



WORLDVIEW MADE PRACTICAL Volume 20 Number 28 July 22, 2025

What Is the National Council of Churches?

By Tal Davis

Are you a member or attend a church in any of the following denominations: The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA); The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; The American Baptist Churches in the USA; The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada; The Church Of The Brethren; The Community of Christ (formerly The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints [RLDS]); The Episcopal Church; The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America; The Moravian Church in America; The National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.; The Orthodox Church in America; The Presbyterian Church U.S.A. (PCUSA); The Reformed Church in America; The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers); or The United Methodist Church? If you are a member of one of those communions (and a few smaller ones) you may or may not know that they are all affiliated with an interdenominational alliance called The National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC). At present, a total of 37 American denominations are officially affiliated with the NCC.

If you are a member of some other denominational church or a non-denominational church, it is probably not affiliated with the NCC. Some of the larger of those include The Roman Catholic Church; The Southern Baptist Convention; The Presbyterian Church in America; The Church of God in Christ; The Assemblies of God; The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS); and The Churches of Christ.

So, you might ask, why are some denominations members of the NCC and others are not? To get a clear answer to that question we need to explore the history and purpose of the NCC. In the early 1900s, many churches banded together to further common social goals in American society. In May 1908, leaders of 32 Christian denominations met together and formed the Federal Council of Churches (FCC) to work for social reform. The

NCC was formed in 1950 when the FCC and 11 similar organizations merged. Since that beginning, the NCC has worked together to accomplish a number of projects. Perhaps its notable most notable accomplishment was the publication, in 1952, of The Revised Standard Version (RSV) of the Bible and the updated edition in 1989. Today the NCC has 37 member communions with a combined membership of more than 30 million people in an estimated 100,000 congregations (down from about 40 million at the beginning of the 21st century). Each denomination donates funds to finance the NCC administration and projects. The NCC headquarters is located on Riverside Drive in New York City (right next-door to the World Council of Churches).

So what is the purpose of the NCC? Its own website states the following:

“The purpose of the NCC is to live as a community of denominations called by Christ to visible unity and sent forth in the Spirit to promote God’s justice, peace, and the healing of the world.

This purpose is served as the communions, striving to express unity by living together as the Council

- Further their vocation to proclaim Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord;
- Engage in ecumenical worship and in biblical and theological study;
- Challenge and counsel one another in mutual accountability as a witness to the unity of the Church;
- Share resources for unity and mission;
- Strive for peace and justice in the social, political, and economic order;
- Practice and advocate careful stewardship of God’s creation;
- Act as responsible servants to people in need;
- Foster education about and for ecumenism and en-

Permission to Reprint

If you wish to reprint this article in your own print or electronic newsletter, please include the following text:

*Reprinted from **Worldview Made Practical**; a free e-zine produced by **MarketFaith Ministries** featuring practical teaching and life tools to help Christians become more effective in their faith life. Discover **MarketFaith Ministries** at www.marketfaith.org.*

Speaking Schedule

If you are interested in having Freddy Davis or Tal Davis present one of our **Worldview Seminars** or to share about worldview and its practical implications at your church or organization, please contact **MarketFaith Ministries** to schedule your event. All contact information is at the bottom of this e-zine.

Worldview Resources

It is one of the primary purposes of **MarketFaith Ministries** to provide resources to help Christians understand the practical implications of worldview. You can find many free resources that will help you in your quest at <http://www.marketfaith.org>.

gage in all educational efforts from an ecumenical perspective;

- Nurture ecumenical life through relationships with: local, regional, national and world ecumenical bodies, and groups and movements of Christians seeking renewal and unity;
- Cultivate relationships and dialogue with people of other faiths and ideologies. Evidence of their commitment to racial, gender, and economic justice, as well as in disability and generational concerns.”

(https://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/about-us/?gad_source=1&gad_campaign_id=22568877486&gbraid=0AAAAA90FwHqG4i5y11ww-p0IskvPusn5FW&gclid=CjwKCA-jwx8nCBAwEiwA_z_058zQp8chCYfW3cKNtC94K_LvLeJG4ahLaASWluOesiioVF-Byn8KuBoCtEUQAvD_BwE)

Those stated principle all sound very noble and would be hard for any Christian to dispute. However, when we analyze how the various denominations interpret them, we see there is a problem. The truth is, most of the member denominations are what would be characterized as liberal or progressive. That is to say they put little or no emphasis on biblical study, evangelism, or missions. Rather, they focus far more on ecumenism (the de facto unification of all Christians, churches, or even non-Christian faiths) than reaching out to the unsaved or unreached with the gospel.

When they do study the Bible they often filter it through an interpretive system called the “Higher Critical Method.” That method uses subjective naturalistic processes to question the historicity and authorship of many, if not most, of the books in the Bible. They often “demythologize” the stories to eliminate supernatural elements, even including the historic resurrection of Jesus. Ironically, since this method began in the 19th century, most of the historical assertions made by the early “higher critics” to discredit the Bible have themselves been discredited. Ar-

chaeology and textual research have actually enhanced the credibility of the Scriptures in the last century.

Likewise, when NCC groups do refer to evangelism, they do not mean proclaiming the gospel message; that is, telling people how to repent of their personal sins and put their faith in the atoning death and resurrection of Christ for their personal salvation. Often they take “evangelism” to mean reaching out and doing various kinds of service and social programs to help the poor or needy and to fight for social justice. This often includes interjecting themselves into political controversies. Some 20th century liberal theologians used to refer to this as the “Social Gospel.”

Social ministries are commendable and churches should do them. Nonetheless, the primary obligation of a Christian church is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ (see 1 Corinthians 15:1-8); that is the good news message of salvation from sin and eternal life through faith in Christ. Then comes discipling individuals in their spiritual growth. It is not some “Social Gospel” or social action that takes priority over personal salvation. It’s like hitting a baseball and running to third base while skipping first and second. Unfortunately, this has led to drastic declines in church memberships, and to churches filled with unregenerate (unsaved) members.

Another area where many churches in the NCC have lost their focus is in world missions. The world missions movement was started with the intention of carrying the gospel around the world to win unreached people groups to Christ. It involved evangelizing people, then planting indigenous churches that would grow and multiply. Christianity then would spread worldwide before the return of Christ. Now, most of the NCC affiliated bodies are retreating from the mission fields. They no longer recruit missionaries or send them abroad. Part of the reason is due to a belief in cultural relativity that is held by many of their leaders. They contend that we western Christians have no right to try to impose our faith on any other established culture or religion.

Subscription Information SUBSCRIPTION NOTICE:

A subscription to **Worldview Made Practical** is complementary for anyone interested in receiving it. If you received this email as a forward from a family member or a friend and wish to subscribe for yourself, you may do so at www.marketfaith.org. If you wish to unsubscribe from this newsletter, simply follow the instructions found at the bottom of each edition.

Contact Information

If you wish to contact us directly, you may do so by the following methods:

321 Anton Dr., Tallahassee, FL 32312

E-mail:

info@marketfaith.org

Phone: 850-383-9756

You can order our products and examine our services at <http://www.marketfaith.org>.

This issue of **Worldview Made Practical** is a production of **MarketFaith Ministries**, © 2025. All rights reserved.

So when we consider these facts we can get a better understanding of why so many denominations have chosen not to seek membership in the NCC. If you look at the list of non-members above, you will notice that, with the exception of the Roman Catholic Church, most of them are what we call evangelical denominations.

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the largest non-Catholic denomination, is a conservative association of autonomous Baptist churches which cooperate to do evangelism and missions. It is not, itself, a church. Therefore, it could not formally associate with the NCC or any other group. It is not even a member of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) – a more conservative, and explicitly evangelical, association of churches, denominations, and organizations.

The Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) is a denomination started in 1974 as an alternative to the Presbyterian Church USA. It is far more conservative theologically than the PCUSA and the other groups that make up the NCC.

The Church of God in Christ (COGIC) is a predominantly African American pentecostal denomination and is one the fastest growing in the nation.

The Assemblies of God (AOG) is a long established conservative and evangelical pentecostal denomination. On a global scale it may be the fastest growing church in the world,

The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS) is the more conservative of the two largest historic Lutheran bodies in the United States. The other is the progressive Evangelical (what a misnomer) Lutheran Church in America, which is in the NCC.

The Churches of Christ (COC) is a loose association of like-minded churches that consider themselves part of the “restoration movement” of the 19th century. They focus on several key doctrines including the necessity

of water baptism and weekly communion. They tend to avoid associations with churches or Christians outside their movement.

Two other major moral issues in the past couple of decades have further alienated churches in the NCC from other more conservative denominational and non-denominational churches. One issue is abortion. It is fair to say that most of the NCC denominations take fairly liberal positions on the abortion question. They tend to oppose legal restrictions states may put on abortions.

The other issue that has split some of the NCC churches in recent years is that of LGBTQ marriage and ordinations. Most of them have made accommodations for same sex marriages and are commonly ordaining gay men and women to their ministry posts. One of them, the United Methodist Church, has formally split over the issue. A sizable percentage of congregations withdrew from that denomination when its 2024 General Conference voted to recognize gay marriage and ordination.

So now you know a little bit about the National Council of Churches in the United States. If you are member of a church in a denomination that is a member of this organization, I hope this article has stimulated your curiosity to investigate further. Sadly, most of the larger denominations in the NCC are losing members as a startling pace. I think the points I have made can, in part, explain why.

For a similar review of this issue in the PCUSA read Freddy Davis’ recent post: <https://www.marketfaith.org/2025/06/missions-shutting-down/>

Resources:

- Melton, J. Gordon. Melton’s Encyclopedia of American Religions, 8th Ed, Detroit: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009.
- Reid, Daniel G. Cord, Ed. Dictionary of Christianity in America. Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990.

- https://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/about-us/?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=22568877486&g-braid=0AAAAA90FwHqG4i5y11wwp0IskvPusn5FW&gclid=CjwKCAjwx8nCBhAwEiwA_z__058zQp8chCYfW3cKNtC94K_LvLeJG4ahLaASWluOesiiovFByn8KuBoCtEUQAvD_BwE
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Council_of_Churches
- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/National-Council-of-the-Churches-of-Christ-in-the-USA>

Would You Consider Supporting Us?

Would you consider financial support for **MarketFaith Ministries**? I feel confident that what we are doing is consistent with your beliefs about spreading the gospel and equipping the saints for ministry. Would you let us be one element of your hands and feet in this process? **MarketFaith Ministries** is a 501 (c) (3) not for profit corporation, so your contributions are tax deductible. If you would consider this we would be very grateful. Also, if you would like to know more about the ministry, it would be my pleasure to share with you personally what we are working on and how you can plug in. I can be reached at 850-383-9756 or by e-mail at Freddy@marketfaith.org. As for any donations, they may be sent directly to **MarketFaith Ministries** at 321 Anton Dr., Tallahassee, FL 32312, or you can contribute through our secure website at www.marketfaith.org. Simply click on the "Donate" button at the bottom of the homepage. We are deeply grateful for your support of this ministry.

And, as always, if you have any thoughts, opinions or suggestions about how **MarketFaith Ministries** can help you, please feel free, at any time, to call (850-383-9756) or e-mail (info@marketfaith.org). We are here to serve you.