



# Who are the Christadelphians?

## Our Purpose

Bethsalem Care is owned and operated by the South Australian Christadelphian community. Our purpose as a service provider is to enrich the quality of life of all those in our care, serving and nurturing them in a compassionate and comfortable living environment. Our culture and the care we provide are founded on the same Biblical principles that form the beliefs of the Christadelphian community. It is on this basis that we warmly welcome both Christadelphian and non-Christadelphian residents alike.

## About Christadelphians

### 1. First century patterns

The Christadelphians are a religious body who have attempted to get back to the faith and character of the early Christian church of New Testament times. The name 'Christadelphian' has been in use for about 150 years. It means "Brothers and Sisters in Christ".

*(Matthew 23:8; Colossians 1:2; Hebrews 2:11)*

We are located in over 120 countries throughout the world, including the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, North America, India, Asia and Africa. Like the early Christians, we meet in homes, rented rooms and, in some cases, our own halls.

*(Acts 1:13–14; 2:46–47; 18:7; 19:9; 28:30)*

We are a lay community patterned after first century Christianity. Each congregation is called an 'ecclesia' (the Greek New Testament word for church). We have no paid clergy or ecclesial hierarchy. Members of each congregation are addressed as 'brother' or 'sister', and all are involved in organising our activities. All members contribute their time and energy voluntarily in service to God, the Lord Jesus Christ and each other. A strong common faith binds our community together.

*(Romans 12:4–8; 1 Corinthians 12:4–27; Galatians 3:28)*

We accept the Bible as our only guide and believe it to be the inspired word of God. Membership is open to those with the same beliefs after being baptised (fully immersed in water).

### 2. A brief history

Many believers since the apostles have held the same faith as the Christadelphians. There have been countless independent communities around the world who have eagerly studied the Bible and accepted its teachings.

The beliefs and practices of the Christadelphians can be traced from the New Testament to the earliest Christians of the 1st and 2nd centuries in documents such as the Epistle of Clement, The Didache and The Apostles' Creed.

With the advent of greater religious freedom in Europe in the 16th century, the same beliefs and practices resurfaced in Bible-minded groups such as the Swiss Anabaptists, Polish Socinians and early English Baptists. In the 18th century many leading figures in the Enlightenment such as Sir Isaac Newton and William Whiston held these beliefs.

The modern Christadelphian movement has its origin in the 1830s, an age of revival and reform in America and England. In America a medical doctor, John Thomas, published the Herald of the Kingdom, which set out Bible teaching on the resurrection and the Kingdom of God. In Britain a journalist named Robert Roberts took up the same cause in the Ambassador of the Coming Age. Thomas and Roberts made no claims to any vision or personal revelations. They simply promoted what they honestly believed to be the teaching of the Bible.

When the American Civil War broke out in 1861, Christian Conscientious Objectors were required to register with the Union government. Sam Coffman and other brothers in Illinois registered themselves as "Brethren in Christ, or in a word, 'Christadelphian'". This name was soon adopted by like-minded groups of believers in America and Britain. Since then, Christadelphian ecclesias have been established in countries all over the world.

### 3. Our beliefs

#### The Bible

We believe that the Bible is God's only revealed message to mankind, given to bring individuals to faith in God and his Son. The Bible is our only authority and it should be read prayerfully and with care at every opportunity.

*(2 Timothy 3:16–17; 1 Peter 1:10–12; 2 Peter 1:20–21; Acts 17:11; Ephesians 2:20; Romans 16:26)*

#### God

There is only one eternal, immortal God. Jesus Christ is his only begotten son and the Holy Spirit is his power.

*(Deuteronomy 6:4; Luke 1:35; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 1 Timothy 1:17; 2:5; 6:16)*

#### Man

Man is mortal and a sinner before God. The punishment for sin is death – the end of all life.

*(Jeremiah 17:9; Mark 7:21–23; Romans 3:23; James 1:13–15; Romans 6:23; Ecclesiastes 9:5,10; Psalm 115:17; 146:4)*

#### Hope

The only hope of life after death is the resurrection of the body and everlasting life in God's kingdom on earth.

*(Psalms 49:12–20; John 11:25–26; Acts 24:15; Romans 8:22–39; 1 Corinthians 15:12; Revelation 5:10; 20:4)*

#### The Promises

The Gospel is inseparable from the promises which God made to Abraham and David in Old Testament times. These promises are fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

*(Acts 13:32; Genesis 13:14–17; 22:15–18; 2 Samuel 7:12,16; Luke 1:31–33; Galatians 3:6–9,16,26–29)*

#### Jesus

In his love, God sent his son, the man Jesus, into the world to save men from their sins. Jesus was perfectly obedient to God His Father, and sinless.

*(Matthew 1:20–21; 3:17; Luke 1:35; John 3:16)*

#### Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Jesus died to show God's righteousness and to save those who receive this sacrifice by faith. God raised him from the dead, gave him immortality, granted him all authority in heaven and on earth, and set him as the mediator between God and man. Those who believe in him will not perish, but have everlasting life.

*(Romans 3:21–26; Ephesians 1:19–23; 1 Timothy 2:5–6; Hebrews 4:14–16)*

#### Return of Jesus

Jesus will return to the earth soon. Then he will raise many of the dead, judge them with the living, and give everlasting life to the faithful in the kingdom of God.

*(Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:31–34; Luke 21:20–32; John 5:28–29; Acts 1:11; 2 Timothy 4:1; Revelation 22:12)*

#### Kingdom of God

The Kingdom of God will be established on earth. Jesus will be king in Jerusalem; his rule will be worldwide and his government will bring eternal righteousness and peace.

*(Psalm 72; Isaiah 2:2–4; 9:6–7; 11:1–9; 61:1–11; Jeremiah 3:17; Daniel 2:44; 7:14,27; Acts 3:21)*

#### The Way of Salvation

The way to enter the kingdom of God is by faith and baptism. This involves belief in the Bible and obedience to its requirements that men and women confess their sins, repent, be baptised and follow Jesus faithfully.

*(Matthew 16:24–27; Mark 16:16; John 3:3–5; Acts 2:37–38; 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 11:6)*

## 4. Some important differences

Often we are asked, “How are you different from other Christian groups?” Apart from our distinctive organisation (with no clergy or hierarchy), our understanding of the Bible differs from that of other churches at a number of points.

We reject the doctrine of the Trinity, which developed after Jesus’ death and resurrection as a result of disputes within the church (Council of Nicea, 325AD). The Bible teaches that Jesus was uniquely the Son of God but nowhere does it speak of him ‘pre-existing’ in heaven as “God the Son”. The Trinity diminishes the work of Christ by limiting his struggle against sin and the reality of his death. For if he was God he could not be tempted, neither could he die.

*(1 Timothy 2:5; 6:16; 1 Corinthians 11:3; Hebrews 5:8; James 1:13)*

We also reject the popular idea of an ‘immortal soul’ that goes to heaven at death. The Bible teaches that the only hope for eternal life is resurrection when Jesus returns and life forever with him in God’s kingdom.

*(John 3:13; Acts 2:34; 1 Thessalonians 4:16)*

We believe that baptism is essential after a person believes and accepts the gospel. Sprinkling of babies is not baptism.

*(John 3:5; Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21)*

We also believe that the Bible uses the word ‘devil’ as a symbol of sinful human nature, and so we reject the doctrine of a supernatural tempter.

*(Isaiah 45:7; Mark 8:33; John 6:70; Hebrews 1:14)*

## 5. Our way of life

### The Bible: guidebook for life

The Bible gives effective direction to our lives. A widespread custom among Christadelphians is to read the Bible every day using a reading plan which enables us to systematically read the Old Testament once and the New Testament twice each year. Many read much more widely than this.

*(Romans 15:4; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; James 1:22; 2 Timothy 2:15)*

### Prayer

Following the New Testament example, and Christ’s instruction, we pray to God, our Father in heaven, in the name of Jesus his Son. Jesus is our advocate in prayer, knowing our weaknesses. Prayer is an important part of our lives, both individually and in our meetings.

*(John 15:16; 16:26; Romans 8:26,34; Hebrews 4:15; 1 John 2:1)*

### Work and business

Following the teaching and example of the Apostle Paul all Christadelphians aim to support themselves and their families by honest work or enterprise.

*(1 Timothy 5:8; 2 Thessalonians 3:6–12)*

### Family life

The relationship between husband and wife is parallel to the relationship between Christ and his ecclesia. Therefore marriage must be treated with utmost sanctity. Children are brought up to know God, reading the Bible with their parents and attending Sunday School. The elderly are cared for both by their families and by the brotherhood.

*(Ephesians 5:22–33, 6:4; 1 Timothy 5:4)*

## Giving

Christadelphians are, both individually and in groups, involved in charitable work and giving. For example, we operate several nursing homes and hostels for the elderly. Christadelphians also operate a number of third-world charities providing education, food, medical care and basic infrastructure in Africa, India, South-East Asia and the Pacific Islands.

*(Galatians 6:10; James 1:27, 2:15–16; Matthew 6:1–4; John 6:26)*

## Faith and Grace

We try to rely fully upon God and develop a faith which is active in good works. At the same time, however, we recognise that salvation is by grace.

*(Ephesians 2:8)*

With God's help, we seek to please and obey him every day, trying to imitate Christ who faithfully obeyed his Father. We therefore endeavour to be diligent in work, loyal and loving in marriage, generous in giving, dedicated in preaching, and happy in our God.

## 6. Our fellowship, worship and witness

### Meetings

Once a week we meet to worship God, and remember the sacrifice of his Son Jesus by breaking bread and drinking wine. All baptised members take bread and wine.

*(1 Corinthians 11:23–26; 12:13; Matthew 26:26–30)*

This meeting also includes prayers, the reading of the Bible, hymns and songs, and an 'exhortation' (word of encouragement) based on the Bible. A different brother will speak every week.

*(Ephesians 5:19; 1 Timothy 4:13; Hebrews 3:13)*

Participation in this meeting is the focus of our religious life. In most countries this meeting is held on Sunday, though it may be on another day (e.g., Saturday in Nepal and Friday in Bangladesh) where Sunday is not a public holiday.

*(Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2)*

Most local groups also hold one or more preaching activities, evening Bible classes and Youth Group activities during the week.

### Bible schools

Christadelphians do not have theological schools or seminaries, instead Bible Schools exist for all members. Every year many Christadelphians spend a week or some weekends at a Bible School or Bible Study Camps which are held at facilities rented from colleges or other organisations. At such schools there will usually be two or three speakers who will speak on various Bible subjects.

## Organisation

Each 'ecclesia' is self-governing. There is no national or international 'leadership' or 'central office'. But Christadelphians do share a fellowship worldwide based on a common faith. In this way the relations between assemblies are more like a family than in many traditional churches. This is the New Testament model.

*(Ephesians 3:15; 4:1–6, 1 John 1:6–7)*

The original Jerusalem ecclesia had twelve apostles responsible for "the ministry of the word" (preaching and teaching), and seven deacons responsible for "the ministry of tables" (welfare). Other ecclesias were also led by elders and served by deacons. We use the same model with a group of brothers in each ecclesia responsible for the administration of the ecclesia. We do not have paid pastors.

*(Matthew 23:8–11, Acts 1:23–26, 6:1–6, 20:28)*

## Preaching

Each ecclesia tries to preach the good news of the Kingdom and teach the name of Jesus Christ in its local area.

*(Acts 8:12, 28:31; 2 Timothy 4:2)*

Some members travel overseas to preach and assist the local brothers and sisters. These volunteers are unpaid.

*(Acts 20:33–34; 1 Thessalonians 2:9)*

Christadelphians run Bible Seminars and Bible Camps in many countries, and distribute free Bible literature and magazines. Like Paul we aim to "preach the Gospel free of charge".

*(1 Corinthians 9:18)*

## Online

The Christadelphians are a close-knit community working in God's service in whatever ways we can. The following are various websites where you can access more information.

[www.bibleed.com](http://www.bibleed.com)

[www.thisisyourbible.com](http://www.thisisyourbible.com)

[www.exploringthebible.net](http://www.exploringthebible.net)

[www.one-gospel.org](http://www.one-gospel.org)

[www.christadelphia.org/ecclesia.htm](http://www.christadelphia.org/ecclesia.htm)



10 Education Road  
PO Box 196

Happy Valley SA 5159

**Phone: 08 8321 0300**

Fax: 08 8321 0301

Email: [admin@bethsalemcare.com.au](mailto:admin@bethsalemcare.com.au)

Web: [www.bethsalemcare.com.au](http://www.bethsalemcare.com.au)