

CHRISTIAN UNION

STATISTICS

Summary for the United States, with urban-rural classification.—A general summary of the statistics for the Christian Union for the year 1926 is presented in Table 1, which shows also the distribution of these figures between urban and rural territory.

The membership of the Christian Union comprises those persons whose names have been placed on the roll of communicants in the local churches upon profession of faith. The form of baptism is not prescribed.

TABLE 1.—SUMMARY OF STATISTICS FOR CHURCHES IN URBAN AND RURAL TERRITORY, 1926: CHRISTIAN UNION

ITEM	Total	In urban territory ¹		PER CENT OF TOTAL ²	
		In urban territory ¹	In rural territory ¹	Urban	Rural
Churches (local organizations)	137	13	124	9.5	90.5
Members	8,791	1,382	7,409	15.7	84.3
Average per church.....	64	106	60		
Membership by sex:					
Male.....	3,784	588	3,196	15.5	84.5
Female.....	4,857	794	4,063	16.3	83.7
Sex not reported	150		150		100.0
Males per 100 females.....	77.9	74.1	78.7		
Membership by age:					
Under 13 years.....	492	138	354	28.0	72.0
13 years and over.....	6,653	1,106	5,547	16.6	83.4
Age not reported	1,646	138	1,508	8.4	91.6
Per cent under 13 years ³	6.9	11.1	6.0		
Church edifices:					
Number.....	123	11	112	8.9	91.1
Value—Churches reporting.....	118	11	107	9.3	90.7
Amount reported.....	\$370,784	\$83,000	\$287,784	22.4	77.6
Average per church.....	\$3,142	\$7,545	\$2,690		
Debt—Churches reporting	4		4		100.0
Amount reported.....	\$3,360		\$3,360		100.0
Churches reporting "no debt" on church edifice.....	96	9	87		
Parsonages:					
Value—Churches reporting.....	11	2	9		
Amount reported.....	\$24,500	\$6,000	\$18,500	24.5	75.5
Debt—Churches reporting	1		1		100.0
Amount reported.....	\$1,500		\$1,500		100.0
Churches reporting "no debt" on parsonage.....	10	2	8		
Expenditures during year:					
Churches reporting.....	122	12	110	9.8	90.2
Amount reported.....	\$65,209	\$15,531	\$49,678	24.8	75.2
Current expenses and improvements.....	\$56,414	\$13,924	\$42,490	24.7	75.3
Benevolences, missions, etc.....	\$6,310	\$890	\$5,420	14.1	85.9
Not classified.....	\$2,485	\$717	\$1,768	28.9	71.1
Average expenditure per church.....	\$535	\$1,294	\$452		
Sunday schools:					
Churches reporting.....	101	11	90	10.9	89.1
Officers and teachers.....	926	114	812	12.3	87.7
Scholars.....	6,789	1,329	5,460	19.6	80.4

¹ Urban territory includes all cities and other incorporated places which had 2,500 inhabitants or more in 1920, the date of the last Federal census; rural territory comprises the remainder of the country.

² Per cent not shown where base is less than 100.

³ Based on membership with age classification reported.

The data given for 1926 represent 137 active Christian Union churches, with 8,791 members. The classification of membership by sex was reported by 133 churches, and the classification by age was reported by 112 churches, including, however, only 56 which reported any members under 13 years of age.

Comparative data, 1890-1926.—Table 2 presents, in convenient form for comparison, a summary of the available statistics of this denomination for the censuses of 1926, 1916, 1906, and 1890.

TABLE 2.—COMPARATIVE SUMMARY, 1890 TO 1926: CHRISTIAN UNION

ITEM	1926	1916	1906	1890
Churches (local organizations)	137	220	216	294
Increase ¹ over preceding census:				
Number	-83	4	-78	-----
Per cent	-37.7	1.9	-26.5	-----
Members	8,791	13,692	13,905	18,214
Increase ¹ over preceding census:				
Number	-4,901	-213	-4,309	-----
Per cent	-35.8	-1.5	-23.7	-----
Average membership per church	64	62	64	62
Church edifices:				
Number	123	193	188	184
Value—Churches reporting	118	191	185	-----
Amount reported	\$370,784	\$341,510	\$299,250	\$234,450
Average per church	\$3,142	\$1,788	\$1,618	-----
Debt—Churches reporting	4	15	13	-----
Amount reported	\$3,360	\$9,169	\$5,288	-----
Parsonages:				
Value—Churches reporting	11	8	3	-----
Amount reported	\$24,500	\$11,000	\$2,200	-----
Debt—Churches reporting	1			-----
Amount reported	\$1,500			-----
Expenditures during year:				
Churches reporting	122	176		-----
Amount reported	\$65,209	\$47,079		-----
Current expenses and improvements	\$56,414	\$43,579		-----
Benevolences, missions, etc.	\$6,310	\$3,500		-----
Not classified	\$2,485			-----
Average expenditure per church	\$535	\$267		-----
Sunday schools:				
Churches reporting	101	172	168	-----
Officers and teachers	926	1,479	1,514	-----
Scholars	6,789	11,582	9,234	-----

¹ A minus sign (—) denotes decrease.

State tables.—Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6 present the statistics for the Christian Union by States. Table 3 gives for each State the number and membership of the churches classified according to their location in urban or rural territory and the total membership classified by sex. Table 4 gives for selected States the number and membership of the churches for the three censuses from 1906 to 1926, together with the membership for 1926 classified as under 13 years of age and 13 years of age and over. Table 5 shows the value of church property and the debt on such property, for 1926 alone. Table 6 presents, for 1926, the church expenditures, showing separately the amounts expended for current expenses and improvements, and for benevolences, etc., and also gives the data for Sunday schools. Separate presentation in Tables 5 and 6 is limited to those States in which three or more churches reported the principal items shown (values or expenditures), in order to avoid disclosing the financial statistics of any individual church. The States omitted from these tables can be determined by referring to the complete list which appears in Table 3.

Ecclesiastical divisions.—Table 7 presents, for each council in the Christian Union, the more important statistical data shown by States in the earlier tables, including number of churches, membership, value of church edifices, debt on church edifices, expenditures, and Sunday schools.

TABLE 3.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES IN URBAN AND RURAL TERRITORY, AND TOTAL MEMBERSHIP BY SEX, BY STATES, 1926: CHRISTIAN UNION

GEOGRAPHIC DIVISION AND STATE	NUMBER OF CHURCHES			NUMBER OF MEMBERS			TOTAL MEMBERSHIP BY SEX			
	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Male	Female	Sex not reported	Males per 100 females ⁽¹⁾
United States.....	137	13	124	8,791	1,382	7,409	3,784	4,857	150	77.9
East North Central:										
Ohio.....	78	7	71	3,971	666	3,305	1,735	2,126	110	81.6
Indiana.....	12	1	11	1,170	62	1,108	514	656		78.4
West North Central:										
Iowa.....	8	2	6	897	168	729	395	502		78.7
Missouri.....	17	3	14	1,706	486	1,220	720	986		73.0
Nebraska.....	1		1	40		40	21	19		
Kansas.....	1		1	14		14	8	6		
East South Central:										
Kentucky.....	2		2	78		78	40	38		
Tennessee.....	2		2	58		58	25	33		
West South Central:										
Arkansas.....	6		6	149		149	38	71	40	
Oklahoma.....	10		10	708		708	288	420		68.6

¹ Ratio not shown where number of females is less than 100.

TABLE 4.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES, 1906 TO 1926, AND MEMBERSHIP BY AGE, 1926, BY STATES: CHRISTIAN UNION

[Separate presentation is limited to States having 3 or more churches in either 1926, 1916, or 1906]

STATE	NUMBER OF CHURCHES			NUMBER OF MEMBERS			MEMBERSHIP BY AGE, 1926			
	1926	1916	1906	1926	1916	1906	Under 13 years	13 years and over	Age not reported	Per cent under 13 ¹
United States.....	137	220	216	8,791	13,692	13,905	492	6,653	1,646	6.9
Ohio.....	78	123	117	3,971	7,678	8,184	227	2,899	845	7.3
Indiana.....	12	13	15	1,170	1,366	1,488	85	946	139	8.2
Illinois.....		4	4		155	123				
Iowa.....	8	14	15	897	1,048	655	98	731	68	11.8
Missouri.....	17	39	33	1,706	2,382	2,433	38	1,143	525	3.2
Kansas.....	1	1	4	14	25	99		14		
Kentucky.....	2	5	5	78	55	139		78		
Arkansas.....	6	5		149	96			109	40	
Oklahoma.....	10	11	17	708	721	541	37	642	29	5.4
Colorado.....			5			190				
Other States.....	3	5	1	98	166	53	7	91		

¹ Based on membership with age classification reported; not shown where base is less than 100.

TABLE 5.—VALUE OF CHURCH PROPERTY, AND CHURCH DEBT, BY STATES, 1926:
CHRISTIAN UNION

[Separate presentation is limited to States having 3 or more churches reporting value of edifices]

STATE	Total number of churches	Number of church edifices	VALUE OF CHURCH EDIFICES		DEBT ON CHURCH EDIFICES		VALUE OF PARSONAGES		DEBT ON PARSONAGES	
			Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Amount
United States.....	137	123	118	\$370, 784	4	\$3, 360	11	\$24, 500	1	\$1, 500
Ohio.....	78	69	69	185, 884	3	2, 160	6	8, 500		
Indiana.....	12	12	12	49, 200			(1)			
Iowa.....	8	8	8	48, 000	1	1, 200	(1)			
Missouri.....	17	22	17	59, 200			(1)			
Oklahoma.....	10	7	7	23, 200						
Other States ²	12	5	5	5, 300			5	16, 000	1	1, 500

¹ Amount included in figures shown for "Other States," to avoid disclosing the statistics of individual churches.

² The figures for parsonages (value and debt) include data for 5 churches in Indiana, Iowa, and Missouri.

TABLE 6.—CHURCH EXPENDITURES AND SUNDAY SCHOOLS, BY STATES, 1926:
CHRISTIAN UNION

[Separate presentation is limited to States having 3 or more churches reporting expenditures]

STATE	Total number of churches	EXPENDITURES DURING YEAR					SUNDAY SCHOOLS		
		Churches reporting	Total amount	For current expenses and improvements	For benevolences, missions, etc.	Not classified	Churches reporting	Officers and teachers	Scholars
United States.....	137	122	\$65, 209	\$56, 414	\$6, 310	\$2, 485	101	926	6, 789
Ohio.....	78	70	29, 689	24, 818	2, 941	1, 930	62	565	3, 547
Indiana.....	12	12	9, 224	8, 580	644		11	107	913
Iowa.....	8	8	5, 639	5, 209	410	20	7	71	565
Missouri.....	17	13	10, 077	8, 998	794	285	9	72	970
Arkansas.....	6	3	115	10	105		1	6	21
Oklahoma.....	10	10	9, 795	8, 494	1, 251	50	7	82	660
Other States.....	6	6	670	305	165	200	4	23	113

TABLE 7.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES, VALUE OF EDIFICES, DEBT, EXPENDITURES, AND SUNDAY SCHOOLS, BY COUNCILS, 1926: CHRISTIAN UNION

COUNCIL	Total number of churches	Number of members	VALUE OF CHURCH EDIFICES		DEBT ON CHURCH EDIFICES		EXPENDITURES DURING YEAR		SUNDAY SCHOOLS	
			Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Number of scholars
Total.....	137	8, 791	118	\$370, 784	4	\$3, 360	122	\$65, 209	101	6, 789
Arkansas.....	6	149	1	1, 000			3	115	1	21
Indiana.....	9	971	9	40, 700			9	7, 739	8	673
Iowa.....	9	937	9	51, 000	1	1, 200	9	5, 849	8	610
Kentucky and Tennessee.....	4	136	3	1, 300			4	260	2	58
Missouri.....	18	1, 720	17	59, 200			14	10, 277	10	980
North Ohio.....	37	2, 270	37	130, 284	1	1, 760	36	20, 889	34	2, 334
South Ohio.....	44	1, 900	35	64, 100	2	400	37	10, 285	31	1, 453
Oklahoma.....	10	708	7	23, 200			10	9, 795	7	660

HISTORY, DOCTRINE, AND ORGANIZATION¹

DENOMINATIONAL HISTORY

The churches forming the organization called Christian Union trace their origin to a number of independent movements, from 1795 to 1864, for a larger liberty in religious thought and worship, a greater freedom from ecclesiastical domination, and a closer affiliation of men and women of different creeds and beliefs. A number of these independent churches sprang up in various parts of the country, the leaders having no knowledge of the existence of the other or their efforts to bring about a closer union of believers.

Rev. James O'Kelley led one effort in North Carolina, Rev. Abner Jones one in Vermont, and Rev. Barton W. Stone led another in Kentucky. From 1835 to 1857 independent organizations were also formed in Clay and Ray Counties, Mo., under the leadership of Rev. John Walker and Reverend Livingstone; and in 1857 several organizations were formed in Monroe County, Ind., by Rev. Eli P. Farmer, which were known as the Evangelical Christian Union. During the Civil War Mr. Farmer entered the Army as a chaplain and a number of his followers volunteered, and as a result most of the organizations were disbanded for lack of a ministerial leader. Mr. Farmer united with the Christian Union organization later, however, when he returned from the war. Several independent churches were organized in Michigan under the leadership of Rev. Hiram Rathbun, but later they were disbanded. Of the seven Missouri churches six were formally merged with the Christian Union organization in 1868, under the leadership of Rev. J. V. B. Flack, and are still identified with the movement.

The intensity of the political strife during the Civil War became very bitter, and was manifest in extremely intolerant partisan preaching. The war spirit entered into the church services to such an extent that many ministers and laymen who were strongly opposed to the presentation of such questions from the pulpit withdrew from the different denominations. Others, who refused to indorse war and countenance what they termed "an unwarrantable meddling of both North and South, which was the culmination of the great injustice and insane haste on the part of the extreme leaders of both sections," were expelled from the churches or socially ostracized, and many of them joined the ranks of those who were impatient under the restrictions of ecclesiastical rule.

Christian Union became a distinct church organization in 1864. Rev. J. F. Given, of Columbus, Ohio, began the publication of a paper known as the Christian Witness, in which he gave expression to the sentiment of those who desired freedom from political and ecclesiastical interference in religious worship. This agitation finally resulted in a convention being called for those favorable to "forming a new church organization" on broader lines than those of the already existing denominations. This convention was held at Columbus, Ohio, February 3, 1864. After the representatives from several of the more prominent denominations had conferred together, both in private and in public convention, the following declaration was adopted as a basis of union:

Having a desire for more perfect fellowship in Christ and a more satisfactory enjoyment of the means of religious edification and comfort, we do solemnly form ourselves into a religious society under the style of the "Christian Union," in which we do avow our true and hearty faith in the received Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God and the only and sufficient rule of faith and practice, and pledge ourselves "through Christ who strengtheneth us" to "keep and observe all things whatsoever He hath commanded us."

¹ This statement, which is substantially the same as that published in Part II of the Report on Religious Bodies, 1916, has been revised by Mr. J. W. Hyder, Excelsior Springs, Mo., secretary of the Christian Union General Council, and approved by him in its present form.

A second convention was held in Columbus, Ohio, June 1-2, 1864, composed of delegates from different local organizations which had been formed in the interim and also of other persons favorable to the new movement. There were present at this meeting some who had formerly been members of the Methodist Episcopal, Methodist Protestant, United Brethren, Presbyterian, New School, and Freewill Baptist Churches. A third convention was held at Lancaster, Ohio, November 19, 1864.

In 1865 a general convention was held in Terre Haute, Ind., attended by delegates from different States in which organizations had been formed. The action of the three former conventions was reaffirmed and a complete summary of principles was declared. These have been revised by later State and general councils, and, as now officially adopted, are as follows: (1) The oneness of the Church of Christ; (2) Christ the only head; (3) the Bible the only rule of faith and practice; (4) good fruits the only condition of fellowship; (5) Christian union without controversy; (6) each local church governs itself; (7) partisan political preaching discountenanced.

The movement spread very rapidly, and among the more prominent early leaders, in addition to those already mentioned, were Rev. M. T. Bowman, Rev. K. D. Wolf, Rev. Ira Norris, Rev. Joseph Goode, Rev. J. W. Klise, Rev. Charles Dorrell, Rev. Joseph Richmond, Rev. John Iams, and Rev. A. T. Cunningham.

The local groups now differ somewhat in name. Those in Ohio, where the organization had its beginning as a distinctive church movement, use the original name, the "Christian Union," for both local and State organizations; in nearly all the other sections the local organization is called the "Church of Christ in Christian Union," and the State organizations are called the "Churches of Christ in Christian Union"; but while thus differing somewhat in name, the several State organizations affiliate and recognize one another as parts of the same general movement, and the general council of all the States is known as the "General Council of Christian Union of the United States."

DOCTRINE

Apart from the brief summary already given, Christian Union can scarcely be said to have a system of doctrine. Its members believe in the generally accepted doctrines of all evangelical churches, making no distinction between Arminian and Calvinist. They require no special creed, but say, as did Paul, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." Each individual has the right to his own interpretation of the Scriptures without controversy on disputed theological questions, and on admission to membership is expected to make a public confession of Christ as his personal Savior, to accept the Bible as the revealed Word of God, and give his promise to read and study it and to follow its teaching, thus "keeping and observing whatsoever He hath commanded us," as set forth in the basis of union adopted at the first convention in Columbus, Ohio.

The Lord's Supper, baptism, and, in rare instances, foot washing, are observed among the churches, but none of these is required as a condition of fellowship, "good fruits" or Christian character being the only test of fellowship. The various modes of water baptism are practiced, each individual choosing the method by which he wishes the ordinance administered.

The ordination of ministers is in the hands of the State councils and follows recommendation from the local church of which the candidate is a member, but the candidate is generally required to preach under a license for two or more years and to pass certain examinations by the board of ordination. Men and women alike are ordained to the ministry and are admitted to the charge, district, State, and general councils on an equality.

ORGANIZATION

The local church or congregation is absolutely self-governing in all things pertaining to its individual affairs. For purposes of fellowship, however, and for the transaction of such business as pertains to the general movement in their territory, various councils have been organized. Charge councils, composed of contiguous churches employing the same pastor, usually meet quarterly, all members and church officers participating. District councils are composed of a number of counties and generally meet semiannually, with the church officers, ministers, and sometimes delegates, taking part. State councils meet annually, and are composed of all licensed and ordained ministers together with church officers or delegates. The general council meets every four years and is composed of an equal number of ministerial and lay delegates from the different State councils, although some States have more delegates than others, because of their larger number of churches and membership.

WORK

Christian Union is engaged in a small way in missionary activities, local, home, and foreign. The local activities are in the hands of the State missionary boards, while the home and foreign work is in the hands of a general mission board appointed by the general council. The local mission work consists of evangelistic efforts among the local churches that have become run down and unable to carry on the work with regular pastoral services or to go into neglected and needy communities and minister to their spiritual needs. What is known as home mission work is carried on through the Chicago Tract Society and is confined chiefly to Americanizing and Christianizing the foreign-speaking people in our large cities. What is designated as foreign mission work is carried on through the Ceylon and India General Mission. An accurate statement of the amount contributed to these departments of the work can not be given for the reason that until recently no definite work had been undertaken by regularly constituted boards. For this reason many have been contributing through various denominational boards and others have made their offerings direct. Official and unofficial records, however, show that approximately \$2,500 was contributed during 1926 to the local, home, and foreign work, most of which was sent direct to the workers and did not pass through the treasury of the mission board.

Christian Union has no educational institutions at present. Sunday schools and Christian Endeavor societies are maintained in most of the local churches and several of the States are making special efforts to promote the work among the young people of the churches.

A home for aged ministers is being maintained on the individual cottage plan, depending solely upon freewill offerings. It is known as Christian Union Home and is located at Excelsior Springs, Mo.