

Who Are The Members Of The Churches Of Christ?

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Romans 16:16

Loved ones, welcome to the churches of Christ. We are your neighbors, your fellow workers and your fellow students. We are followers of Jesus, the Christ. Just as God does, we desire that all men be saved and that is what we have been sent to do (1 Tim. 2:3-4; 2 Pet. 3:9) just as the church in in Rome (Rom. 1:7; 16:3-5; 16:23; 16: 1, 16; 1 Cor. 1:14, the church in Corinth 1 Cor. 1:1-2, and the church in Jerusalem Acts 11:22. When you read these verses you will find they show and teach about who we are and what we do, and why we do it.

Churches of Christ are a group of men and women, boys and girls who have formed and constitute a congregation striving to be the church built after the pattern found in the New Testament. While recognizing the guiding principles of the Old Testament (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor.10:1-6, 11), we seek to conform to the pattern of the New Testament (Heb. 1:1-2; 9:15; 1 Pet. 4:11). The Bible tells us that we will be judged based upon the Law of Christ (John 12:48; Gal. 6:2; Rom. 8:1-4). Thus, the Bible teaches us that the Law of Moses (Old Testament) is NOT binding on any person today (Eph. 2:13-15; Col. 2:14; Rom. 7:1-6; Heb. 9:15-17).

As children of God, it is our purpose to be identified as the first century Christians. I believe this to be possible to all who will learn, believe and be guided by the plain teaching of God's Word as found in the New Testament. We comprise a church that is "*of Christ*" (Rom. 16:16) in how we become Christians, and in how we live as Christians; in what we teach, in the work and worship we do as church; and in the way we are organized.

We are NOT a denomination; neither are we inter-denominational. But we are pre – denominational! As Christ's followers, we know that Jesus built His church in 30 A.D. – long before any Catholic or Lutheran denomination (Matt. 16:18-19). We do not wear or accept any designations not found in the Scriptures. It is my sincere desire that we do not wear any other name than Christ's, and to be known as Christians (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:15-16), members of the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:12). Collectively we refer to ourselves as the churches of Christ, the Lord's church.

The Bible, the truth, the word of God, is our only guide; we don't use creed books (John 1:1-4,14; 12:32; 14:6; 17:17), our only authority is God's word (Col. 3:17; Matt 28:18). We are governed in faith and conduct

by the Bible alone. Again, we do not subscribe to any man made creed. We are speak where the Bible speaks and to be silent where the Bible is silent; to do Bible things in Bible ways and to call Bible things by Bible names. We are interested in honoring God, in following Christ, and in learning, doing and teaching God's Word. Consequently, when the Bible speaks upon any given subject, its pronouncement is accepted as final.

The Bible is the inspired, complete, and perfect word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3). We accept the Bible as being both verbally inspired and infallible in content (2 Pet. 1:20-21; 1 Cor. 2:11-13). We do not practice any doctrines that are man-made; this would be a violation of God's Law (Gal. 1:8-10; Matt. 15:7-9). By its own testimony, no one may alter a single word from the Bible with impunity (Deut. 4:2; Pro.30:6; Rev. 22:18-19). If you ask a Christian a Bible question, the Bible commands us to give you a Bible answer (1 Thess. 5:21, 1 Pet. 3:15; Rom. 12:2). When Jesus declared His word to be "*the seed*" of the kingdom (Luke 8:11), He was emphasizing a known fact of nature.

The Bible speaks of only ONE church (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; Col. 1:18, 24; Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 12:12-13). It is the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27). The church is NOT the building, but the people. Notice why the church of Christ is that one church spoken of in the Bible:

- It uses a Bible name (Rom. 16:16; Eph. 4:12).
- It was NOT formed by division and does not bear anyone else's name (1 Cor. 1:10-13).
- Christ is the founder, the only head and the Savior (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 5:23).

There is no man, or group of men, who legislate for the church. We have no one to answer to like Catholics do, except Christ our Lord (Heb. 5:8-9; Rev.20:12).

As was true in the first century, there is no inter-congregational organization. There in no one man, woman or group of men over various congregations of Christ's church. Congregations in different locations with Christ as Lord, function independently of each other. According to the authority of Christ, when a church matures to the point where two or more men meet the qualifications, overseers (also called bishops and elders) are appointed to look after the affairs of the local congregation. Such men are appointed when they meet the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9. Then they have the responsibility to "*feed the flock*" with spiritual food found in the Scriptures, and to be examples for others (1 Pet. 5:1-30). In churches of Christ, preachers are not "pastors" (unless they meet the qualifications cited above). Evangelist preachers are simply teachers of the Gospel who travel to establish and

support other congregations (2 Tim. 4:2-5). The true churches of Christ worship the God of Heaven “*in spirit and in truth*” (John 4:24).

- Every first day of the week we partake of the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7; Matt. 26:26-30; 1 Cor. 11:23-29).
- Every first day of the week we cheerfully give a contribution (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:6-8).
- Our preaching and teaching comes from the Bible (Rom. 1:16; 10:17; Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:19).
- We pray (1 Thess. 5:17).
- We sing without the accompaniment of a musical instrument realizing that only the heart is where the melody in the New Testament worship is to be made (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

We believe that what the Bible teaches is relative to God’s plan of salvation. To be saved:

- One must hear the gospel or good news (Rom. 10:14-17; Matt. 13:19; 28:19).
- One must believe the gospel when it says Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 1:16; John 3:16; 8:24; Heb. 11:6).
- One must repent of their sins (Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38; 17:30).
- One must confess that Christ is the Lord, the son of God (Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9-10; Matt. 10:32-33).
- One must be baptized by immersion in much water to have their sins washed away (forgiven) by the blood of Jesus (Acts 22:16; Rev. 1:5; Matt. 26:28).

Eternal life, salvation, newness of life, and all other spiritual blessings are in Christ (1 John 5:11; 2 Tim. 2:10). Water baptism puts you into Christ so you can be saved in the name of Jesus (Gal. 3:26-27; Acts 4:12). The Lord ADDS you to His body – His church.

Jesus said: “*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free*” (John 8:32). All of the thoughts and passages above are just a beginning of the truth. We encourage you to visit, study and worship with a congregation of the churches of Christ at your first opportunity. We would like to help you understand, appreciate, and obey the scripture just as Philip did to the Eunuch (Acts 8:26-39).

May our living God help us to reach the qualifications He wants us to be.

Your brother in Christ, Sadat.
Church of Christ Katoro – Geita, Tanzania

