

A Council of Communion



The member bodies of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA encompass a wide spectrum of American Christianity — representing traditions as varied as Protestant, Orthodox, Evangelical, Anglican, and African-American, historic peace churches and ethnic-language immigrant churches. They include more than 100,000 local congregations and 45 million persons in the United States.

Many volumes have been written about each of the member communions of the National Council of Churches and no thumb-nail description can do justice to the history and mission of each. The following is intended as the briefest of introductions to the faith groups that compose the NCC. For more information, see the NCC's *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*, and the communion Web sites.



African Methodist Episcopal Church

2.5 million members; 4,174 congregations
3801 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 29204.
www.ame-church.com

The African Methodist Episcopal Church grew out of the Free African Society (FAS) which **Richard Allen**, Absalom Jones, and others established in Philadelphia in 1787. In 1794 Bethel AME was dedicated with Richard Allen as pastor.

To establish Bethel's independence from interfering whites, Allen, a former Delaware slave, successfully sued in the Pennsylvania courts in 1807 and 1815 for the right of his congregation to exist as an independent institution. Because black Methodists in other middle Atlantic communities encountered racism and desired religious autonomy, Allen called them to meet in Philadelphia to form a new Wesleyan denomination, the AME. Today, the stated mission of the African Methodist Episcopal Church is to minister to the spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and environmental needs of all people by spreading Christ's liberating gospel through word and deed.



African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

1,443,405 members; 3,310 congregations
3225 West Sugar Creek Road, Charlotte, NC 28269
www.amez.org

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church Corporation is a major faith-based organization servicing nearly 1.4 million members utilizing a membership business model as its revenue base.

It manages its corporate business through a triune management process that includes the General Conference, the Board of Bishops (a twelve person board, each responsible for a geographical area known as an Episcopal District) and twelve elected General Officers or Department Heads (individual area secretaries, directors and editors whose responsibilities vary over specific units of the church). Our corporate headquarters is located in Charlotte, NC, but each Bishop maintains an office near where they live.



The Alliance of Baptists

65,000 members; 127 congregations
1328 16th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036
www.allianceofbaptists.org

From its inception in 1987, the Alliance of Baptists has stood for those values that have distinguished the Baptist movements from its beginnings nearly 400 years ago — the freedom and accountability of every individual in matters of faith; the freedom of each congregation under the authority of Christ to determine its own ministry and mission; and religious freedom for all.



American Baptist Churches in the USA

1,371,278 members; 5,559 congregations
P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851
www.abc-usa.org

Originally known as the Northern Baptist Convention and later as the American Baptist Convention, this body of Baptist churches assumed the name American Baptist Churches in the USA in 1972 to signify that it is a family of individual congregations. The denomination was officially born in 1907 in Washington but its missionary efforts had been going on for nearly a century: the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society in 1814, the American Baptist Publication Society in 1824 and the American Baptist Home Mission Society in 1832,

American Baptist ministry at the local level dates back to the founding by Roger Williams of the First Baptist Church in Providence, R.I. In 1638.



Armenian Apostolic Church, Diocese of America

414,00 members; 72 congregations
630 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10016
www.armenianchurch.org

The Armenian Apostolic Church was founded at the foot of Mount Ararat in Armenia, where Saints Thaddeus and Bartholomew preached Christianity. In A.D. 303, the historic Mother Church of Etchmiadzin was founded by Saint Gregory the Illuminator, the first Catholicos of All Armenians. The first Armenian diocese in America was established in 1898 by Catholicos Mgrdith Khrimian. Armenian immigrants built the first Armenian Church in the New World in Worcester, Mass.

The church is the home of the National Council of Churches' 24th president, Archbishop Vicken Aykazian.



Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

698,686 members; 3,774 congregations
130 E. Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1986
www.disciples.org

Born on the American frontier in the early 1800s as a movement to unify Christians, the church drew its major inspiration from Thomas and Alexander Campbell in western Pennsylvania and Barton W. Stone in Kentucky. The "Disciples" under Campbell, and the "Christians" led by Stone, united in 1832 in Lexington, Ky.

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is marked by informality, openness, individualism and diversity. The church claims no official doctrine or dogma. Membership is granted through a simple statement of belief in Jesus Christ and baptism by immersion.



Christian Methodist Episcopal Church

850,000 members; 3,500 congregations
4466 Elvis Presley Blvd., Memphis, TN 38116
www.c-m-e.org

The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church was established in 1870 in Jackson, Tenn., by former slaves representing the eight annual conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church South. The new organization became the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America, later renamed the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. The church's boundaries reach from the continental U.S., Alaska, Haiti, Jamaica, and the West African countries of Nigeria, Ghana, and Liberia.



Church of the Brethren

127,526 members; 1,064 congregations
1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, IL 60120
www.brethren.org

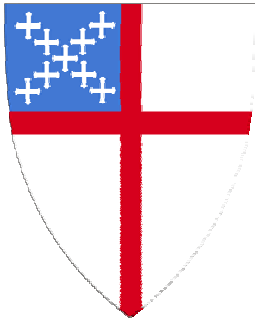
Eight German Pietists/Anabaptists led by Alexander Mack founded the Brethren movement in 1708 in Schwarzenau, Germany. Originally a reaction to state churches they regarded as stagnant, the Brethren soon formed their own movement modeled on the first century church. They practice church discipline, believer baptism, anointing, and the love feast. They have no creed other than the New Testament and hold to the principles of non-violence, Christian service and simplicity. Brethren first came to America in 1710, settling in Germantown, Pa.



Coptic Orthodox Church

300,000 members; 100 congregations
427 West Side Avenue, Jersey City, NJ 07305
www.ecucopt.org

This body is part of the ancient Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria, Egypt, currently headed by Pope Shenouda III. Egyptian immigrants have organized many parishes in the U.S and Copts live outside Egypt in Africa, Europe, Asia, Australia, and Canada. The worldwide Coptic community numbers 27 million. The church is in full communion with other members of the Oriental Orthodox Church family, including the Syrian Orthodox Church, the Armenian Orthodox Church, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the Indian Orthodox Church and the Eritrean Orthodox Church.



Episcopal Church

2,154,572 members, 7,095 congregations
815 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017
www.ecusa.anglican.org

The Episcopal Church entered the colonies with the earliest settlers at Jamestown in 1607. After severe setbacks in the years following the American Revolution because of its association with the British Crown, the church soon established its own identity and sense of mission. It sent missionaries into newly settled territories of the U.S., establishing dioceses from coast to coast, and undertook missionary work in Africa, Latin America and the Far East. The beliefs and practices of the Episcopal Church, like other Anglican churches, are both Catholic and Reformed, with bishops in the apostolic succession and the historic creeds regarded as essential elements of faith and order.



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

4,774,203 members; 10,470 congregations
8765 W. Higgins Rd., Chicago, IL 60631
www.elca.org

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America was organized in the spring of 1987, in Columbus, Ohio, bringing together the 2.25 million-member American Lutheran Church, the 2.85 million-member Lutheran Church in America, and the 100,000-member Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches. The first Lutheran association, the Pennsylvania Ministerium, was organized in 1748 under Henry Melchior Muhlenberg.

The ELCA, through its predecessor church bodies, was a founding member of the Lutheran World Federation, the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA.



Friends United Meeting

42,680 members; 427 congregations
101 Quaker Hill Dr., Richmond, IN 47374-1980
www.fum.org

Friends United Meeting was organized in 1902 as a confederation of North American yearly meetings to facilitate a united Quaker witness in missions, peace work, Christian education and outreach. Today, Friends United Meeting is comprised of 26 full-member and three association member yearly meetings representing about half the Friends in the world.



Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

1,500,000 members; 560 congregations
8-10 E. 79th St., New York, NY 10021
www.goarch.org

Before the establishment of an Archdiocese in the Western Hemisphere there were numerous communities of Greek Orthodox Christians. The first Greek Orthodox community in the Americas was founded in New Orleans by Greek merchants. The first Greek colonists landed at St. Augustine, Fla., in 1768. The first permanent community was founded in New York in 1892 at what is now the Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity and the See of the Archbishop of America. The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America was incorporated in 1921 and officially recognized by the state of New York in 1922.



Hungarian Reformed Church in America

6,000 members; 27 congregations
13 Grove Street, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601
www.calvinsynod.org

A Hungarian Reformed Church was organized in New York in 1904 in connection with the Reformed Church of Hungary. In 1922, the Church in Hungary transferred most of its congregations in the United States to the Reformed Church in the U.S. Some, however, preferred to continue as an autonomous, self-supporting American denomination, and these formed the Free Magyar Reformed Church in America. The church is a member of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the World Council of Churches and the NCC USA.



International Council of Community Churches

73,174 members; 157 congregations
21116 Washington Parkway, Frankfort, IL 60423-3112
www.icccusa.org

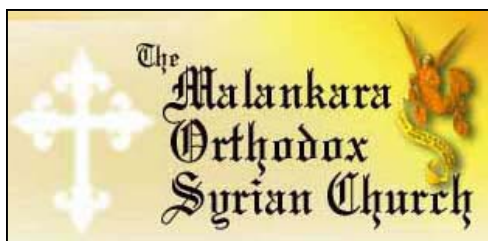
The International Council of Community Churches is a fellowship of locally autonomous, ecumenically minded, congregationally governed, non-creedal churches. The Council came into being in 1950 as the union of two former councils of community churches, one formed of black churches known as the Biennial Council of Community Churches in the United States and elsewhere, and the other of white churches known as the National Council of Community Churches.



Korean Presbyterian Church in America

55,000 members; 302 congregations
17200 Clark Avenue, Bellflower, CA 90706
714-816-1100

This body was officially formed in the United States in 1976 and is an ethnic church, using the Korean and English languages.



Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, Diocese of America

30,000 members, 80 congregations
80-34 Commonwealth Blvd., Bellerose, NY 11436
www.malankara.com

Malankara (Indian) Orthodox Church is an ancient Church of India and it traces its origin to A.D. 52 when St. Thomas — one of Christ's Disciples — came to India and established Christianity in the south western parts of the sub-continent. The Church, modern in its vision and outlook, keeps the traditional Orthodox faith and liturgy. The liturgy is the translation of the liturgy adopted from the Antiochian Church in the 17th century, but the liturgical rites are uniquely Indian.



Mar Thoma Syrian Church of India

40,000 members; 74 congregations
2320 S. Merrick Avenue, Merrick, NY 11566
www.martomanae.com/web/

According to tradition, the Mar Thoma Church was established in A.D. 52 as a result of the apostolic mission of St. Thomas. The Mar Thoma Church retains its Eastern Orthodoxy, following an Orthodox worship form of liturgy. The Church believes in the catholicity of grace and is missionary and evangelistic in its approach. The Mar Thoma Church derives Episcopal succession from the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch and is independent, autonomous, and indigenous, combining democratic values with Episcopal authority. The church started in the U.S. with a small prayer group in Queens, N.Y., in 1972, and was recognized as a parish in 1976.



Moravian Church in America (Unitas Fratrum)

22,489 members, 89 congregations
1021 Center Street, Bethlehem, PA 18016-1245
www.moravian.org

In 1735 German Moravian missionaries of the pre-Reformation faith of Jan Hus came to Georgia, in 1740 to Pennsylvania and in 1753 to North Carolina. They established the American Moravian Church, which is broadly evangelical, ecumenical, liturgical, "confederal" in form of government and has an episcopacy as a spiritual office. The Northern and Southern Provinces of the church operate on a semi-autonomous basis.



National Baptist Convention of America, Inc.

3,500,000 members
777 S.R.L. Thornton Freeway, Dallas, TX 75203
www.nbcamerica.net

The National Baptist Convention of America, Inc., was organized in 1880. The Convention (a corporation of the churches) has a mission statement with 14 objectives including fostering unity through its membership and the world Christian community by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ; validating and propagating the Baptist doctrine of faith and practice, and its distinctive principles throughout the world; and harnessing and encouraging the scholarly and Christian creative skills of its membership for Christian writing and publications.



National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

5,000,000 members; 9,000 congregations
1700 Baptist World Center Dr., Nashville, TN 37207
www.nationalbaptist.com

The National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., one of the oldest African American organizations in the nation, traces its history back to 1895. It was formed as a consolidation of the Baptist Foreign Mission Convention (1880), Consolidated American Baptist Convention (1896), and the National Baptist Educational Convention (1882). In 1915, the Convention stated the following goals in its constitution: "Promote a growth and propagation of religion, morality, and intelligence among the races of mankind, by engaging in missionary work ... by fostering the cause of education and publishing and circulating literature, and in providing the necessary ways and means for carrying on such work."



National Missionary Baptist Convention of America

2,500,000 members
4269 S. Figueroa St., Los Angeles, CA 90037
www.nmbca.com

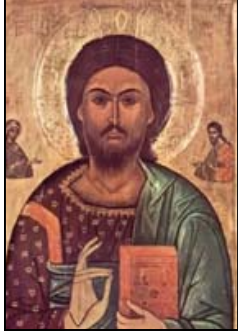
The National Missionary Baptist Convention of America was organized in 1988 as a separate entity from the National Baptist Convention of America, inc., after a dispute over control of the convention's publishing efforts. The purpose of the new organization is to serve as an agency of Christian education, church extension and missionary efforts. It seeks to maintain and safeguard full religious liberty and engage in social and economic development.



The Orthodox Church in America

1,064,000 members, 737 congregations
P.O. Box 675, Syosset, NY 11791-0675
www.oca.org

The Orthodox Church of America entered Alaska in 1794, decades before the territory was purchased by the United States in 1867. Its canonical status of independence (autocephaly) was granted by its Mother Church, the Russian Orthodox Church, on April 10, 1970



Patriarchal Parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church in the USA

17,000 members, 31 congregations
St. Nicholas Cathedral, 15 E. 97th Street, New York, NY 10029
www.russianchurchusa.org

This group of parishes is under the direct jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, His Holiness Aleksy II, in the person of a Vicar Bishop, His Grace Mercurius, Bishop of Zaraisk.



Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

11,681 members, 104 congregations
1515 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102-1479
www.pym.org

PYM traces its roots to the yearly meeting of 1681 in Burlington, N.J. For more than three centuries, PYM has served Monthly Meetings and Quarterly Meetings throughout eastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey, eastern Maryland and Delaware.



Polish National Catholic Church of America

60,000 members, 126 congregations
1006 Pittston Ave., Scranton, PA 18505
www.pncc.org

After a number of attempts to resolve differences regarding the role of the laity in parish administration in the Roman Catholic Church in Scranton, Pa., this church was organized in 1897. With the consecration to the episcopacy of the Most Rev. F. Hodur, this church became a member of the Old Catholic Union of Utrecht in 1907.



Presbyterian Church (USA)

3,025,740 members, 11,903 congregations
100 Witherspoon St., Louisville, KY 40202
www.pcusa.org

The Presbyterian Church (USA) was organized June 10, 1983, when the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. and the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S. united in Atlanta. The union healed a major division that began with the Civil War when Presbyterians in the South withdrew from the Presbyterian Church in the USA to form the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States. Presbyterians organized their first American Presbytery in Philadelphia circa 1706. Strongly ecumenical in its outlook, the Presbyterian Church (USA) is the result of at least ten different mergers over the last 250 years.



Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.

2,500,000 members, 2,000 congregations
601 50th Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20019
www.pnbc.org

The Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc., which traces its heritage to historic African American Baptist conventions in the U.S., held its first organizational meeting in Cincinnati in November 1961. It began holding annual sessions beginning in Philadelphia in 1962.



Reformed Church in America

265,217 members, 891 congregations
4500 69th St., Grand Rapids, MI 49512
www.rca.org

The Reformed Church in America, established in 1628 by the earliest settlers of New York, is the oldest Protestant denomination with a continuous ministry in North America. The church accepts the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession and Canons of Dort as its standards of faith. Although the RCA has worked closely with other churches, it has never entered into a merger with any other denomination. In 1998, it entered into a relationship of full communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the United Church of Christ.



Serbian Orthodox Church in the USA and Canada

67,000 members; 68 congregations
St. Sava Monastery, Libertyville, IL 60048
www.oea-serbianchurch.net

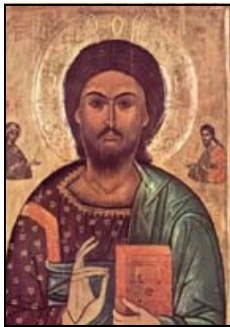
The Serbian Orthodox Church is an organic Part of the Christian Orthodox Church and it received autocephaly from Constantinople in 1219. The Serbian Orthodox Diocese in the United States of America and Canada was formed in 1921. Administratively autonomous, the church remains canonically an integral part of the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate with its see in Belgrade.



The Swedenborgian Church

1,660 members, 40 congregations
11 Highland Avenue, Newtonville, MA 02460
www.swedenborg.org

Founded in North America in 1792, the Swedenborgian Church was organized as a national body in 1817 and incorporated in Illinois in 1861. Its biblically-based theology is devised from the spiritual experiences and exhaustive biblical studies of the Swedish scientist and philosopher, Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772)



Syrian (Syriac) Orthodox Church of Antioch

32,500 members; 31 congregations
260 Elm Ave., Teaneck, NJ 07666
www.syrianorthodoxchurch.org

The Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch traces its origin to the Patriarchate established in Antioch by St. Peter. The first Syrian Orthodox faithful came to North America during the late 1800s and by 1907, the first Syrian Orthodox priest was ordained to tend to the community's spiritual needs. The Archdiocese was officially established in 1957. It is under the supreme ecclesiastical jurisdiction of His Holiness the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and All the East.



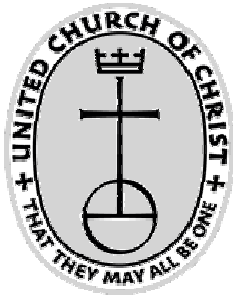
Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA

50,000 members, 118 congregations

Saint Andrew the Firstcalled Apostle Ukrainian Orthodox Church Center,
South Bound Brook, NJ 08880

www.uocofusa.org

The church's ancient origins are in the Ukraine where St. Andrew is believed to have preached the gospel to inhabitants. The church found haven in America in the early 1920s. Before 1996 there were two Ukrainian Orthodox jurisdictions in the U.S. Formal unification of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA, shepherded by His Beatitude Metropolitan Constantine, and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of America, shepherded by His Grace Bishop Vsevolod, was concluded in November 1996.



United Church of Christ

1,218,541 members; 5,452 congregations

700 Prospect Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44115

www.ucc.org

The United Church of Christ was formed on June 25, 1957, as a merger of the Congregational Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Church in Cleveland, Ohio. The creation of the UCC brought together four unique traditions: Congregationalists, including Calvinist and Separatist traditions; Christian Churches, an 18th century movement that emphasized Christ as the only head of the church; the German Reformed Church that followed the insights of Zwingli, Luther and Calvin; and German evangelical and reformed churches.



United Methodist Church

7,995,456 members, 34,397 congregations

www.umc.org

The United Methodist Church was formed April 23, 1968, in Dallas, by the union of The Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church.

The Methodist movement began in 18th century England under the preaching of John Wesley, but the Christmas Conference of 1784 in Baltimore is regarded as the official founding of the Methodist Church as an ecclesiastical organization. It was there that Francis Asbury was elected the first Methodist bishop in the United States.

The Evangelical United Brethren Church was formed in 1946 with the merger of the Evangelical Church and the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, both of which had beginnings in the 18th and 19th century evangelistic movements in Pennsylvania.