

The Disciples Movements

First Christian Church is one of the oldest congregations in the city- founded in 1833, only three years after Springfield's first church. Since its beginning, it has been a part of the denomination known as Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Disciples churches trace their roots and beliefs back to a movement of the early 19th century in what were then the American frontier states of Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee. This movement sought to unify all Christians by returning to an emphasis on the essentials of Christianity typified by the church of the New Testament Scriptures.

The earliest church leaders included Thomas and Alexander Campbell, father and son Presbyterian clergy, who came from Scotland to the American frontier; and Barton W. Stone, a native-born American frontiersman who also ordained in the Presbyterian Church. These men and others found freedom in what was then the American West to express their own ideas and beliefs about the essentials of Christianity and to differ from certain church doctrines. Although they sought to unify all Christians with no intention of beginning another denomination, they, in fact, began what became a major protestant religion in the United States.

Disciple churches practice a congregational form of government. The church calls its own ministers, owns its own property, determines its own policies, and elects its own leaders. Officers include trustees, elders, deacons, and others serving various terms and a Moderator, who is elected bi-annually to head the congregation and chair the Church Council.

The congregation determines its own membership requirements. We practice baptism by immersion of believers upon confession of faith, but accept transfer of membership by any Christian from another denomination and recognize previous baptism, whether or not by immersion.

Some of the historic slogans associated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) are:

“Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent.”

“In essentials unity, in opinions liberty, in all things charity.”

“No creed but Christ, no book but the Bible, no law but love, no name but the divine.”