

## Denominations Comparison Pamphlet

Information is from official documents, websites, or catechisms of each denomination, as well as from encyclopedias and directories of various denominations. The descriptions on this chart are necessarily short and only generally representative of each denomination. There is diversity within each movement by location, local leadership, and individual personality.

### Official Web Sites for the Major Denominations

Catholic Church: [http://www.vatican.va/phome\\_en.htm](http://www.vatican.va/phome_en.htm)  
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America: <http://www.goarch.org/>  
Episcopal Church USA (Anglican): <http://www.ecusa.anglican.org/>  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: <http://www.elca.org/>  
Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod: <http://www.lcms.org/>  
Presbyterian Church—U.S.A.: <http://www.pcusa.org/>  
United Methodist Church: <http://www.umc.org/index.asp>  
Southern Baptist Convention: <http://www.sbc.net/>  
United Church of Christ: <http://www.ucc.org/>  
Churches of Christ: <http://church-of-christ.org/>  
Seventh-day Adventist Church: <http://www.adventist.org/>  
Assemblies of God: <http://www.ag.org/top/>

### General References Online

Advocates (statistics for all religions): <http://www.adherents.com/>  
Barna Research (what people actually believe): <http://www.barna.org/>  
Creeds of Christendom: <http://www.creeds.net/>

### Other Helpful Gateway Web Sites for the Major Traditions

Catholicism: <http://www.catholic.net/>  
Orthodoxy: <http://www.orthodox.org/>  
Calvinism: <http://www.reformed.org>  
Mennonites: <http://www.mennolink.org/>

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### Acknowledgements

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### Other teaching aids from Rose Publishing:

*Denominations Comparison* chart (439L)  
*PowerPoint® Denominations Comparison* (486X)  
*Christianity, Cults, and Religions* chart (403L)  
*The Trinity* chart (435L)  
*The Trinity* pamphlet (410X)

When was it founded  
and by whom?

How many adherents  
in 2000?

How is Scripture viewed?

Who is God?

Who is Jesus?

How are we saved?

What happens  
after death?

What is the church?

What about the  
sacraments?

What are other beliefs  
and practices of note?

What are the major  
divisions or trends today?

## Catholic Church

Catholics consider Jesus' disciple Peter (died ca. AD 66) the first pope; Gregory the Great (pope, AD 540-604) was a key figure in the pope's office. At that time, the pope came to be viewed as ruling over the whole church.

About 1 billion worldwide;  
62 million, USA

The Scriptures teach without error the truth needed for our salvation. Scripture must be interpreted within the Tradition of the Church. The canon includes 46 books for the Old Testament including deuterocanonical books (the Apocrypha) and 27 books for the New Testament.

The one Creator and Lord of all, existing eternally as the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

The eternal Son incarnate, fully God and fully man, conceived and born of the virgin Mary, died on the Cross for our sins, rose bodily from the grave, ascended into heaven, and will come again in glory to judge us all.

Christ died as a substitutionary sacrifice for our sins; God by his grace infuses a supernatural gift of faith in Christ in those who are baptized, which is maintained by doing works of love and receiving Penance and the Eucharist.

The souls of the faithful go to heaven either immediately or, if imperfectly purified in this life, after purgatory. The souls of the wicked at death are immediately consigned to eternal punishment in hell.

The church is the Mystical Body of Christ, established by Christ with the bishop of Rome (the pope), who may at times pronounce dogma (doctrine required of all members) infallibly, as its earthly head. It is united (*one*) in a sacred (*holy*) worldwide (*catholic*) community through the succession of bishops whose ordination goes back to the apostles (*apostolic*); Christians not in communion with the Catholic Church are called "separated brethren."

Baptism removes original sin (usually in infants). In the Eucharist, the substances (but not the properties) of bread and wine are changed into Jesus' body and blood (transubstantiation).

Mary was conceived by her mother immaculately (free of original sin), remained a virgin perpetually, and was assumed bodily into heaven. She is the Mother of the Church and is considered an object of devotion and veneration (a show of honor that stops short of worship).

About one-fourth of Catholics are doctrinally conservative. Many priests and members tend to accept liberal, pluralist beliefs contrary to church teaching.

## Orthodox Churches

330: Emperor Constantine renamed the city of Byzantium "Constantinople," which became the city of the leading patriarch in the "Great Schism" of 1054.

About 225 million worldwide;  
3-5 million, USA

The Scriptures are without error in matters of faith only. Scripture is to be interpreted by Sacred Tradition, especially the seven Ecumenical Councils which met from AD 325-787. The canon includes 49 Old Testament books (the Catholic Bible plus three more) and the 27 New Testament books.

The one Creator and Lord of all, existing eternally as the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

The eternal Son incarnate, fully God and fully man, conceived and born of the virgin Mary, died on the Cross for our sins, rose bodily from the grave, ascended into heaven, and will come again in glory to judge us all.

In Christ, God became human so that human beings might be deified (*theosis*), that is, have the energy of God's life in them. Through baptism and participation in the church, God's people receive the benefits of Christ's redeeming work as they persevere.

At death, the souls of the faithful are purified as needed (a process of growth, not punishment), then get a foretaste of eternal blessing in heaven. The souls of the wicked get a foretaste of eternal torment in hell.

The church is the Body of Christ in unbroken historical connection to the apostles, changelessly maintaining the faith of the undivided church as expressed in the creeds. It is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, with churches organized nationally (Armenian, Greek, Russian, and so forth) with its bishops under the leadership of patriarchs (the pope being recognized as one of several), of which that of Constantinople has primacy of honor.

Baptism initiates God's life in the one baptized (usually infants). In the Eucharist, bread and wine are changed into Jesus' body and blood (a Mystery to be left unexplained).

Mary was cleansed of sin when Gabriel appeared to her. She remained a virgin perpetually, and (in tradition, not dogma) was assumed bodily into heaven. Icons (pictures of Christ or saints) are objects of veneration through which Christ is to be worshiped.

Roughly one-third are doctrinally conservative. Most Orthodox bodies are members of the National Council of Churches, whose liberal direction is causing some concern.



# Liturgical Churches In order by date

## Lutheran Churches

1517: Martin Luther's "95 Theses" (challenges to Catholic teaching) usually mark the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. 1530: The Augsburg Confession is the first formal Lutheran statement of faith.

About 60 million worldwide (all branches; see below); over 8 million, USA

Scripture alone is the authoritative witness to the gospel (some parts more directly or fully than others). Conservatives view Scripture as inerrant. The standard Protestant canon of 39 Old Testament books and 27 New Testament books is accepted.

The one Creator and Lord of all, existing eternally as the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

The eternal Son incarnate, fully God and fully man, conceived and born of the virgin Mary, died on the Cross for our sins, rose bodily from the grave, ascended into heaven, and will come again in glory to judge us all.

We are saved by grace alone when God imputes to us his gift of righteousness through faith alone (*sola fide*) in Christ, who died for our sins. Good works are the inevitable result of true faith, but in no way the basis of our right standing before God.

The souls of believers upon dying go immediately to be with Christ, and at Christ's return, their bodies are raised to immortal, eternal life. The souls of the wicked begin suffering immediately in hell.

The church is the congregation of believers (though mixed with the lost) in which the gospel is taught and the sacraments rightly administered. All believers are "priests" in that they have direct access to God. All ministers are pastors; some serve as bishops. Historically, apostolic succession has been rejected. At the end of the 20th century, the ELCA (see below) was considering ministerial unity with the Episcopal Church.

Baptism is necessary for salvation; in it both adults and infants are given God's grace. The Lord's Supper remains truly bread and wine but also becomes truly Jesus' body and blood (consubstantiation).

Some members accept Mary's immaculate conception but not other doctrines about Mary. The church's liturgy is very similar to the Episcopal. The church affirms that God chooses who will be saved before they believe (predestination).

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is the mainline church. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is doctrinally conservative.

## Anglican Churches

**Episcopal**

1534: King Henry VIII was declared head of the Church of England.

1549: Thomas Cranmer produced the first Book of Common Prayer.

Some 45-75 million worldwide; 2.3 million, USA

Scripture contains the truth that is necessary for salvation and is the primary norm for faith, but must be interpreted in light of tradition and reason. The canon includes 39 Old Testament books and 27 New Testament books (the Apocrypha is respected but not viewed as Scripture).

The one Creator and Lord of all, existing eternally as the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

The eternal Son incarnate, fully God and fully man, conceived and born of the virgin Mary, died on the Cross for our sins, rose bodily from the grave, ascended into heaven, and will come again in glory to judge us all.

Christ suffered and died as an offering for sin, freeing us from sin and reconciling us to God; we share in Christ's victory when in baptism we become living members of the church, believing in him and keeping his commandments.

The souls of the faithful are purified as needed to enjoy full communion with God, and at Christ's return they are raised to the fullness of eternal life in heaven. Those who reject God face eternal death.

The church is the Body of Christ, whose unity is based on the "apostolic succession" of bishops going back to the apostles, of whom the bishop of Rome is one of many. It is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. The Anglican communion is a part of the church, whose unity worldwide is represented by the archbishop of Canterbury. The church in the USA is known as the Episcopal Church.

The sacraments are "outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace." Infants and converts are made part of the church in baptism. Christ's body and blood are really present in Communion.

Members are free to accept or reject the Catholic doctrines of Mary. The Book of Common Prayer is the norm for liturgy. Priests may marry. In 1976 the Episcopal Church approved the ordination of women. Same-sex marriage and ordaining homosexuals are matters of debate.

In the USA, most belong to the Episcopal Church. About one-fifth are doctrinally conservative. The 39 Articles (1571) are the doctrinal basis for the Reformed Episcopal Church and other conservative splinter groups.

## Presbyterian Churches

1536: John Calvin writes *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. 1643-49: Westminster Standards define Presbyterian doctrine. 1789: Presbyterian Church (USA) first organized (see below).

Some 40-48 million worldwide; 3-4 million, USA

Historic view: Scripture is inspired and infallible, the sole, final rule of faith. PCUSA: Scripture is "the witness without parallel" to Christ, but in merely human words reflecting beliefs of the time. The standard Protestant canon is accepted.

The one Creator and Lord of all, existing eternally as the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

The eternal Son incarnate, fully God and fully man, conceived and born of the virgin Mary, died on the Cross for our sins, rose bodily from the grave, ascended into heaven, and will come again in glory to judge us all.

We are saved by grace alone when God imputes to us his gift of righteousness through faith alone (*sola fide*) in Christ, who died for our sins. Good works are the inevitable result of true faith, but in no way the basis of our right standing before God.

The souls of believers upon dying go immediately to be with Christ. At Christ's return, their bodies are raised to immortal, eternal life. The souls of the wicked begin suffering immediately in hell.

The church is the body of Christ, including all whom God has chosen as his people, represented by the visible church, composed of churches that vary in purity and corruption. Christ alone is the head of the church. Congregations choose elders to govern them. Regional groups of elders (presbyteries) meet in denomination-wide General Assemblies.

Baptism is not necessary for salvation but is a sign of the new covenant of grace, for adults and infants. Jesus' body and blood are spiritually present to believers in the Lord's Supper.

Conservatives affirm the "five points of Calvinism": humans are so sinful that they cannot initiate return to God; God chooses who will be saved; Christ died specifically to save those whom God chose; God infallibly draws to Christ those whom he chooses; they will never fall away.

The Presbyterian Church (USA), or PCUSA, is the mainline church. The Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) is the largest doctrinally conservative church body.

## Methodist Churches

1738: Conversion of John and Charles Wesley, already devout Anglican ministers, sparks Great Awakening. 1784: USA Methodists form separate church body.

Some 20-40 million worldwide; 12 million or more, USA

Historic view: Scripture is inspired and infallible, the sole, final rule of faith. United Methodist Church: Scripture is "the primary source and criterion for Christian doctrine," but (for most) not infallible. The standard Protestant canon is accepted.

The one Creator and Lord of all, existing eternally as the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

The eternal Son incarnate, fully God and fully man, died on the Cross for our sins, rose bodily from the grave, ascended into heaven, will come again in glory to judge us all. Many mainline ministers do not accept the virgin birth.

We are saved by grace alone when God regenerates and forgives us through faith in Christ, who died for our sins. Good works are the necessary result of true faith, but do not obtain forgiveness or salvation.

The souls of believers upon dying go immediately to be with Christ; and, at Christ's return, their bodies are raised to immortal, eternal life. The wicked will suffer eternal punishment in hell.

The church is the body of Christ, represented by visible church institutions. Bishops oversee regions and appoint pastors. In the United Methodist Church, clergy and laity meet together in a national "General Conference" every four years. All pastors are itinerant, meaning they move from one church to the next as directed by the bishop (on average once every four years).

Baptism is a sign of regeneration and of the new covenant and is for adults and children. Jesus is really present, and his body and blood are spiritually present, to believers in the Lord's Supper.

"Entire sanctification" is a work of the Spirit subsequent to regeneration by which fully consecrated believers are purified of all sin and fit for service—a state maintained by faith and obedience. Methodists are Arminian, i.e., they disagree with all five points of Calvinism.

United Methodist Church (8.5 million) and the African Methodist Episcopal church bodies (about 4 million) are mainline churches. The Free Methodists are a small conservative body.



# Helpful Words to Know

**Anabaptist.** Literally, “one who is baptized again.” (1) Groups that baptize believers who were already baptized as infants. Anabaptists deny that they are doing so, since in their view infant baptism is not valid. (2) Specifically, the Anabaptists of Zurich and the church bodies (e.g., Mennonites, Amish) that trace their heritage to them.

**Apocrypha.** Books considered part of the Old Testament in Catholic or Orthodox theology but not in Protestant theology (e.g., 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon). Called *deuterocanonical* in Catholic theology.

**apostolic succession.** The doctrine that there is an unbroken line of succession from the original apostles of Jesus Christ to bishops of today. Only bishops in proper succession may ordain priests authorized to perform the sacraments.

**Arminian.** (1) In the theological tradition of Jacob Arminius (1560-1609), a theologian in early Dutch Calvinism who broke with the Calvinist mainstream on matters pertaining to predestination. (2) Somewhat loosely, any Protestant who rejects the Calvinist view of predestination and related doctrines (especially most Anglicans, Methodists, Churches of Christ, and Pentecostals).

**baptist.** (1) Anyone who holds that only persons giving a credible profession of faith should be baptized. (2) *Capitalized.* A church tradition originating in Puritan England that was congregational and baptist.

**Calvinist.** (1) In the theological tradition of John Calvin (1509-64), particularly in the Reformed and Presbyterian church bodies. (2) Somewhat loosely, any Protestant who holds to the Calvinist view of predestination and related doctrines, including some Baptists and other evangelicals. Conservative Lutherans are closer to Calvinism than to Arminianism, but differ in relatively minor ways. 3) Five points of Calvinism: humans are so sinful that they cannot initiate return to God; God chooses who will be saved; Christ died specifically to save those whom God chose; God infallibly draws to Christ those whom he chooses; they will never fall away.

**canon.** Authoritative list of books belonging in the Bible (or in the Old or New Testament).

**catholic.** Literally, “universal” (1) The faithful church in all its expressions worldwide. (2) *Capitalized.* Having to do with the church body headed by the Pope.

**charismatic.** (1) A generic term for spiritual enablement, as in, *charismatic gifts* (tongues, healings, prophecies, etc.). (2) Church bodies whose members practice speaking in tongues and other charismatic gifts but that do not view tongues as the initial evidence of having received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. (3) Christians in other denominations who experience charismatic gifts.

**clergy.** Priests, ministers, pastors, and other official church leaders, usually said to be *ordained* (specially recognized as having a spiritual responsibility as a leader in the church). *Antonym:* laity.

**Confession.** (1) A document stating what a particular church body or other group of Christians believe in common, such as the Augsburg Confession (Lutheran) or the Westminster Confession of Faith (Presbyterian). (2) The act of privately telling a priest about one's sins (see *Penance*).

**congregational.** (1) A form of church government in which each local church is self-governing; practiced by many denominational groups. (2) *Capitalized.* A church tradition originating in Puritan England that was congregational in church government but (unlike most others) also accepted infant baptism.

**conservative.** Retaining the theological position enshrined in the church body's historic creeds or confessions. *Antonym:* liberal.

**conversion.** (1) The act of changing from one religion (or none) to a new religion, as in conversion from Buddhism to Christianity. (2) The experience of coming to personal faith in Christ, even if the person was already a member of a Christian church.

**ecumenical.** Literally, “of the world.” (1) Representing the Christian church before the schism between the Eastern and Western churches; especially, the creeds and councils of the first millennium. (2) Seeking to foster institutional cooperation or even unity among all Christian church bodies (or at least among some).

**Eucharist.** Literally, “thanksgiving.” Term of choice in liturgical churches for Communion or the Lord's Supper.

**evangelical.** (1) Conservative Christians, mostly Protestant, who affirm the infallibility or inerrancy of the Bible. (2) *Capitalized.* Church bodies in the tradition of Martin Luther (1483-1546), whether or not they are evangelical in the generic sense.

**Friends.** The proper name for Quakers, a movement founded by George Fox (1624-91).

**hell.** (1) *Capitalized.* In Christian theology, the final state of the wicked, that is, of the devil, all fallen angels, and all human beings not redeemed by Christ. (2) In the King James Version of the Bible, “hell” translates both the Greek *Gehenna* (which does refer to the final state of the wicked) and the Greek *Hades* (which refers to the temporary waiting place of all departed human beings between their death and resurrection).

**holiness.** (1) God's attribute of sinless perfection, of being beyond and above all impurity or evil an attribute that human beings are meant to have but do not because of sin. (2) *Capitalized.* The Christian tradition, stemming from John Wesley, which believes that Christians need a distinct work or effect of God's grace in their lives that makes them personally holy and ready for Christian love and service; or, any of the several denominations in that tradition (e.g., Christian & Missionary Alliance, Nazarenes, Salvation Army).

**immersion.** A form of baptism in which a person is completely submerged under water; nearly always practiced in Baptist churches.

**immortality.** A state in which a person is unable to die, certain to live forever.

**incarnate, Incarnation.** Literally, “in the flesh.” The doctrine that Jesus, who was God the Son, “became flesh” (John 1:14), that is, became a fully human being, while still being also fully God.

**inerrant.** Without error; used by evangelicals with reference to the complete trustworthiness of the Bible in all matters on which it speaks.

**infallible.** Without error, sometimes understood comprehensively (as in *inerrant*) and sometimes viewed as limited to certain areas or subjects (especially faith and morals). Applied in Catholic theology to the pope in certain specific pronouncements, and applied in conservative Catholic and Protestant theology alike to the Bible.

**laity.** All church members not holding official church leadership offices. *Antonym:* clergy.

**liberal.** Theological views that deny the infallibility of the Bible and that question, in varying degrees, the traditional doctrines held in common by most Christians prior to the modern era (such as the Virgin Birth or the Trinity). *Antonym:* conservative.

**liturgical, liturgy.** A form of corporate worship in which the priest or minister leads the congregation in readings and prayers from a prescribed text (called the *liturgy*).

**mainline.** A Protestant denomination generally originating before 1900 (though it may have undergone recent mergers), from which theologically conservative congregations have separated (e.g., the United Methodist Church).

**new covenant.** The relationship binding believers in Christ to him that in some way superseded the “old covenant” that God had made with Israel through Moses (see 2 Corinthians 3), into which a person enters in baptism and which is celebrated in the Lord's Supper.

**ordination.** Term of choice primarily in non-liturgical churches for baptism and the Lord's Supper; is understood to mean that the rite is a symbol of God's grace already present in the believer. See *sacrament*.

**orthodox.** (1) Adhering to the essentials of the Christian faith, especially as articulated in the early creeds; in this sense the “orthodox” include conservative Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox. (2) *Capitalized.* Having to do with the association of church bodies of Eastern Europe and the Middle East that became divided from Rome and the churches aligned with it in Western Europe in the “Great Schism” of 1054.

**patriarch.** In the Orthodox Churches, the bishop recognized as the leader of all Orthodox bishops under his jurisdiction (usually a nation or ethnic group, such as Greeks, Armenians, or Russians).

**Penance.** The Catholic sacrament in which a person confesses his sins to a priest and is given assurance of forgiveness.

**pope.** The title, meaning “Father,” referring to the Bishop of Rome (head of the Roman Catholic Church).

**predestination.** A term used by Paul of God's prior decision that determines who is saved. Calvinists hold that God predestines individuals and on that basis brings them to faith; Arminians and most other Christian bodies hold that God predetermines that those who believe will be saved, but does not predetermine who will believe.

**Protestant Reformation.** The movement originally calling for reform of the doctrines, preaching, and rites of the Catholic Church, ignited by the work of Martin Luther, and which resulted in the secession of many churches from the Catholic Church. All of the church bodies profiled in the chart are Protestant except for the Catholic and Orthodox churches (although the Anglican Church also regards itself as Catholic).

**Purgatory.** A state or place to which believers go after death to have any remaining sin or impurity purged or removed before going to heaven. In the Catholic Church this is generally regarded as a place of temporal punishment; it is not so regarded in the Orthodox and Anglican churches. Most Protestants do not believe in Purgatory but rather in an immediate purgation of sin at death.

**Puritan.** English Protestants who embraced Reformed (Calvinist) theology and wanted to purify the Church of England from supposed corruption, especially ornate church decor and priestly garments.

**sacrament.** Term of choice primarily in liturgical churches for baptism and the Lord's Supper (and, for Catholics, five other rites); is understood to mean that the rite is in some way a means by which God extends his grace. See *ordination*.

**sanctification.** (1) Being set apart, or consecrated, to God. (2) The work of the Holy Spirit by which a believer is made holy in character.

**virgin birth.** The miracle by which Mary conceived and gave birth to Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit, without being impregnated by a man.



## Other Significant Church Bodies

There are many other Christian denominations that are not mentioned in this pamphlet. The following are some of the better known or more influential of these denominations.

### Calvary Chapel

Roughly 250,000 in the USA. Started by Chuck Smith in Costa Mesa, CA, as an independent charismatic church oriented to youth. Staunchly evangelical.

### Christian and Missionary Alliance

About 270,000 in the USA, 2 million worldwide. Founded by A. B. Simpson, a faith-healing evangelist of the late nineteenth century, it is an evangelical denomination in the Holiness tradition, emphasizing personal piety and evangelism.

### Church of God (Cleveland, TN)

About 750,000 in the USA; over 6 million members worldwide and growing rapidly. The largest of the Pentecostal "Church of God" bodies.

### Church of the Nazarene

600,000, USA; 1.2 million worldwide. A Holiness church body founded in Texas in 1908.

### Evangelical Covenant Church

#### Evangelical Free Church of America

About 100,000 each, USA. Two U.S. evangelical denominations with origins in the Free-Church tradition (which broke with the national Lutheran church bodies) of Scandinavia.

### International Church of the Foursquare Gospel

About 235,000 in the USA; about 3.6 million worldwide. A Pentecostal church body, founded by Aimee Semple McPherson, one of America's most well-known women evangelists, and emphasizing physical as well as spiritual healing.

### Salvation Army

450,000, USA. A Holiness church founded in 1878 by William Booth, a former Methodist preacher, and his wife Catherine Booth. It is best known for its ministries to the poor.

### Vineyard Ministries International

Perhaps 100,000, USA (over 850 churches worldwide). Charismatic church body that started in 1974 with a single church; in 1982 a Calvary Chapel headed by John Wimber, whose ministry focused on praying for signs and wonders, became a Vineyard, after which Vineyard Ministries International (1983) began growing quickly throughout the world.



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## Anabaptist Churches

## Congregational Churches

## Baptist Churches

## Churches of Christ

1525: Protestants in Zurich begin believer's baptism.  
1537: Menno Simons begins leading Mennonite movement.  
1682: A Quaker, William Penn, founds Pennsylvania.

Perhaps 2 million worldwide;  
Roughly 600,000, USA.

Most view Scripture as the inspired means for knowing and following Jesus, but not as infallible. Jesus is the living Word. Scripture is the written Word that points to him. The standard Protestant canon is accepted. How believers live is emphasized over having correct doctrine.

The one Creator and Lord of all, revealed in Jesus through the Holy Spirit. Most affirm the Trinity in some way.

The Savior of the world, a man in whom God's love and will are revealed by his life of service and his suffering and death. His deity, virgin birth, and resurrection are traditionally affirmed.

Salvation is a personal experience in which, through faith in Jesus, we become at peace with God, moving us to follow Jesus' example as his disciples by living as peacemakers in the world.

No official view of what happens immediately after death. At Christ's return God's people will be raised to eternal life and the unrepentant will be forever separated from God (the traditional view).

The church is the body of Christ, the assembly and society of Christ's disciples who follow him in the power of the Spirit. It is to be marked by holiness, love, service, a simple lifestyle, and peacemaking. No one system of church government is recognized; leadership is to be characterized by humble service and is primarily but not exclusively local.

Baptism is for believers only, a sign of commitment to follow Jesus. The Lord's Supper is a memorial of his death. Most Quakers view sacraments as spiritual only, not external rites.

Anabaptists and similar bodies are "peace churches," teaching nonresistance and pacifism (the view that all participation in war is wrong). Doctrine is deemphasized, and liberal views with social emphasis prevail in some church bodies, including most Quaker churches.

The Mennonite Church and Church of the Brethren are the largest bodies; the Amish (1693) are a variety of Mennonites. Quakers (Friends) originated separately but share much in common with Anabaptists.

1607: Members of a house church in England, illegal at that time, who were forced into exile.  
1620: Congregationalists called Pilgrims sail on *Mayflower* to Plymouth (now in Massachusetts).

Over 2 million worldwide;  
About 2 million, USA.

Most view Scripture as "the authoritative witness to the Word of God" that was living in Jesus, rather than viewing Scripture as the unerring Word of God. (UCC, see below.) The Bible and creeds are seen as "testimonies of faith, not tests of faith." The standard Protestant canon is accepted.

The Eternal Spirit who calls the worlds into being and is made known in the man Jesus.

The crucified and risen Savior and Lord, in whom we are reconciled to God. (His deity and virgin birth are widely ignored or rejected except in the conservative church bodies.)

God promises forgiveness and grace to save "from sin and aimlessness" all who trust him, who accept his call to serve the whole human family.

Those who trust in God and live as Jesus' disciples are promised eternal life in God's kingdom. No position is taken on the future of the wicked (most reject the idea of eternal punishment).

The church is the people of God living as Jesus' disciples by serving humanity as agents of God's reconciling love. Each local church is self-governing and chooses its own ministers. The United Church of Christ is not part of the "Churches of Christ" but was formed in 1957 as the union of the Congregational Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Church, a liberal Protestant body.

Congregations may practice infant baptism or believer's baptism or both. Sacraments are symbols of spiritual realities.

The United Church of Christ (UCC) is one of the most theologically liberal denominations in the USA. Individual ministers and churches vary widely in belief. The United Church of Christ ordains openly homosexual men and women to ministry.

United Church of Christ (1.5 million) is staunchly liberal. The National Assn. of Cong. Christian Churches (110,000) is a mainline body. The Conservative Congregational Christian Conference (38,000) is evangelical.

1612: John Smythe and other English Puritans form the first Baptist church.  
1639: The first Baptist church in America established in Providence, Rhode Island.

100 million worldwide (including families);  
25-30 million, USA.

Scripture is inspired and without error, the sole, final, totally trustworthy rule of faith. The standard Protestant canon is accepted. (Mainline churches vary in the extent to which they continue to view Scripture as without error.)

The one Creator and Lord of all, existing eternally as the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

The eternal Son incarnate, fully God and fully human, conceived and born of the virgin Mary, died on the Cross for our sins, rose bodily from the grave, ascended into heaven, and will come again in glory to judge us all.

We are saved by grace alone when God imputes to us his gift of righteousness through faith alone (*sola fide*) in Christ, who died for our sins. Good works are the inevitable result of true faith, but in no way the basis of our right standing before God.

The souls of believers upon dying go immediately to be with Christ; and, at Christ's return, their bodies are raised to immortal, eternal life. The wicked will suffer eternal punishment in hell.

The church (universal) is the body of Christ, which consists of the redeemed throughout history. The term "church" usually refers to local congregations, each of which is autonomous, whose members are to be baptized believers and whose officers are pastors and deacons. Churches may form associations or conventions for cooperative purposes, especially missions and education.

Baptism is immersion of believers only as a symbol of their faith in Christ. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic memorial of Christ's death and anticipation of his return.

Most Baptist bodies emphasize evangelism and missions. Church and state are to be separate. Baptists include both Calvinists (dominant in the Southern Baptist Convention) and Arminians (dominant in mainline bodies and the Free-Will Baptist bodies).

Southern Baptist (15 million), a conservative body, are the largest Protestant denomination in the USA. American Baptists (1.5 million) and the National Baptists (5-8 million) are mainline churches.

1801: Barton Stone holds his Cane Ridge Revival in Kentucky. 1832: Stone's Christians unite with Thomas and Alexander Campbell's Disciples of Christ. They have different beliefs in some areas.

Perhaps 5-6 million worldwide;  
3-4 million, USA.

"Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent." Churches of Christ view Scripture as the inerrant word of God; Disciples of Christ generally view Scripture as witness to Christ but fallible. The standard Protestant canon is accepted.

The one Creator and Lord of all. The creeds are rejected, but most conservatives accept the idea of the Trinity.

The Son of God, fully God and fully human, conceived and born of the virgin Mary, died on the Cross for our sins, rose bodily from the grave, ascended into heaven, and will come again in glory to judge us all.

Churches of Christ: A person must hear the gospel, believe in Christ, repent, confess Christ, be baptized, and persevere in holiness to be saved. Disciples of Christ: God saves human beings (possibly all) by his grace, to which we respond in faith.

Churches of Christ: Believers immediately go to be with Christ and at his return are raised to immortality; the wicked will suffer eternally in hell. Disciples: Most believe in personal immortality but not hell.

Churches of Christ: The church is the assembly of those who have responded rightly to the gospel; it must be called only by the name of Christ. Only such churches are part of the restoration of true Christianity. Each local church is autonomous and calls its own pastors. Disciples of Christ have a similar form of church government but are ecumenical, and thus do not claim to be the sole restoration of true Christianity.

Baptism is immersion of believers only, as the initial act of obedience to the gospel. Many Churches of Christ recognize baptism in their own churches only as valid. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic memorial.

Many but not all Churches of Christ forbid the use of instrumental music in worship. International Churches of Christ teaches that its members alone are saved and is widely reported to strongly influence its members.

Churches of Christ (about 2 million) are conservative, some militantly and others not. Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) (about 1 million) is the mainline church body.



# Adventist Churches

1844: William Miller's prediction that Christ's "advent" (return) would occur in 1844 failed. It was later interpreted as a heavenly event, not as an actual return.  
1863: Seventh-day Adventist Church is organized.

Over 11 million worldwide (plus members of much smaller bodies); about 900,000, USA.

Scripture is inspired and without error, the final, totally trustworthy rule of faith. The standard Protestant canon is accepted. Ellen G. White, a leader in the early Seventh-day Adventist Church, was a prophet, and her writings authoritatively impart instruction in the Scriptures.

The one Creator and Lord of all, existing eternally as the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

The eternal Son incarnate, fully God and fully human, conceived and born of the virgin Mary, died on the Cross for our sins, rose bodily from the grave, ascended into heaven, and will come again in glory to judge us all.

To be saved, we repent, believe in Christ as Example (in his life) and Substitute (by his death), and so by grace are made right with God and made alive by the Spirit to live in obedience to God's commandments. Those so found at the end will be saved.

Death for all people is an unconscious state. At Christ's return the righteous will be raised for life in heaven. After a Millennium, the wicked will be raised only to be annihilated; the righteous will live forever on a new earth.

The universal church includes all who believe in Christ. The last days are a time of apostasy during which a remnant (the Seventh-day Adventist Church) keeps God's commandments faithfully. The General Conference, composed of delegates from regional "union missions," governs the whole church.

Baptism is immersion of believers only, as a symbol of their faith in Christ. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic memorial of Christ's death and is practiced in conjunction with foot washing.

In 1844 Christ began the Investigative Judgment, a work in heaven of determining who among the dead and living are true, loyal believers obeying God's law. Rest and worship on Saturday is an essential element of that obedience. When the Judgment work is done, Christ will return.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is by far the largest Adventist body. Most of the smaller offshoots reject the Trinity and other traditional Christian doctrines.

# Pentecostal Churches

1901: Charles Fox Parham's Kansas Bethel Bible College students speak in tongues. 1906: The Azusa Street revival (led by William J. Seymour in Los Angeles) launches Pentecostal movement. 1914: Assemblies of God organize.

500 million worldwide (estimates vary); roughly 10 million, USA.

Scripture is inspired and without error, the final, totally trustworthy rule of faith. The standard Protestant canon is accepted. Some church bodies view certain leaders as prophets with authoritative messages that are to be confirmed from Scripture.

The one Creator and Lord of all, existing eternally as the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

The eternal Son incarnate, fully God and fully human, conceived and born of the virgin Mary, died on the Cross for our sins, rose bodily from the grave, ascended into heaven, and will come again in glory to judge us all.

We are saved by God's grace, by Christ's death for our sins, through repentance and faith in Christ alone, resulting in our being born again to new life in the Spirit, as evidenced by a life of holiness.

The souls of believers upon dying go immediately to be with Christ, and at Christ's return their bodies are raised to immortal, eternal life. The wicked will suffer eternal punishment in hell.

The church is the body of Christ, in which the Holy Spirit dwells, which meets to worship God, and which is the agency for bringing the gospel of salvation to the whole world. Most church bodies practice a form of church government similar to Baptists.

Baptism is immersion of believers only, as a symbol of their faith in Christ. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic memorial of Christ's death and anticipation of his return.

Pentecostals in the strict sense view speaking in tongues as the initial evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit (a second work of grace akin to entire sanctification in Methodism). Charismatics accept tongues but don't view it as the only initial evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Assemblies of God (2.5 million USA, historically white) and Church of God in Christ (3 million USA, historically black) are the largest church bodies. "Oneness" churches reject the Trinity.

Date

No.

Scripture

God

Jesus

Salvation

Death

The Church

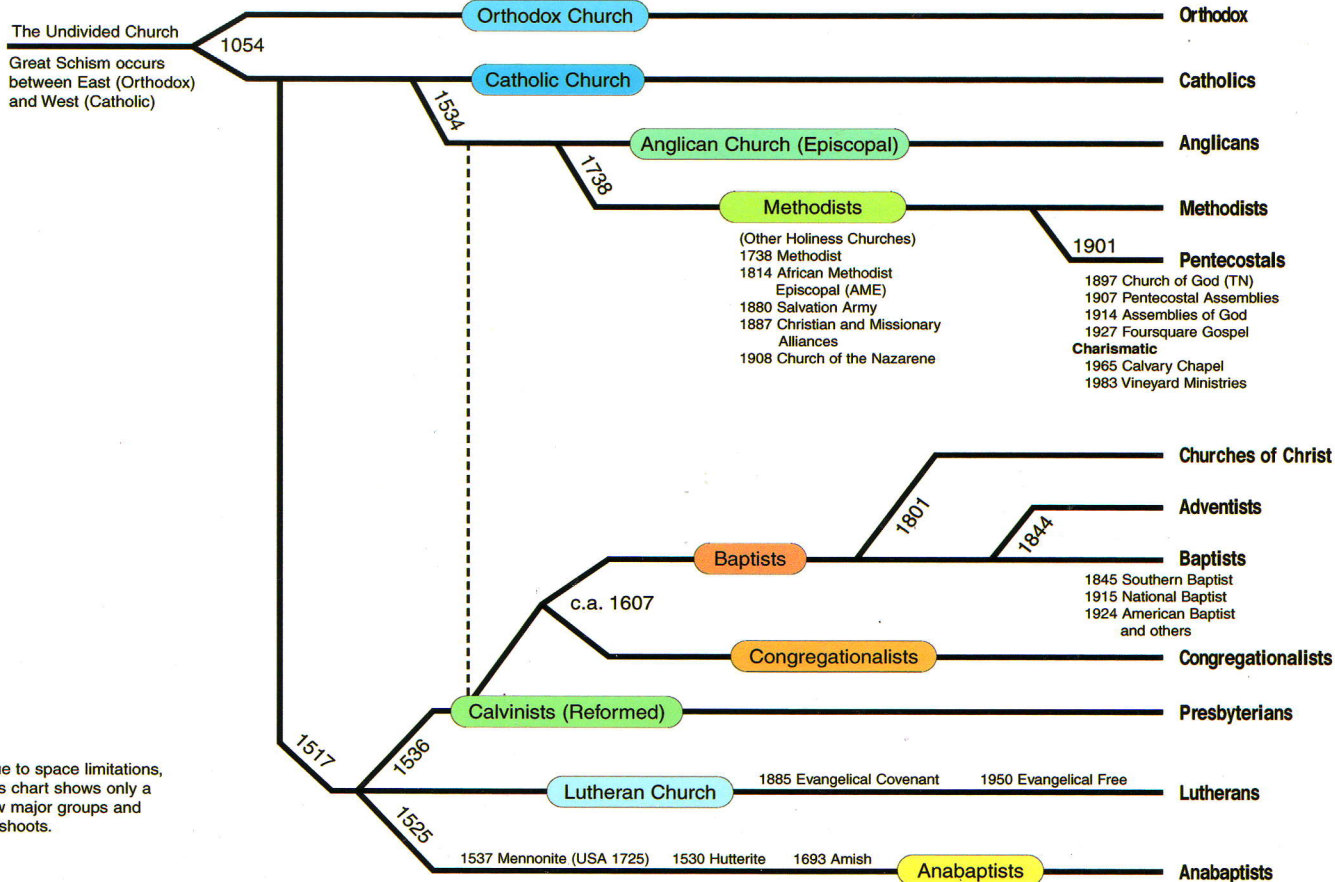
Sacraments

Beliefs

Trends



# Family Tree of Denominations



Due to space limitations, this chart shows only a few major groups and offshoots.