

# Who We Are



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Unity  
Restoration  
Life

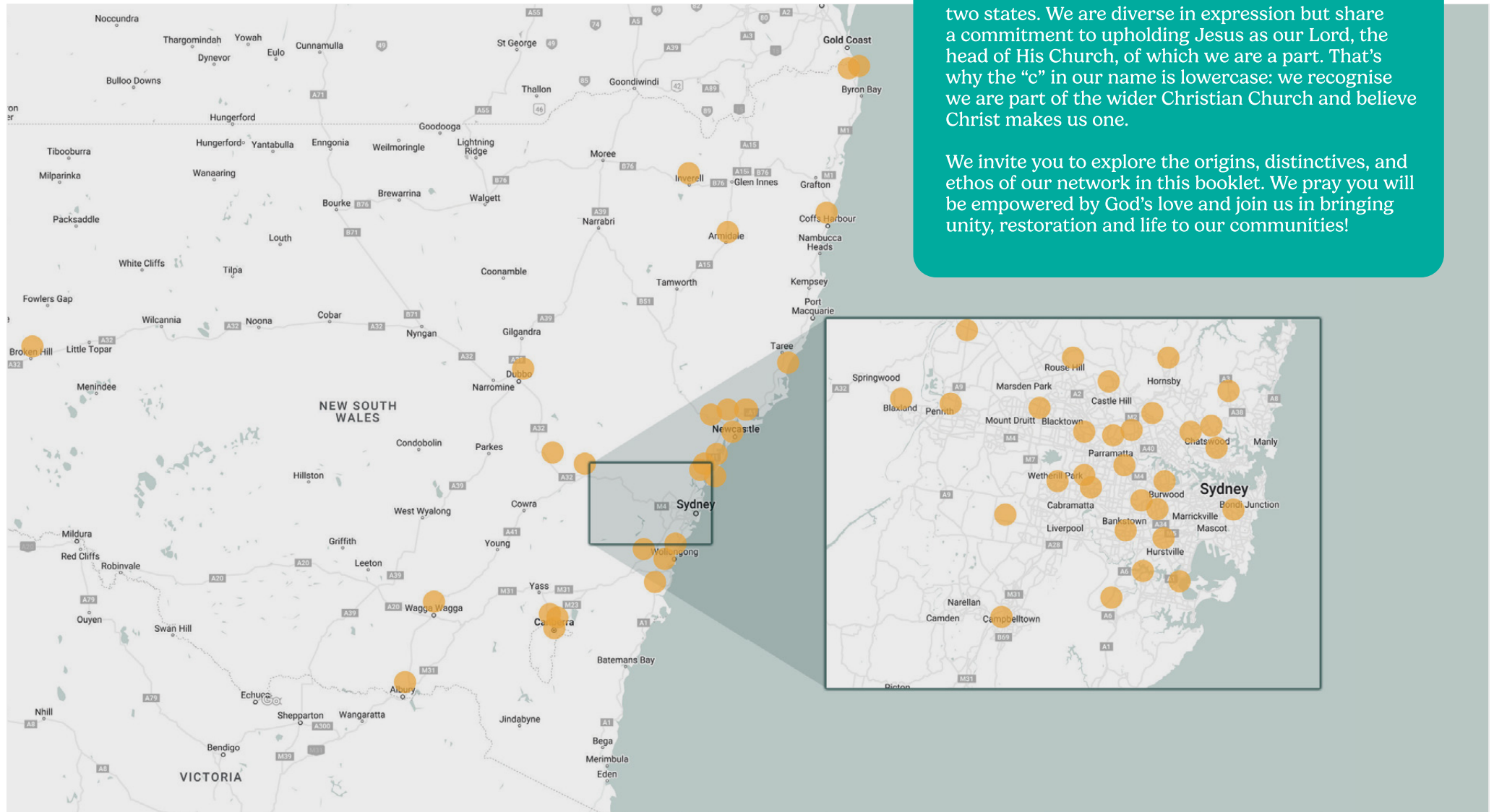
# Welcome!

We are the churches of Christ in NSW and ACT. Our churches are diverse in expression but share a commitment to the Lordship of Jesus and to the simplicity of New Testament Christianity. We desire and seek unity among the broader body of Christ in order that we might bear witness to his grace and glory.

restoration • life • unity • restoration  
unity • life • restoration



# Our Churches



We are a network of more than 60 churches across two states. We are diverse in expression but share a commitment to upholding Jesus as our Lord, the head of His Church, of which we are a part. That's why the "c" in our name is lowercase: we recognise we are part of the wider Christian Church and believe Christ makes us one.

We invite you to explore the origins, distinctives, and ethos of our network in this booklet. We pray you will be empowered by God's love and join us in bringing unity, restoration and life to our communities!

# Our Origins

The churches of Christ story goes back centuries, developing organically as God orchestrated our growth. Today we are a tribe across two states, linked with similar networks across Australia and the world.

## 1. The Enlightenment

The precursors of Churches of Christ developed in the 16th century following the explosion of social changes prompted by a new way of perceiving the world: 'the Enlightenment'.

At this time, the Bible was translated into new languages, which provided greater access to the bible itself, and challenging presumptions such as needing religious leaders to have access to God and the divine right of kings to rule. At the same time social movements such as the French Revolution and constitutional reforms in England led to major societal reforms.

As these social changes matured, followers of Jesus people found freedom to rediscover Christianity uninhibited by religious hierarchy.

## 2. The Restoration Movement

During the 18th and 19th centuries, God was moving powerfully across the United Kingdom, Europe, and the United States, in what is now called the Second Great Awakening. Christians experiencing this spiritual renewal became frustrated with the societal division of mainline denominations and began to return to the simplicity and unity they saw in the New Testament Church.

Across the US and UK, spontaneous gatherings formed that prioritised minimal structure and empowered all Christians to lead and minister. This phenomenon is known as the Restoration Movement, birthing many new, self-governing church networks around the world, some of which became known as 'Churches of Christ'.

## 3. Churches of Christ in Australia

As the 'New World' opened in North America, Australia, and New Zealand, people were freer to think for and govern themselves. Many were reading their Bibles with fresh eyes and rediscovering Simple Christian faith and forms.

First appearing in Adelaide in the 1830's, and later in New South Wales and Brisbane, settlers arrived on Australian shores carrying the Restoration Movement. They planted communities of faith and served new settlers with the love of Christ, proclaiming: "We just want to follow the Bible and not be afraid of where God leads us!"

Today, we are connected with churches of Christ networks in every state and territory of Australia, and with other kindred networks around the world. The richness of our heritage is that we believe that every Australian can open the Bible and allow God to lead them with a freedom found only in Jesus.



# NSW & ACT: Our Story So Far

For New South Wales, it all started when 21-year-old Albert and Isabella Griffin arrived from England in 1851, set up a grocery store on Sydney's Pitt Street, and opened a backroom to hold Christian gatherings.

Quickly outgrowing Griffin's shop, this group separated into two gatherings – one remaining in the city and the other meeting in Newtown. From there, simple churches spread and partnered across New South Wales and the ACT, building ministries and communities for Jesus, becoming known by the simple description: churches of Christ in NSW & ACT. Throughout our story, our network has sought to partner with God in His restorative work in people and communities.



**1851** – Albert Griffin arrives by ship, establishes grocery store in Sydney on Goulburn & Pitt St. Several 'church houses' emerge, coalescing into Newtown church 'hub' base.



**1867** – Building erected by the Newtown church in King St (300 seats). Baptisms conducted at Wollomooloo Baths and the Baptist Church in Bathurst St, Sydney.



**1885** – Newtown Church initiates a conference, calling the first metropolitan Sydney meeting. Dr Kingsbury becomes first Conference President for Churches of Christ in NSW.



**1894** – NSW State Conference formalises the Annual Conference of Women, comprised of 80 female members who met at the invitation of Mrs Martha Clapham, first women's president.



**1886** – Enmore Tabernacle built. First NSW conference held. Forty delegates, representing 684 members from churches at Sydney, Newtown, Darlington, Petersham, Rookwood, Lismore and Manning River district.



**1891** – NSW State Conference tasks Inter-Colonial Conference to establish overseas mission work, resulting in Mary Thompson, the first Churches of Christ missionary, being sent to India.



**1930** – A Churches of Christ committee establishes the Dundas House property to provide housing and care for orphans.



**1941** – Churches of Christ NSW Bible College established in Woolwich, overlooking Lane Cove River.



**1970** – Stanwell Tops site purchased and converted into a Christian Conference Centre.



**1980** – Woolwich Bible College site relocates to Carlingford, is renamed 'Churches of Christ Theological College of NSW'.



**1999** – Australian College of Ministries (ACOM) formal name launched.



**2009** – The Fresh Hope Navigate programs are launched, with a focus on transformation and spiritual formation.



**2022** – Return to the name "churches of Christ in NSW & ACT" as a network.

# Our Distinctives

Our churches are united by Jesus and our shared values, leaving freedom for each church to define their form, expression, and practice as they are led in their context.

The Restoration Movement generally rejected formalised creeds as a test of membership, believing they caused unnecessary division. In the pursuit of unity in our diversity, some distinctive principles emerged over our history that describe what it means to be a church of Christ.



belief in the **Lordship of Jesus** is the mark of our fellowship; we welcome all people to encounter Jesus for themselves



empowering the **ministry of all believers**



**practice guided by the New Testament**, particularly baptism by immersion and participating in the Lord's supper (communion) regularly



**locally-governed churches**: we find commonality in being “simply Christians” - but not the “only Christians” - as we collaborate with the wider body of Christ



**affirming diversity and interdependence** among our churches, seeking to hold to the principle: “In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, and in all things love.”

If you would like to explore these distinctive principles and our origins, read more in “Simply Christians” on the history section of our website:

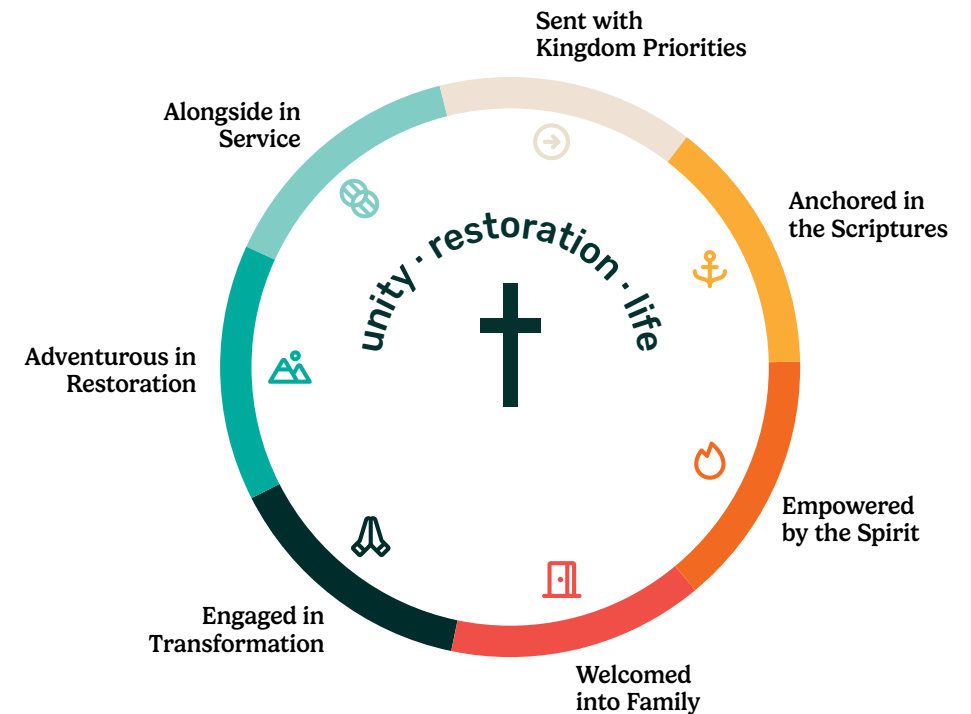


# Our Ethos



In 2020, our churches began a process of re-engaging with our original DNA and in 2022 we affirmed together seven statements that re-express our commonality. These statements are not unique to churches of Christ, and none of them is more important than the others. It's their combination that is powerful, that shapes our presence, purpose and horizon.

This is our ethos, and it stands alongside our shared history and distinctive principles. It exists to give us a common language to name our culture, who we are, what we are for and how we will be together as a network of churches in this time and place. The seven statements, and the scriptures which expand them, help us to live out our shared values. Our ethos is a living document that will continue to be refreshed as frequently as the times and context necessitate.



# Our Ethos Statements

## We are SENT – with Kingdom Priorities

We proclaim and demonstrate with compassion the good news of Jesus. We are sent by Him into the world, with a personal and shared mission to make disciples. Within this mission, larger than ourselves, we work with others to see His Kingdom come.

*Matthew 28:18-20, Matthew 4:17, Matthew 22:1-14, Luke 19:10, Ephesians 2:8-10, 4:11-15, John 17, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, Daniel 2:44*

## We are ANCHORED – in the Scriptures

We have the Scriptures as our anchor, tethering us to God and His redemptive story, preventing spiritual drift. In them, we find life-giving, soul-enriching and mission-equipping truth. They are complete within themselves, holding the place of God-given authority in the personal and shared Christian life. The Scriptures unify us in the essentials of faith, while also providing freedom for exploring the variety of application in love.

*2 Timothy 3:16-17, Luke 24:32, Hebrews 4:12, John 1:1-5,14, Acts 17:11, Joshua 1:8, Psalms 119:105, Isaiah 40:8*

## We are ENGAGED – in Transformation

We cultivate spiritual practises that awaken us to the presence of Jesus who transforms us by His Spirit into His likeness. We are invited into this formational process for the Glory of God, the blessing of others and the abundance of our own lives. We navigate life's experiences of suffering and joy together through the sharing of story, discernment, affirmation and communion.

*Romans 12:2, John 10:10, Revelation 3:20, Proverbs 27:17, Luke 22:19-20, Romans 8:28-29, Psalms 51:10-12, Psalms 1:1-3*

## We are ADVENTUROUS – in Restoration

We courageously bear witness to Jesus in our rapidly changing world with creativity and innovation, gentleness and respect. Holding methodology lightly, we actively restore New Testament patterns for the Christian life in fresh ways. With reflective experimentation, we persevere in our pioneering and we champion the 'have a go' mindset.

*Isaiah 43:18-19, Matthew 13:52, Acts 1:8, Matthew 9:14-17, 1 Peter 3:15, 1 Chronicles 28:20, Isaiah 41:10*

## We are EMPOWERED – by the Spirit

We rely on the indwelling power and counsel of the Holy Spirit, humbly offering our spiritual gifts in loving service to God and others. Conscious of the spiritual battle, we prayerfully walk in step with the Spirit bearing His fruit as He leads, guides and transforms us into the likeness of Jesus.

*Galatians 5:16-26, John 16:13-15, Ephesians 4:1-6, 6:12, 1 Corinthians 12:1-10, Romans 8:1-17, 12:3-8, Ezekiel 36:26-27*

## We are WELCOMED – into Family

We are baptised into Christ, who makes us family with both God and each other. We acknowledge that our bonds of spiritual connection are life-giving, the breaking of which can result in hurt and loss. From a place of genuine connection and mutual accountability we sacrificially love, honour and support one another, from generation to generation.

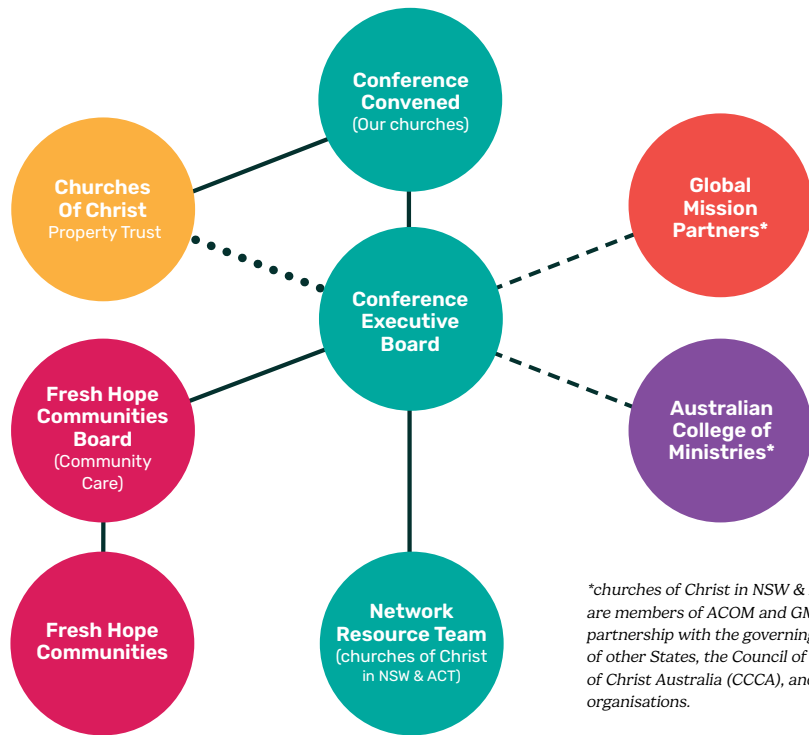
*Romans 12:9-16, Romans 6:3, Galatians 3:28, 6:2, John 1:12-13, 1 John 3:16, Philippians 2:5-11, Ephesians 1-32:11-22, Matthew 18*

## We are ALONGSIDE – in Service

We embrace humble service that equips and empowers the body of Christ, releasing the priesthood of all believers. We express this by working together, bringing a mutual offering of love, gifts and resources for the extension of His Kingdom.

*Galatians 6:2, Ephesians 4:10-13, Philippians 2:5-11, John 13:12-17, Mark 10:43-45, 1 Peter 2:9, Isaiah 58:6-12*

# Our Network



*\*churches of Christ in NSW & ACT are members of ACOM and GMP in partnership with the governing boards of other States, the Council of Churches of Christ Australia (CCCA), and other organisations.*

- **Churches Of Christ Property Trust**  
 Our incorporated entity which holds property in trust and provides low-cost loans and grants to churches.
- **Network Resource Team**  
 The state team that works in partnership with churches to support and resource our network.
- **Fresh Hope Communities**  
 An entity of CCNSWACT which exists to create spaces that cultivate belonging and places that feel like home.

- **Australian College of Ministries**  
 A national partner of churches of Christ, which exists to provide flexible online study options to equip Christians for ministry in their local church and workplace.
- **Global Mission Partners**  
 A national partner of churches of Christ, which exists for mission, relief and development to overseas and Indigenous Australian communities.



To find out more about our leadership, head to our About Us page:

The power of a network means our impact reaches beyond our churches themselves. Over our history, our network has begun initiatives in aged care, retirement living, outdoor adventures, conferencing and group accommodation, ministry training and spiritual formation, and international mission and development.

Today these initiatives are established entities, creating opportunities for thousands of people to encounter transformation in Christ every day.



**Fresh Hope Communities** exists to create spaces that cultivate belonging and was founded by the churches of Christ in NSW and ACT. For almost 90 years, they have been providing quality support and lifestyle choices across retirement, residential and respite settings, as well as conference and outdoor adventure experiences for school and community groups.

To find out more, please visit [freshhope.org.au](http://freshhope.org.au)



**Australian College of Ministries** is an online-based college, developing healthy, effective leaders who can positively impact their own corner of the world. ACOM emphasises a missional focus, flexible learning, deep spiritual formation, work-based learning, and academic excellence.

To find out more, please visit [acom.edu.au](http://acom.edu.au)



**Global Mission Partners** is the mission and development organisation of the Churches of Christ in Australia. They connect people and churches in mission partnerships in three areas: International Relief and Development, International Church Partnerships and Indigenous Ministry in Australia.

To find out more, please visit [gmp.org.au](http://gmp.org.au)



**Whatever part  
you play in our network,  
our prayer is that you would  
be welcomed into God's family,  
anchored in the Scriptures,  
empowered by the Spirit,  
engaged in transformation,  
sent with kingdom priorities,  
alongside in service and  
adventurous in restoration  
in our world.**

**Scan to find ways to be involved  
and stay connected as we partner  
together with God and His work  
in NSW & ACT!**

