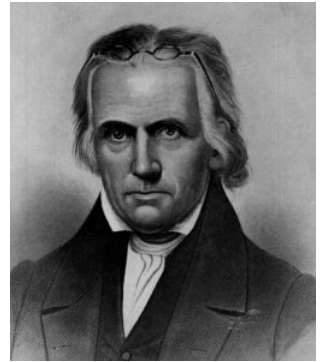


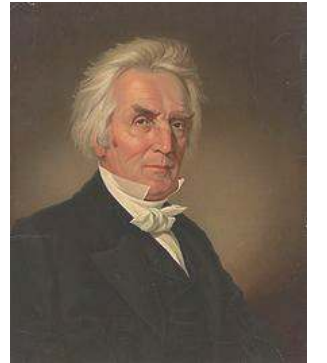
Discovering the Disciples

Key People

Thomas Campbell (top) was a Scots-Irish Presbyterian minister who came to the USA in 1807, and settled in Pennsylvania. He ran afoul of the Synod there when he issued an open invitation to the communion table to those outside his synod. His work for unity in the church soon got his credentials suspended by the Presbyterians. In 1809, he published the *Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington*, outlining his beliefs and theology. When his family arrived from Scotland shortly after, his son Alexander (bottom) became his partner in working for reform, and eventually became the leader of the movement his father had begun, based at the Brush Run Church Thomas had started.



The Campbells worked for unity in the church, for believer's baptism (in opposition to the practice of baptizing infants) and weekly communion. Alexander was a master at debating and published his ideas in his own monthly journal, the *Christian Baptist*. Both Campbells had teaching in their background and believed deeply in higher education and an educated clergy. Alexander founded Bethany College in what is now Bethany, West Virginia in 1840.



Thomas died in 1854, and is buried in the Campbell family cemetery in Bethany. Alexander died in 1866.

Key Moments

In the Scottish Presbyterianism of the Campbells' day, communion tokens were required to receive the elements at the Lord's Table. Only those "approved" by the minister and/or the elders of the church and deemed fit to receive the bread and cup were given tokens. In practice, communion would be celebrated once or twice a year, with the tables fenced off and the "unworthy" banned from the gathering.

Alexander Campbell, whose father was already in America at the time, had a deep moral conflict with this practice as a 21 year old university student in Glasgow. At a biannual service he attended, the presiding minister preached against those who were undeserving of the elements receiving them, saying that they were "seven times more fit for the devil than before" if they did. He also spoke against abstaining from communion if you were deemed fit, warning that any who did so would take God's wrath with them as they left.

Alexander waited and waited as others were served, trying to resolve his internal conflict. Finally, he took his seat. When the tray was passed and the tokens were collected, he threw his into the plate; then, when the elements came around, he refused them, instead rising from his seat and walking out.

Each week, Disciples of Christ all over the world extend a welcome to the Lord's Table to any who come seeking the living Christ. We do so in the tradition of Alexander Campbell's protest.

The Stone/Campbell Union

Barton Stone and Alexander Campbell met for the first time in 1824, while Campbell was on a preaching tour in Kentucky. In an 1829 edition of the *Christian Messenger*, Stone relayed a conversation in which a Baptist had asked why his Christian movement and Campbell's movement hadn't united. What followed was a lively debate between the two, which was largely carried on in their respective publications. They debated issues such as whether or not baptism should be a requirement for admission to the Lord's Supper or church membership; the weekly observance of communion; who had the authority to ordain clergy; and, of course, what was implied by labeling their movements as "Christian" "Baptist" or "Disciples of Christ." Stone pursued the idea of union between the two groups, while Campbell often resisted the idea with his theological arguments.

The union finally came about through two other representatives entirely, John Smith (of the Reformer/Campbell movement) and John Rogers (of the Christian/Stone movement). The two agreed to travel to congregations in attempt to unite the two groups. Before they went out, two meetings were held, both in Kentucky (Georgetown and Lexington), which members of both groups were invited to attend. A spirit of cooperation was present, and the two groups began to form as one.

In the end, joining together led to compromise. Campbell's view that the local congregation had the authority to ordain ministers won out over Stone's belief that other clergy should have a role; Stone's insistence on open communion prevailed over Campbell's argument that one should be baptized prior to approaching the table; Campbell's practice of limiting church membership to the immersed became the practice. Some congregations resisted the union, and later formed what are now the congregational Christian churches and the United Church of Christ (UCC).