

The International Churches

Edited by Scott Shifferd Jr.

History:

- The International Churches “of Christ” (ICOC) report, **“At the end of 2009, the ICOC has about 92,544 members in 574 churches in 143 countries. [...]**
ICOC membership grew dramatically to a high of 135,000 in 2002 followed by a large decrease to about 88,597 in 2006 during our crisis. Our attendance has always been significantly higher than our membership due to the commitment of our members and the addition of children and guests in our services” (“God Blesses ICOC in Last Three Years.” *International Churches of Christ*. 8 May 2012. <disciplestoday.org/content/view/2024/304/>).
- Separate from the ICOC, the history of the International Christian Churches is reported, **“In 2003, Kip became the evangelist for the Portland International Church of Christ. In October 2006, after a valiant three-year effort to bring reform to the crumbling International Churches of Christ, the Holy Spirit used Kip, soon joined by other valiant disciples on every continent, to initiate the new Portland / SoldOut Discipling Movement. In May 2007, Kip and Elena McKean along with 40 other disciples from Portland planted the City of Angels International Christian Church, where he now serves as the ‘World Missions Evangelist’ for this new movement of churches. [...]**
Of note in 1979, Kip and Elena were invited to lead the Lexington Church of Christ (later renamed the Boston Church of Christ). From these ‘30 would-be-disciples,’ the Spirit ignited a movement of churches known as **the Boston Movement** and in 1994 renamed **the International Churches of Christ**. From a historical perspective, no other preacher in the past century has been directly responsible for the planting of so many congregations around the world. [...] Then as this noble effort was being tragically decimated in 2002 and 2003, God sent Kip on a rocky path of suffering and redemption. For almost two years, he wandered in a lonely, spiritual wilderness, which greatly humbled him. Yet, those dark days ultimately strengthened Kip’s resolve to fulfill the dream. **Therefore in late 2011, it is so amazing that in a little more than five years, God’s new SoldOut Movement has 39 congregations in 20 nations... and counting!**” (Harding, Ron. “A History of the Spread of Christianity in Modern Times.” *The Biography of Kip McKean*. 8 May 2012. <kipmckean.org>).
- In Kip McKean’s book, “Revolution through Restoration”, he confesses, “During the sabbatical, God taught me to take full responsibility for my leadership in the kingdom, the decisions of the World Sector Leaders and for the spiritual condition of each person in my family. **My sins are clear and grievous. I have been arrogant, almost always thinking I was right. I did not listen. I did not actively seek discipling for me and my family. I was only partially open and deceit came into my life.** This led to the sin of anger towards those who disagreed with me. Too often, I viewed these individuals as critical. I did not draw people out. **I built an atmosphere in which people were afraid to speak up. There were times when I corrected people that I was mean, cruel and I even humiliated them. I was too controlling. For this I apologize. I am truly sorry**” (Harding, Ron. “The Biography of Kip McKean.” 8 May 2012. <kipmckean.org>).
- **The Jacksonville church “of Christ” links to the International Church “of Christ”** (“Home.” *Jacksonville Church of Christ*. 9 May 2012. <jaxcoc.org>).
- **The Greater Atlanta Church “of Christ” is a part of the International Church of Christ posting links on the home page of their website to the ICOC Conference and more** (“Home.” *The Greater Atlanta Church of Christ*. 9 May 2012. <thegacc.org>). The Greater Atlanta Church “of Christ” is not the “Campus Church” that meets at Greater Atlanta Christian School. They are also listed by the International Church of Christ website along with 3 other Atlanta International churches called, **“The**

Atlanta Church of Christ in Gwinnett, “North River Church of Christ”, and “Atlanta Metropolitan Christian Church” (“ICOC Church Locator.” *Disciples Today*. 9 May 2012. <todayinfo.net>).

God, Christ, and the Spirit:

- The Los Angeles International Church of Christ stated, “We believe in and surrender our lives to the one God who made the heavens and earth and who breathed life into humanity. We worship and praise the Father who spoke the world into existence, Jesus, the Son, who died upon the cross to redeem us from sin, and the Holy Spirit who is the seal of our salvation” (“Statement of Beliefs.” *Los Angeles International Church of Christ*. 9 May 2012. <laicc.net/content/view/1794/74/>).
- The Orlando Church “of Christ” states, “**There is one God, who is known to men in three persons: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is eternal, having no beginning and no end.** God is omnipresent, filling the Universe. God is immutable, perfect and unchanging. God is omnipotent: no one can thwart his will. God is omniscient, knowing everything. God is totally pure, having in himself no sin. God is love” (“Statement of Belief.” *Orlando Church of Christ*. 9 May 2012. <OrlandochurchofChrist.org>).
- About **creation**, the scientist referred by the International Church “of Christ” is Dr. John Oakes, who states, “**About Adam and Eve, I believe that they were a special creation—that God created them from scratch. Having said that, the evidence is that humans are quite similar to apes. It is not inconceivable to me that God could have put a soul, spirit, consciousness and a conscience into an evolved ape. This would not destroy biblical theology, but I believe that Adam and Eve are a special creation. The evidence for evolution is strong, but it does not rule out God doing something miraculous.** John the Baptist said that God could make children of Abraham from stones. I believe him” (“The Entire Bible Literally. Is this the Right Approach?” *Evidences for Christianity*. 9 May 2012. <evidenceforchristianity.org>).

Scriptures: *God:* Gen. 1:1-2, Psa. 110:1, Isa. 9:6, 48:16, 61:1, Mic. 5:2, Matt. 12:46-47, 13:55-56, 28:19, Luke 3:22, John 1:1, 14, Acts 7:55, 10:38, Rom. 8:9, 9:5, 15:30, 2 Cor. 3:17, 13:14, Phil. 2:5-8, Col. 1:15-20, Heb. 9:14, 1 Pet. 1:2, 3:18, 1 John 4:2; *Creation:* Gen. 1:26-27, Exo. 20:11, Matt. 19:4-5, Mark 10:6-8, Luke 11:50-51, Rom. 1:20.

Christ’s Words and the Scriptures:

- A prominent and central church among the International Churches of Christ is the Los Angeles International Church of Christ. This church states, “**The Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God. It is sharp, powerful, effective, challenging, exposing, and encouraging when it is revered, studied, preached, taught, and obeyed because it is from our Creator and therefore relevant for all generations.** (1 Timothy 4:13, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 4:1-5, Hebrews 4:12-13)” (“Statement of Beliefs.” *Los Angeles International Church of Christ*. 9 May 2012. <laicc.net/content/view/1794/74/>).
- The Greater Atlanta Church “of Christ” states, “**We believe in the Bible as the inerrant word of God and that every disciple must make the Bible his standard in every area of his life** (2 Timothy 3:16-7, John 12:47-50)” (“Beliefs.” *The Greater Atlanta Church of Christ*. 9 May 2012. <thegacc.org>).
- According to Kip McKean’s approved biography, Ron Harding records about Kip McKean, “In his years at Charleston and Memphis, Kip devoted himself to studying the Old Testament. This became a major turning point in his theology. [...] However, Kip taught from 2 Timothy 3:16 that **‘All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.’** The word **‘Scripture’** in the context of this passage refers only to the Old Testament; therefore, the intent by Paul was to call Timothy – and all disciples – to use the Old Testament **‘Scriptures’** in their preaching, in their discipling, and in their lives. [...]

Kip taught churches should be: **'Silent where the Bible speaks, and speak where the Bible is silent.'** In other words, a Christian should simply obey where the Bible speaks, and speak (have opinions) where the Bible is silent. **Theologically, Christians are free to implement any practice or apply any name that is not prohibited in the Bible**" (Harding, Ron. "A History of the Spread of Christianity in Modern Times." *The Biography of Kip McKean*. 8 May 2012. <kipmckean.org>).

Scriptures: Luke 1:1-3, 1 Cor. 1:1-2, 10, 12:13, 2 Cor. 1:1, Eph. 2:20, 3:3-5, Col. 4:16, 2 Thess. 2:15, **2 Tim. 3:16-17 (cf. 1 Tim. 5:18)**, 2 Pet. 1:16-21, 3:15-16, 1 John 1:1-4.

Way of Salvation:

- The Los Angeles International Church of Christ stated, **"Our salvation totally depends on the work of God, prompted by his own mercy and grace, not our good deeds. That work redeems those who hear, believe and obey the Gospel message with total commitment, repentance, and baptism into Christ through their faith in God's power and continue to remain faithful unto death.** (Romans 2:7, Acts 2:22-37, Ephesians 2:8-10, Colossians 2:12, Hebrews 10:32-39, James 1:12)" ("Statement of Beliefs." *Los Angeles International Church of Christ*. 9 May 2012. <laicc.net/content/view/1794/74/>).
- The Greater Atlanta Church "of Christ" states, **"We believe baptism is necessary for forgiveness of sin (Acts 2:38)"** ("Beliefs." *The Greater Atlanta Church of Christ*. 9 May 2012. <thegacc.org>).
- A common reference for Apologetics in the International Churches "of Christ", Dr. John Oakes states, "So, your question amounts to 'What is necessary to be saved?' What is necessary to be saved is sufficient to make it to heaven, unless we turn our back on God. I assume you already know what is necessary for salvation. **The 'work' has already been done by Jesus, of course, but in order to be saved, we need to accept the message (Jesus died for our sins, etc.), repent of our sins, make Jesus the Lord of our lives (not just in word, but in our hearts and minds) and be baptized in water in the name of Jesus for forgiveness of sins**" ("Is the 'Plan of Salvation' Sufficient for Us to Be Saved?" *Evidence for Christianity*. 8 May 2012. <evidenceforchristianity.org>).
- The Orlando Church "of Christ" states, **"Discipleship is the commitment of one's entire being to the principles of obedience to and imitation of Jesus. It involves the pursuit of: a) a personal relationship with God built on prayer and Bible study; b) the mutual encouragement of other disciples accomplished through individual relationships and corporate worship; c) the maintenance of personal righteousness through confession and repentance; d) the fulfillment of Jesus' mission on earth, the spread of the gospel to all nations"** ("Statement of Belief." *Orlando Church of Christ*. 9 May 2012. <orlandochurchofchrist.org>).

Scriptures: Matt. 28:19-20, Mark 16:16, John 6:53-56, 16:7-13, Acts 2:38, 3:19, 8:38, 22:16, Rom. 6:3-7, Gal. 5:4, Col. 2:11-12, 1 Tim. 2:4, Heb. 6:4-6, 1 Pet. 3:21, 2 Pet. 1:10, 3:9, 1 John 1:5-2:6.

The Church & Church Government:

- The Boston Church "of Christ" states, **"The Boston church is broken up into five Worship Centers"** ("Boston is Hiring." *Boston Church of Christ*. 9 May 2012. <bostoncoc.org>).
- The Orlando church "of Christ" believes, "The church is the body of Christ. Just as Christ can only have one body, he has only one church. The church is composed of men and women who have become disciples of Jesus and have been baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. **We consider ourselves to be 'non-denominational' in the sense that, although we are associated with sister churches, each church is a self-governing entity**" ("Statement of Belief." *Orlando Church of Christ*. 9 May 2012. <orlandochurchofchrist.org>).

- The International Churches are diligent in evangelizing. The Greater Atlanta CoC states, **“We believe Jesus expects nothing less than 100% commitment, so we expect nothing less from each other** (Luke 14:25-33). [...]

We believe in our Savior's vision to seek and save the lost and have dedicated our money, our time, even our very lives to see His true, message spread to all nations (Matthew 28:18-20.)” (“Beliefs.” *The Greater Atlanta Church of Christ*. 9 May 2012. <thegacc.org>).

- The LA Church “of Christ” defines “Discipleship” as **“We get together for individual Bible study with each other and believe this is where true change takes place --when you have the opportunity to sit down with someone else with the Bible open and simply talk about your life** (usually at the nearest Starbucks). [...]

We are a part of the LA Church of Christ, which was founded in downtown LA in 1989 and as it grew spread into surrounding communities and multiple locations” (“Who We Are.” *LA Church of Christ*. 9 May 2012. <thecentralregion.org>).

- The Boston Church “of Christ” states, “We rejoice as three new elders are added to oversee the Boston Church of Christ. **We believe these men have been made overseers by the Holy Spirit as they fulfill the Bible qualifications and have been commended by the congregation for this role among us”** (“Appointment of New Elders.” *Boston Church of Christ*. 9 May 2012. <bostoncoc.org>).
- The Los Angeles ICoC states, **“As members of the body, we are connected by our immersion in water that united us with Christ’s death and brought with it the promise of absolute forgiveness, the Holy Spirit and a new life. Together, we make up the church body and commit our devotion to being members of the family of God—a community that helps its members grow to be like Jesus”** (“Statement of Beliefs.” *Los Angeles International Church of Christ*. 9 May 2012. <laicc.net/content/view/1794/74/>).
- The International Churches “of Christ” state, **“Churches in 137 countries representing over 90% of the membership in the International Churches of Christ family have committed to the Plan for United Cooperation.** Each year the spirit of cooperation and unity grows and matures” (“2011 ICOC Annual Delegates Conference Report.” *International Churches of Christ*. 8 May 2012. <icocco-op.org/content/blogcategory/26/66/>).
- The International Churches “of Christ” report, “For decades we, like the churches in the New Testament, have functioned as regional families of churches. **This cooperation plan recognizes the existing families of churches worldwide and encourages their growth and continuation.**

Churches participate in this ‘Cooperation Plan’ by first identifying themselves with the circle of churches in their geographic region. These regional families of churches are expected to engage in humble and meaningful relationships with each other at the regional level. They are committed to mutual discipling, exchanges of full-time workers, and cooperation on church plantings, missions and working relationships and mutually respectful, agreed accountability with other church leaderships in their region. [...]

Every year delegates from each of these regional families of churches are committed to meet to discuss matters of international importance. The regional families of churches send delegates to this meeting to act on the agenda put forward. [...]

The regional families of churches include all congregations that embrace sound doctrine and a desire to cooperate. Churches may be invited to join or request participation. Membership would be recognized by that regional family of churches and/or the international committee. **Following the New Testament pattern, if a congregation strays from sound doctrine the regional family of churches will discuss the issues with the specific congregation and take appropriate actions; potentially including the exclusion of an errant congregation from the regional family of churches.**

Churches are also free to withdraw their participation. **The International delegates are also able to exclude a church from participation if it is deemed necessary and appropriate** (“Plan for United Cooperation Summary.” *International Churches of Christ*. 8 May 2012. <icoc.org>).

- **This International Church “of Christ” has proposed at “Statement of Shared Beliefs”** (“A Plan for United Cooperation.” *ICOC Co-Operation Churches*. 9 May 2012. <icocco-op.org/images/englishproposal.pdf>).
- Regarding **women working in the Church** and in agreement with the proposed “Statement of Shared Beliefs”, the Los Angeles ICoC states, **“We believe in the church supporting women as they serve a vital ministry role in evangelizing, baptizing, teaching, counseling, and training other women.** In addition, we recognize the value and significant influence that all sisters can have in the lives of the brothers (1 Corinthians 9:5, Titus 2:3-4, Acts 18:24-26, Romans 16:1-15)” (“Statement of Beliefs.” *Los Angeles International Church of Christ*. 9 May 2012. <laicc.net/content/view/1794/74/>).
- About **accountability**, the Chattanooga Church “of Christ” believes, “Accountability for one another must be meaningful. Paul writes that God arranged the parts of the body of Christ, the church, just as He wanted them to be. **Each part, every member, has a responsibility to be present and accounted for and to do his or her respective part.** The church is not described in the bible as a corporation, an association or a private club. Rather, **the church is described as functioning like a human body having unique and valuable parts arranged in exact order in a state of inter-dependence on one another. Therefore, we believe accountability to one another is not optional but essential and meaningful.** It helps us be ready for our ultimate accountability to God” (“What We Believe.” *Chattanooga Church of Christ*. 9 May 2012. <chattc3.net>).

Scriptures: Acts 14:26, 20:28, Eph. 1:22, 4:11-12, Phil. 1:1, Col. 1:18, 2:19, 1 Tim. 3:1-7, **Titus 1:5-9**, 1 Pet. 5:1-4.

Worship and Assembly:

- The Los Angeles ICoC states, **“Our community worship includes our devotion to God’s Word, prayer, fellowship, and the Lord’s Supper as a weekly breaking the bread and drinking the fruit of the vine together.** As a community imitating the first century disciples, we give a willing sacrifice to God as a fragrant offering and a sign of our thankfulness. Since everything we enjoy in life is a gift from God, we agree to cheerfully and sacrificially contribute of our finances to the church so that the ministry of Jesus will advance throughout our communities and around the world (Acts 2:42-47, 1 Corinthians 10:17-34, 1 Corinthians 9:7-14, Philippians 4:14-19)” (“Statement of Beliefs.” *Los Angeles International Church of Christ*. 9 May 2012. <laicc.net/content/view/1794/74/>).
- Dr. John Oates states, **“My experience is that the great majority of Christians do not worry about the exact timing of when the Lord’s Supper should be celebrated. For this reason, even though almost all believers do the Communion on Sunday or Saturday evening, not many have bothered to prove this is the right day.** [...] The issue is not the day the Lord’s Supper is celebrated—it is the idea of legalism and salvation based on such rules rather than of faith in Jesus. In Colossians 2:16-23 he says that imposing these worldly requirements (and he includes celebrating Sabbaths specifically as an example) are not at all helpful in creating righteousness in believers. [...] **The bottom line is that the New Testament does not give a definite command as to when and even how often the Communion should be celebrated. Acts 20:7 is proof that at least in one case, the Lord’s Supper was celebrated on Sunday**” (“Do You Have a Book to Recommend on the Time the Lord’s Supper Should Be Celebrated?” *Evidence for Christianity*. 8 May 2012. <evidenceforchristianity.org>).
- Concerning **music**, the Boston Church “of Christ” describes their worship, **“The 11 AM service began with high-powered singing, accompanied by the Boston church musicians.** A fantastic blend of old

and new songs moved our hearts. As Tony Singh, Boston evangelist, pointed out – ‘The angels and elders are already worshipping before God’s throne and all we have to do is join them!’ [...]

New Hampshire evangelist, Mike Fix, led our hearts to the cross in communion by focusing on the simple concept, ‘Be Still.’ If we are to ever focus on Jesus and all He has done and is doing for us, we must remove the myriad of things that cloud our minds and meditate on Him” (Allen, Jimmy. “All New England Service.” *Boston Church of Christ*. <bostoncoc.org>).

- In hiring a “worship director”, the Boston Church “of Christ” states, “This would be a part time position and the person we choose would assist the entire church in our Worship of God across all the ministries in the Boston Church. **This person would need to be an experienced Worship Leader with skills including directing and leading worship, creating chorus', training other worship directors, arranging music, composition, training our part singers, directing worship band musicians and coordinating with the various ministry staff across the church**” (“Boston is Hiring.” *Boston Church of Christ*. 9 May 2012. <bostoncoc.org>).

Scriptures: Matt. 6:1-18, 15:1-9, 23, John 4:21-24; Acts 20:7, 1 Cor. 4:17, 11:2, 17-34; 14, 16:1-3; Eph. 5:19; Col. 2:18-23, 3:16; 1 Tm. 2:11-12, Heb. 2:12, 10:24-25, 13:15-16.

Morality:

- *No statement found. [Unconfirmed sources report that they are opposed to abortion and homosexuality finding these to be sins.]*

Scriptures: Matt. 15:19, Mark 7:20-23, Rom. 1:24-32, 12:9-15:13, 1 Cor. 6:9-11, Gal. 5:16-6:10, Eph. 4:17-6:18, Col. 3-4:6.

Marriage and Divorce:

- The Orlando Church “of Christ” states, “**For disciples divorce on any grounds other than adultery is not an option and should not be considered, spoken of during a disagreement, nor actions taken toward that direction. To do so is the same thing as considering adultery**” (“Holiness.” *Orlando Church of Christ*. 9 May 2012. <orlandochurchofchrist.com>).

Scriptures: Matt. 5:31-32, 19:9, Mark 10:5-12, Luke 16:18, 1 Cor. 6:16-18, 7:10-15, Heb. 13:4.

The End Times & Afterlife:

- *No statement found. [Unconfirmed sources report that these churches mostly believe that the millennium reign of Christ is the Church, and also that Hell is an eternal conscience torment.]*

Scriptures: Matt. 24:29-51, 25:31-46, Mark 9:1, 13:24-37, Luke 21:25-36, John 14:1-4, 18:36, Acts 1:9-11, 1 Cor. 15:23-28, 50-53, Col. 1:13, 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11, 2 Thess. 2:1-12, Heb. 12:28, 2 Pet. 3:1-13, Rev. 19-22:5.