
Johnson Bible College
- 1894 – Disciple Divinity House begun at University of Chicago
The Lookout (originally *Young People’s Standard*, 1884)
- 1895 – Northwest Christian College
- 1896 – Campbell Institute
- 1903 – E. S. Ames practices open membership in Chicago
- 1905 – *The Church of Christ* (Thomas W. Phillips) published
Federal Council of Churches formed (forerunner of National Council of Churches)
- 1906 – Churches of Christ listed separate from Disciples of Christ in U.S. Religious Census
- 1907 – Disciples join Federal Council of Churches
- 1908 – H. L. Willett questions miracles in Old Testament
- 1909 – Centennial Convention held in Pittsburgh
- 1913 – Minnesota Bible College (today Crossroads College)
- 1917 – International Convention of Disciples of Christ [superseded by General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in 1985]
Charges of liberalism leveled at College of the Bible
- 1919 – FCMS becomes United Christian Missionary Society
Kentucky Christian College (today Kentucky Christian University)
- 1920 – R. E. Elmore charges open membership in China
- 1922 – “Sweeney Resolution” urges UCMS to reject open membership
Clarke Fund established (became CRA in 1925)
- 1923 – McGarvey Bible College
Cincinnati Bible Institute
- 1924 – MBC & CBI merge to form Cincinnati Bible Seminary (today Cincinnati Christian University)
- 1925 – Christian Restoration Association begins
Restoration Herald begins
The Touchstone begins
Conservatives demand recall of China missionaries practicing open membership
- 1926 – Conservatives blocked at Memphis convention; form new convention
- 1927 – North American Christian Convention begun in Indianapolis**
Kansas Bible College [now Manhattan Christian College]
- 1928 – Pacific Bible Seminary [now Hope International University]
- 1930 – World Convention of Churches of Christ formed
- 1932 – Alberta Bible College, Calgary, ALB
- 1933 – Beam-Jessup Unity Rallies begin (ends in 1957)
- 1934 – ICD creates Commission on Restudy of the Disciples of Christ (ends 1948)
- 1935 – *Concerning the Disciples* (P. H. Welshimer)
Adventuring for Christian Unity (Dean E. Walker)
ICD adopts “Unified Promotion”
- 1937 – Murch-Witty start National Unity Meetings
Atlanta Christian College
- 1939 – San Jose Bible College [now William Jessup University]
- 1941 – Disciples of Christ Historical Society formed

- 1942 – Ozark Bible College (now Ozark Christian College)
- 1943 – Committee on Action formed
- “The Christians’ Hour” national radio program launched (merged with Gospel Broadcasting Mission in 1987)
- 1944 – *Christian Standard* issues Call for Enlistment
Nebraska Christian College
- Lincoln Bible Institute (now Lincoln Christian College & Seminary)
- 1945 – Boise Bible College
- Dakota Bible College (disbanded in 1988)
- College of the Scriptures
- Colegio Biblico
- Winston-Salem Bible College
- 1946 – Intermountain Bible College (ceased operations in 1985)
- Voice of Evangelism* begins
- 1947 – *Christian Standard* publishes “Honor Roll of the Faithful”
- Midwestern School of Evangelism (became Midwestern Correspondence School in 2006)
- 1946 – “Committee of 1000” formed (disbanded in 1949)
- Midwest Christian College [merged with Ozark Christian College in 1985]
- Eastern Christian College (now Lincoln Christian College East)
- 1947 – Southern Christian College (ceased in 1963)
- Southwest Christian Seminary (ceased in 1963)
- 1948 – National Missionary Convention formed
- Roanoke Bible College
- Go Ye Chapel Mission formed in NYC
- 1949 – Christian Missionary Fellowship formed
- Great Lakes Bible College [today Great Lakes Christian College]
- Louisville Bible College
- Kiamichi Clinic begun
- 1950 – NACC becomes annual event
- Puget Sound College of the Bible (today Puget Sound Christian College; ceased operation in 2007)
- Dallas Christian College
- Winston-Salem Bible College (originally The Christian Institute)
- 1951 – Platte Valley Bible College [today Summit Christian College]
- 1952 - Churches of Christ School of Evangelists [today Northwest College of the Bible]
- Gospel Broadcasting Mission begun
- 1953 – Church Development Fund begun
- Gulf States Christian College (disbanded in 1959)
- 1954 – Donald McGavran founds Institute of Church Growth (later known as School of World Mission) at Northwest Christian College
- 1955 – Directory of Ministry printed
- DeGroot labels Independents “Church of Christ No. 2”
- Horizons* begins
- Grundy Bible Institute
- 1956 – St. Louis Christian College
- 1957 – Central Christian College of the Bible
- 1958 – Ontario Christian Seminary, Toronto, ONT
- 1959 – Moderates establish Consultations on the Internal Unity of Christian Churches (ends 1966)
- Committee on Brotherhood Restructure appointed by Disciples
- Don DeWelt starts College Press Publishing Company

- Mid-South Christian College (originally Memphis Christian College)
- 1960 – Commission of Brotherhood Restructure authorized
- Maritime Christian College, Charlottetown, PEI
- 1961 – Emmanuel School of Religion
- Missouri Christian Lectureship revived by Central Christian College of the Bible (ends in 1985)
- 1962 – Disciples join Consultation on Church Unity (COCU)
- Christians Only* (James DeForest Murch)
- “God is Just a Prayer Away” radio broadcast launched
- Paducah Bible College (ceased in 1964)
- 1963 – NACC establishes office in Cincinnati
- 1964 – *The Restoration Movement* (Enos Dowling)
- Bible Bowl added to NACC
- Revival Fires national radio broadcast begins
- 1965 – Revival Fires national TV broadcast begins
- 1967 – Atlanta Declaration opposing Restructure fails
- Person-to-Person Ministries begins
- 1968 – Disciples become the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) denomination**
- “Brotherhood Restructure” adopted by Disciples causes conservatives to organize effort to be removed from Yearbook of Disciples of Christ
- Christ in Youth begins
- 1971 – CC/CC listed separately in Yearbook of American Churches
- Bluefield College of Evangelism (became Blueridge COE in 2003)
- New York Christian Institute (ceased in 1981)
- 1972 – National Church Growth Research Center
- Iowa Christian College (formerly Woodland Hills Christian College)
- 1973 – American Rehabilitation Ministries (now ARM Prison Outreach, International)
- International Disaster Emergency Services (IDES) begins
- 1976 – Florida Christian College (originally Central Florida Bible College)
- Good News Productions, International, established
- Pioneer Bible Translators formed
- 1978 – White Fields Overseas Evangelism Team Expansion
- 1981 – *The Stone-Campbell Movement* (Leroy Garrett)
- 1983 - Open Forum begins
- 1984 – Restoration Forum begins
- One Body* begins
- Summit Theological Seminary
- 1985 – Conservative Disciple Renewal begins (now Disciple Heritage Fellowship)
- Double Vision launched
- 1986 – Communion service at joint NACC/NMC in Indianapolis draws 43,000
- Christian Institute of Biblical Studies
- Introduction to the Restoration Ideal* (Marshall J. Leggett)
- 1987 – *Union on the King’s Highway* (Dean Mills)
- 1989 – Open Forum meets with Church of God (Anderson, Indiana)
- 1990 – *In Search of Christian Unity* (Henry Webb)
- 1992 – Literature & Teaching Ministries (LATM)
- Peace on Earth Ministries (POEM)
- 1993 – Harvest Prayer Ministries
- 1994 – *Union in Truth* (James B. North)
- 1995 – Northeast Ohio Bible College

One Body/Disciple Renewal Talks (ends 2000)

1996 – Pre-NACC Dallas Restoration Heritage held

1996 – Disciples and United Church of Christ form bond

1997 – *Coming Together in Christ* (North/Callen)

1998 – *Stone-Campbell Journal* begun

1999 – Stone-Campbell Dialogue begun

2000 – *When God Builds a Church* (Bob Russell)

2002 - Study reveals CC/CC are second-fastest growing religious group in America

Unity Covenant signed at Restoration Forum XX, Lubbock, TX

The Faith Once for All (Jack Cottrell)

2003 – Survey shows CC/CC are third-largest sending group of all churches with 1,154 missionaries abroad

Stadia begins

2003 – *Simply Christians* (Sam E. Stone)

2004 – London Institute for Evangelism

Ministry Impact Conference, Grand Prairie, TX

The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement

2006 – “Family Reunion” of CC/CC & CoC at NACC in Louisville

Together Again (Rick Atchley & Bob Russell)

Together in Christ (Victor Knowles)

2007 – Final Restoration Forum held

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