

WHAT KIND OF CHURCH IS THIS?

“What kind of church is Central Christian Church? Is it liberal or conservative or what?” This document is an attempt to answer that question.

BIBLICAL

To begin with, we are a Biblical church. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has “no book but the Bible, no creed but Christ.” We strive to follow Jesus Christ as revealed to us through the Holy Scripture. We do not worship the Bible, but we do consider it to reveal the word and will of God.

For example:

- We call ourselves “Christians” or “Disciples of Christ” – not because we think we are the only ones entitled to use these names, but because they are scriptural names for the followers of Jesus (Acts 11:26).
- We are a biblical church in that the only statement of faith we recognize is the confession, “I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt. 16:16; Acts 8:37).
- We are a biblical church in that we practice baptism by immersion of adult believers (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:1-5), though we do not attempt to reproduce the work of the Holy Spirit in other forms of baptism.
- We are a biblical church in that we celebrate the Lord’s Supper (also known as Holy Communion or Eucharist, which means Thanksgiving) every Sunday (Acts 20:7).

LIBERAL

In the second place, we are a liberal church. By “liberal,” we mean we are open-minded, tolerant of different views, willing to try new ideas, and encourage individual thought. For example:

- There is an old slogan from our history which aptly summarizes our position:
In faith, unity;
In opinion, liberty;
In all things, charity.

In other words, we are united in our confession of faith that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Beyond that basic common denominator, we enjoy the greatest possible freedom of opinion. We recognize that if in all things we practice charity (generous love), we can work together, even if some of our viewpoints may differ.

- Theologically, we do not try to force everyone into a doctrinal straitjacket or label “unorthodox” and “heretical” those who do not agree with us. As we seek to understand our faith with humility and follow the teachings of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible,

we realize that there are opportunities for fresh, life-giving interpretations of the Scripture. God's Spirit speaks to us and through us as we engage with the Scripture together.

- Ethically, we do not subscribe to a uniform code of conduct which requires every member to do or to refrain doing certain activities. As long as one is not committing violence on another (physical, emotional, etc.), how one conducts themselves in the world is their own decision to make. We encourage everyone to make those decisions in the light of the Bible, prayer, conscience, common sense, and to love your neighbor as yourself (Jas. 2:8).
- Socially, we believe that the gospel is both personal and social – or, as someone once put it, “The gospel is first personal and always social.” It is important that the church champion social justice by challenging injustices that rob people of wholeness and wellness, such as racial prejudice and discrimination, war and peace, poverty and hunger, health care, substance use and mental health disorders, and more. The church must minister to and for the whole person – body, mind, and soul.

CONSERVATIVE

Thirdly, we are a conservative church. We understand “conservative” to mean: “conserving (or preserving) the best values of the past.” This is not the same as being “reactionary,” that is, “totally opposed to progress and wanting to preserve the status quo at all costs.”

To be conservative, in the best sense of the word, simply means that we do not reject a thing just because it is old, nor do we immediately reject something just because it is new. Our standard of judgment is not “Is it old?” or “Is it new?” but “Is it right?”

Some things – like the Ten Commandments, for instance – are very old, but they are just as true and valid today as they ever were. We believe that there are many other values that are still vital in our community today. For example:

- We believe that the local congregation is still God's primary instrument for accomplishing God's purposes in the world.
- We believe that the congregation has the vital role of teaching God's people what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ.
- We believe that preaching is still an effective means of communicating God's word to God's people. We believe Jesus' lessons of integrity, honesty, moderation, morality, and care for communities and creation are still to be enacted in our lives today.
- We believe that the family is still a basic unit of society, and that marriage is a sacred relationship between two people who love each other so much they do not care to love anyone else in just that way.

- We believe that prayer is still one of the most important activities a person can engage in; that God hears and answers prayer; that “prayer changes everything.”

ECUMENICAL

In the fourth place, we are an ecumenical church. The word “ecumenical” comes from the Greek word *οικουμένη* (*oikouménē*) which means “the whole inhabited earth.” As applied to the church, it denotes the universal, worldwide nature of Christianity. The expression, “the Ecumenical Movement,” refers to the move toward cooperation and unity among the various Christian denominations.

From the very beginning, Disciples of Christ have proclaimed the unity of Christ’s church and have sought to manifest that unity through cooperation with other religious groups and interdenominational agencies (such as local, state, national, and world councils of churches).

Let’s enumerate a few instances of our ecumenicity:

- We have an ecumenical name. – The name “Christian” is non-sectarian title which belongs to all followers of Christ. We do not claim to be the only Christians, but we do desire to be Christians only.
- We have an ecumenical baptism. – The validity of believer’s baptism by immersion is universally recognized by all churches. At the same time, we welcome into our fellowship those who have been baptized by some other method and who are conscientiously satisfied with that baptism.
- We have an ecumenical membership. – we come from a dozen or more different denominational backgrounds. We have former Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterians, Catholics, Lutherans, Episcopalians, Church of Christ, Christian Scientists, Mormons, Congregationalists, and others – now united on the simple basis of being “just Christians.”
- We have an ecumenical spirit. – We do not entertain any illusions about our being “the only true church.” We acknowledge the presence of God’s Spirit in every Christian denomination, and we believe that we can learn valuable lessons from our sisters and brothers in other churches. We believe that we ought not to do separately those things we can do together. We look forward to the day when the prayer of Jesus shall be answered, that all of his people “may be one...that the world may believe” (Jn. 17:20-21).

EVANGELICAL

Finally, we are an evangelical church (in the original sense of the term). The term “evangelical” comes from the Greek word εὐαγγέλιον (*euangelion*), meaning “gospel” or “good news.” An evangelical church, therefore, is one that values, above all else, the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ (the Gospel) through word AND deed. This is the one thing the church does that no other body on the face of the earth does: it proclaims that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself” (II Cor. 5:19). Whatever the church does, this remains its one basic reason for existing: to make known to all of God’s creation the love of God we know in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Accordingly, we proclaim – by what we say and what we do – that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.*

If you would like more information about Central Christian Church, we invite you to attend our services on Sundays at 8:30 or 11:00, email us at office@cccweatherford.org, or call the office to arrange a meeting. We hope you will join us as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

CENTRAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
1602 South Main
Weatherford, TX 76086
(817) 594-3053
office@cccweatherford.org