

Christian Temple (Disciples of Christ)

Agency History



The Christian Temple is a congregation based in Catonsville, Maryland and is a Disciples of Christ Church. The original congregation was started in 1901 by Peter Ainslie in Baltimore, MD, and relocated to their current site in 1952. Since its inception, there have been a total of five pastors who have run this congregation of the Disciples, with the current pastor, Rev. Rick Powell, serving since 1995.

The Disciples of Christ are a branch of Mainline Protestants (they refer to their faith as following the "Protestant Mainstream") started in the United States in the 1800s and the denomination refers to itself as the oldest church started in America. The church has a unifying belief in salvation through Jesus Christ, and acceptance of all of God's peoples. Apart from that, many of the Disciples' congregations differ based on community, and are fairly progressive in promoting women and other races towards leadership positions within the church.

This particular congregation follows the works of the national Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and offers an open communion to all, along with a relatively relaxed code of conduct on belief and a general message of tolerance towards all Abrahamic faiths. In addition, they also preach tolerance towards people of different races, sexual orientation and political views. Christian Temple is loosely affiliated with the national Christian Church in that they have very little oversight from the Indiana based church. Within the various church services, there is a particular focus on both the youth program and community outreach. In addition, the congregation has gained a particular amount of notoriety for their choir and music program, which sponsor both a traditional church choir and occasionally an Appalachian-inspired church band.

There is a board for the Christian Temple, but the primary leadership of the congregation comes from Rev. Powell. He has also had contributors throughout the years, most notably Mark Wilson, the leader of the music program. A major contributor was Rev. Bryan Adams, former director of faith development, who left to head another Disciples of Christ congregation in 2008.

This congregation often expresses messages of unity amongst peoples of different races to entice a more universal crowd, and an increase in both the number of church goers and an increase in the ethnic diversity of the church are major goals of the congregation as a whole. However, there are only approximately 250 to 275 members of the actual church, of which only about half appear for services on an average Sunday. In addition, a majority of the Christian Temple's members are of Caucasian descent, although there are a notable few Asian and African-American families.

There is also a significant focus on the youth movement for the congregation, including a "Children at Worship" program that supplants the traditional sermon and youth involvement programs before and after Sunday's events. In addition, during the traditional sermon, the pastor will hold a "children's moment" and invite younger members to come up on stage. These all are elements to attract families with a younger audience, as the majority of the congregation is middle to older-aged.

The Christian Temple is also particularly known for its various programs it participates in or sponsors. These programs include Kaleidoscope! Arts Camp, a children's summer camp started in 1999 in which the church actually serves as the host for the camp, which pulls a majority of its members from outside the Christian Temple.

For the past three years they have also been an active contributor with Chesapeake Habitat for Humanity in both monetary and "in kind" donations. In addition, the church participates in the maintenance of a Pastoral Counseling Center, also located in Catonsville. They do not send funding to this center, rather, they advertise for it and Pastor Rick offers referrals to the center. In addition, the Christian Temple prepares meals for Lazarus Caucus (a local homeless shelter), has sent significant contributions for 9-11 and Hurricane Katrina relief, and has served as the occasional host site for the local Catonsville Children's Theatre.

The Christian Temple appears to be concerned with avoiding the moniker of a "dying congregation" and has made significant inroads on increasing their diversity and youth involvement through a variety of programs hosted on the church grounds and other involvements, all of which unfortunately have yet to pan out significantly.

Timeline of Significant Events

- 1901 Christian Temple Founded in downtown Baltimore, MD
- 1952 Christian Temple relocates to new site in Catonsville, MD
- 1995 Rick Powell becomes pastor of Christian Temple
- 1999 Kaleidoscope! Children's Arts Camp is started
- 2006 Christian Temple begins major involvement with Chesapeake Habitat
- 2008 Newly renovated main church site is completed



Copyright (c) 2010 Faith and Organizations Project

University of Maryland, Department of Anthropology, 1111 Woods Hall, College Park, MD 20742

Phone: 301.405.7121 Email: faithandorganizations@anth.umd.edu