

# Clifton Presbyterian Church

Celebrating Fifteen (15) Decades of Service and Gratitude



*1940's December 7, 1941; June 6, 1944; April 12, 1945; May 8, 1945; Aug. 6, 1945; and August 15, 1945\* And when the war was over . . . the microwave oven, the UN, Eniac, the Slinky, the Jukebox, Nylon Stockings!; the Bikini . . . It's a Wonderful Life!; and CPC celebrates 75 years!*

Clifton Presbyterian Church continued to grow despite America's involvement in the Second World War. The Sessional Minutes of 1943, prior to Rev. DeChant's call to Delaware in December of that year, recorded 87 communicants and 67 Sunday school members and teachers. In the midst of the unsettled period that followed his departure, CPC celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in September 1946, starting with a Saturday evening program and a social hour. This was followed by two services on Sunday. Dr. Ralph K. Merker who had been appointed Moderator of the Session when Rev. DeChant resigned, and former pastors and student pastors including Rev. DeChant, Rev. John Strome (1931, 32), Rev. Keith Custis (1927), Mr. John McLeod, Mr. W. K. Easter, and Mr. Benjamin Lynt participated in the evening service with special music and remarks.

The church family in 1946 wrote in their historical account that, "*The history of {this} church can never be understood without a full appreciation of . . . the work of the . . . Aid Society . . . which {bore} the financial burdens of the church, kept up the spirit of the congregation and provided pleasant social interludes; . . . the Missionary Society {that has} kept before the congregation the necessity of going to all the world to preach the gospel; and . . . the Christian Endeavor Society, one of the most potent religious forces among the young people... {Sadly} it became one of the casualties of WWII.*" Honoring those saints, members that had gone before, they continued, "*This church and Mr. and Mrs. William H. Richards were almost synonymous . . . they gave not alone to this community and this church, but also to God.*"

William Richards died toward the end of Rev. DeChant's ministry in 1942 and his wife, Catherine Detwiler Richards (Clifton's Aunt Kate) followed 2 years later. The writers continue, others who "*served our Savior and whose sacrifices have made our little sanctuary their dearest treasure are the Fords, especially Mr. W. E. Ford, the Grahams, the Kempers, the*

*Adams, the Quiggs, the Browns, the Shaws, and the Poindexters.” {The Newmans, Buckleys, Detwilers, and Doaks were added by Helen Quigg in 1970.} “{They} have maintained in our community not only a church but a spiritual fortress as sturdy and solid as the building of rough-hewn stone they built and have maintained for seventy-five years. Ours is the task to carry on the heritage they gave to us.”* Membership in 1946 was 82 and included Willard Webb who had expressed his desire to unite with the church on Dec. 27, 1942. He served his country in the Pacific Theater during the war and as we will learn in decades to come, he also served his community, his church and his God.

Mr. Benjamin Lynt, the last of the four student pastors who served from 1944-1947, organized the men of the church to help with physical problems of the facility. Known as the Lynt Club, it was devoted to Bible Study and work groups. In 1947, Rev. George T. Liddell, an attorney with the US Government, accepted a call to serve the Church.

1940's Clifton was in economic decline. It had been since the late 1930's. The railroad had discontinued passenger service in 1938. A county-wide consolidation plan had eliminated the high school grades in Clifton in 1935, sending the students to Fairfax. Tractors and automobiles (The Jeep debuted in 1941 and the price of gas was 19 cents/gal.!) had all but replaced horses. Clifton was no longer the same rural community it had been. Young people were not as interested in farming and were seeking employment elsewhere. With FDR's "New Deal," and the increase in government during the Great Depression, others found jobs working for "Uncle Sam." Following Pearl Harbor, many from Clifton volunteered to serve or were drafted. The Town Council was requested to paint bright objects a dark color, and "blackouts" and ration books became a way of life. There was some good news in town! Clifton established a volunteer Fire Department on May 26, 1942 as an auxiliary to the Fairfax Fire Department; and the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company of Virginia renewed the franchise in Clifton in 1947 for 30 years, promising that shortly, the company would increase the number of lines available and **reduce the number of parties on each line to a maximum of Eight (8)!!**

Some in our congregation today have shared their beautifully written memories of the 1940's. Tricia describes a warm spring day, when a phone call changed their lives. Bud remembers his mother's excited announcement that, the WAR WAS OVER, and the errand she sent him on with his little red wagon. Alice remembers 5 different schools in 4 different states in 1942 and how important it was for even the children to do their part for the war effort. Nancy, in grade school in D.C during the war, remembers rationing, air raid drills, blackouts, and the smell of the horse meat her father brought home, that even the dog wouldn't eat! There is so much more to their memories. You won't want to miss reading "the rest of the story".

In war and in peace, we are grateful for our "spiritual fortress," for our faith, for the sacrifices of those of "the Greatest Generation," for the aromas that take us home, and for parents, who do the worrying so children do not have to. (And in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we are grateful that "party lines" are a thing of the past!)