

What Is Scripture?

This is the first in an ongoing series of short articles that will help us understand what scripture is and what is in each book of scripture. Each insert will be available at www.openarms-communityofchrist.org.

We talk a lot about scripture, but what is it? One good definition of scripture is that it is writings that have stood the test of time and have been accepted as sacred as a specific group of people.

Community of Christ holds sacred three books of scripture: the Bible, Book of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants.

The Bible is a collection of books written over many thousands of years. It was written by many authors from different backgrounds, and contains a variety of documents: history, songs, poetry, literature, letters. The books contain records of humanity's interaction with the Divine, and so each book is flavored by the experiences and background of each writer.

The Book of Mormon is another collection of books whose focus is on the ministry of Christ on this continent. It does not replace the Bible but functions as an additional witness of God's concern for **all** people.

The Doctrine and Covenants contains modern revelation—guidance for the church through the individuals who are called to be prophetic leaders of Community of Christ. The documents in this book have been presented to the World Conference and approved by the delegates to that event as “the mind and will of God” for the church.

All scripture grows out of a specific context—a specific time and situation, although there are also general principles that can be gained from scripture. Faith, experience, tradition, and scholarship each have something to contribute to our understanding of scripture, and so it is important to value what each of these sources bring to our study.

Community of Christ has a statement on scripture that can be found at <http://www.cofchrist.org/scripture-in-community-of-christ>. The important introduction to this statement says this: “Scripture provides divine guidance and inspired insight for life when responsibly interpreted and faithfully applied. Scripture helps us believe in Jesus Christ. Its witness guides us to eternal life and enables us to grow spiritually, to transform our lives, and to participate actively in the life and ministry of the church.”