**A QUICK HISTORY OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST & THE UNIVERSITY CHURCH OF CHRIST**

Christian churches, of course, began with Jesus Christ.

Following Jesus’ death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, early disciples quickly became susceptible to and victims of persecution. However, when the Roman Emperor Constantine converted in the early Fourth Century, Christianity found itself in the seat of power. That power famously led to various forms of corruption, and the eventual Protestant Reformation in the 1500s produced a variety of reforms that have influenced the University Church of Christ (“UCC”) in particular ways: (i) the idea of being governed by Scripture alone (“sola scriptura); (ii) the practice of believer’s baptism; and (iii) the priesthood of all believers.

Christianity spread to the North American continent, and the American colonies and the subsequent new nation that formed provided an environment in which the American Restoration Movement emerged. Ideas such as autonomy, democracy, freedom, and unity are evident in the unity movement associated with Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone that encouraged people to be “Christians only” and go “back to the Bible” as the source of authority for churches.

The “Stone-Campbell” movement united and grew in large numbers on the American frontier in the middle of the Nineteenth Century. Although Stone and Campbell did not agree on everything, they found the call for unity more important than their doctrinal differences.

The American Civil War did more than tear a nation apart. It also created an environment that in many ways severed the Stone-Campbell movement along North-South lines. The divide became “official” in 1906 when the U.S. Census recognized two separate groups: (i) Disciples of Christ (mostly in the North); and (ii) Churches of Christ (mostly in the South). From 1906 until 1941, Churches of Christ experienced increased isolation and distinctiveness—and also huge numerical growth. It was during these years that many Church of Christ colleges formed, including George Pepperdine College in 1937.

World War Two (1941-1945) had a significant impact on Churches of Christ as well. For instance, the relative education and income levels of Church of Christ members increased following World War Two, which led individual congregations to build larger buildings and hire staff. In addition, the international experience of many American soldiers led to a new emphasis on worldwide evangelism. While the number of people associated with Churches of Christ continued to grow in the United States until beginning to level off in the 1980s, the global numbers have grown and continue to grow today. Today, there are approximately 1.3 million people in the United States who associate with Churches of Christ, but there are millions more around the world, including a million in Africa alone.

The Malibu Church of Christ organized on April 5, 1970, in anticipation of the new Pepperdine campus and moved its services to Elkins Auditorium when the campus opened its doors in 1972. The congregation assumed responsibility for a campus ministry in 1978 and changed its name to University Church of Christ and has operated a campus ministry ever since.

The University Church of Christ is set to celebrate its 50th anniversary on April 5, 2020.

*Note: For more on the history of Churches of Christ, we recommend "Renewing God's People: A Concise History of Churches of Christ" by Gary Holloway & Douglas A. Foster*