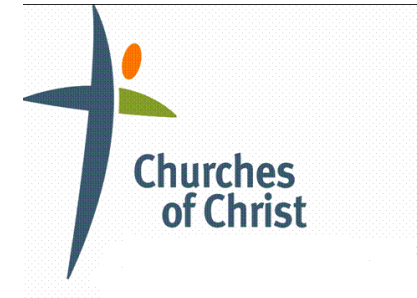


History & Doctrine:

On August 17th 1809 an address was presented by Thomas Campbell to a group of people whose affiliation originated with various different Christian denominations. This address has been accepted as the formal starting point for a new movement within Christian circles, becoming known as the 'Restoration movement'. The basic motivation for this new Christian movement was the growing dissatisfaction among Christians from various denominational backgrounds over the disunity of the church. It was believed that the work of evangelism was being hindered by the divided state of the church and that since division was contrary to the will of God that denominationalism must be ended. The belief was that the only way to unite Christians was to set aside traditions, doctrines and divisive creeds and establish a new movement, a restoration movement, that would seek to reconnect the New Testament church. This movement claimed the saying, 'No creed but Christ'.



The symbol is based on the image of the cross as the essential image of Jesus. The dynamic orientation and symbolized human form also represents the 'People of God', reaching out, full of passion, grace and belief. Contemporary typography links with the symbol suggesting forward motion, energy and confidence.



'In the essentials unity, in the non-essentials liberty and in all things love.'

BLACKWOOD CHURCH OF CHRIST

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An introduction to Churches of Christ in Australia.
Written by Mark Riessen, Ministry Team Leader, Blackwood Church of Christ

Churches of Christ in Australia

Who are we?

Churches of Christ is a non-denominational Christian church. Being non-denominational is part of the ethos which is explained in this document, however for the purposes of conversation with other Christian churches and joint church initiatives, Churches of Christ has been considered a denomination under the National Council of Churches. Churches of Christ churches are autonomous, however have a strong working relationship with one another and are united as a state conference of churches. There are churches established in dozens of countries around the world. The oldest establishments of Churches of Christ are found in England, USA and Australia. Churches of Christ, otherwise known as the Disciples of Christ, or the Christian Church is the largest and fastest growing Christian movement in the USA. Churches of Christ has been established based on the following values and commitments, which were determined as the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

Unity

Unity has always been the cornerstone of the movement of Churches of Christ. We celebrate our commitment to active conversations and participation in ministry with other denominational bodies, locally, nationally and internationally. Our doors are always open to all Christians as we work tirelessly to be united with fellow Christians in diversity and love. 'In the essentials unity, in the non-essentials liberty and in all things love.'

"Churches of Christ in Australia are a product of the British Churches of Christ and the American Disciples. Associated through a common indebtedness to Alexander Campbell, both considered themselves commissioned to restore to the Church her lost unity."

(G. Chapman)

Baptism

We believe in and practice believers' baptism by full immersion under water. This ritual of baptism is celebrated with those who have attained the age in which it is appropriate for them to understand the commitment to follow Jesus. The ritual includes full immersion under water because it symbolizes the washing away of the old life and being raised again into a new life with Christ. We do not practice this ritual with infants or toddlers, instead we perform a ritual of dedication.

Communion

We share communion, otherwise known as 'The Lord's supper' or 'the Eucharist', weekly. Our belief is that every time we gather together as a church we are to share in the ritual Jesus shared with his disciples before he died. The ritual includes breaking bread and eating it and drinking wine as symbols that remind us of Jesus. Traditionally in our churches we eat a small portion of bread or dry biscuit and we drink grape juice instead of wine, remaining sensitive to the fact that not all people can or will drink wine. We believe the elements of the bread and the juice that we share are representative of the body and blood of Jesus, not the actual body and blood of Jesus. Our desire during communion is for unity among Christians. This is why all Christians, no matter what their background or affiliation, are welcome to participate with us every Sunday when we share this ritual.

Mutual ministry

Churches of Christ have always resisted hierarchical structure of leadership. However each church will normally have an appointed and employed minister or pastor who has been called and ordained to teach and inspire the church to participate in the mission and ministry of Jesus. It is commonly understood that all Christians are called to ministry, hence all Christians are ministers. Each member of a church is encouraged to participate in all levels of leadership of the church and in all aspects of worship, including community mission, reading from scripture, leading communion and preaching.

Social Justice

Churches of Christ have always been concerned with matters of injustice at all levels. We have always had active participation in providing a voice in speaking out on issues of injustice locally and globally. Here at the Blackwood Church of Christ we have been particularly influential in raising concern regarding justice in the context of current affairs. Our commitment as a church is to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God. We believe this sums up our call to follow Jesus.

CHAPMAN Graeme, "One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism – a history of Churches of Christ in Australia", Vital publications, 1979, p21 (This book can be borrowed from our church library or accessed online via our website) .

www.churchesofchrist-sa.org.au