

# Clifton Presbyterian Church

Celebrating Fifteen (15) Decades of Service and Gratitude



## *The Fabulous Fifties!*

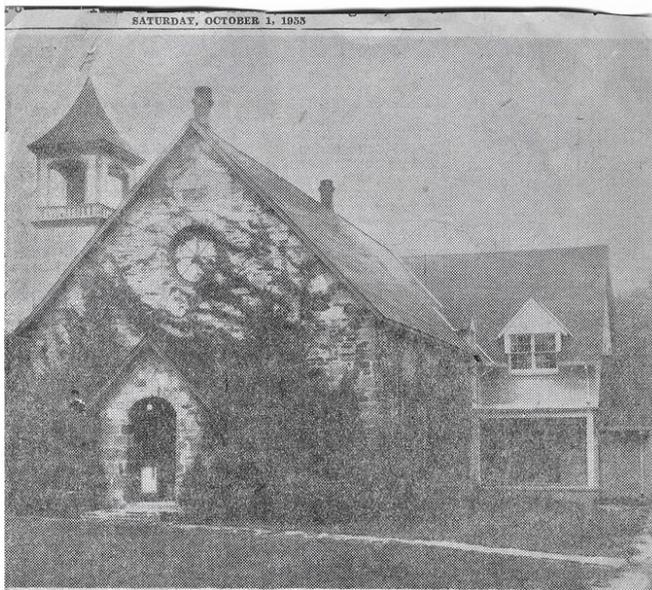
*1950'S - Eisenhower and Interstates, Poodle skirts and pony tails, Sputnik launched and NASA founded, DNA discovered and the first organ transplant succeeds! Disneyland opens - dreams come true, Elvis launches Rock 'n Roll . . . And CPC gets a new addition . . . and a Manse!*

To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven. A time to be born, and a time to die; . . . A time to breakdown, and a time to build up; . . . A time to weep, and a time to laugh; . . . A time to mourn, and a time to dance; . . . A time to keep, and a time to cast away; . . . A time to rend, and a time to sew; . . . A time for war, and a time for peace. Ecclesiastes 3:1-9\* To everything there is a season . . . for our Church, our town, and our Nation.

As the decade dawns, Mrs. Janie Mathers is still in the “very pretty little bungalow” next to the Clifton Presbyterian Church. In 1951 she had her property surveyed and subdivided into four lots. Lots one and two are referred to as the “Hotel Lot.” Lot number four is the Mathers’ home. She died the following year, at age 79. Her daughter, Ruth, remains in the home.

Rev. Liddell remains in the pulpit at Clifton Presbyterian Church making plans for a much needed addition. Mrs. Liddell continues to be very active with the Aid and Missionary Societies, and in Nov. 1950, she explained the plans of the Presbytery to alternate Bible study with mission programs and call the group “The Woman’s Association.” The members voted to combine the two societies, which had been meeting jointly since 1928 anyway. The newly named Woman’s Association still had the two-fold mission of the physical care of the church and missionary programs, and at the monthly meetings, Bible study was always included. Meanwhile, the planning stage for the much needed Sunday school annex had finally been completed, and construction began in 1953.

Sadly, Rev. Liddell did not live to see it completed. His sudden death on December 15, 1954 shocked the congregation. As a memorial to him, the \$50,000 addition, completed in March 1955, would be known as the Liddell Annex. Rev. Keith Curtis (student pastor in 1927) and Rev. Benjamin Lynt (student pastor in 1947) participated in the dedication service held on Sunday, Oct. 2, 1955. In addition to the pastor's study, the Liddell annex had twelve Sunday school classrooms, and an extension of the sanctuary. (Evening Star, Sat. Oct. 1, 1955.)



**VIRGINIA CHURCH ADDITION TO BE DEDICATED**  
 The new \$50,000 educational unit of the Clifton (Va.) Presbyterian Church will be dedicated at a 3 p.m. service tomorrow. The Rev. William Kepler, moderator of the Washington Presbytery, will deliver the dedication address. Among those taking part will be two pastors who started their ministerial careers at the Clifton Church—the Rev. W. Keith Custis of Riverdale (Md.) Presbyterian Church and the Rev. Benjamin Lynt of Second Presbyterian Church, Alexandria. The addition (rear right), completed in March, has twelve Sunday School classrooms, a study and an extension of the sanctuary. The addition is being dedicated to the late Rev. George T. Liddell, who served as minister from 1947 until his death in December, 1954 and Mrs. Liddell. Richard D. Ames is serving as minister pending the calling of a new pastor.—Star Staff Photo.

Rev. Richard D. Ames had stepped in as the minister until a new pastor could be called. It was thought that having a place to live might be an enticement for a new minister, so the Kidwell house on Main Street was purchased in Feb. 1955. "With much labor it was repaired and painted by members of the congregation in time to be ready when the new minister should arrive." (Helen Quigg, History of CPC, 1970) George and Frances Cranston (Stewart's parents), new members in 1952, were among the workers. When Reverend A. Ray Howland and Mrs. Howland arrived in Jan. 1956, all was ready. Mrs. Howland wasted no time in taking an active role in the Woman's Association. The Association paid the interest on the Liddell annex, purchased 60 folding chairs, and had an on-going sewing project in which the members

prepared a box of garments for mission each year – sometimes needed close to home, sometimes sent overseas. Ruth and Norman Petersen (Jim's parents) joined the church in 1959 just as Rev. Howland announced his intention to retire in August of 1960. The Church had an early start in securing a new pastor . . .

In 1950's Clifton, only a few homes had in-house running water and plumbing. Buckley's store was sold out of the family, but in that same year of 1951 the Clifton Volunteer Fire Department was chartered and Clifton had a brand new brick firehouse and two not so brand new fire trucks. In 1953, the old frame 1912 school was torn down and a brand new, modern, brick elementary school was built in its place. In 1957, CPC's own General Webb, wrote a play, "Dress Rehearsal," with all the members of the fire department making up the cast. It was not only a fundraiser for the Firehouse, but entertainment for the community. (Brigadoon in VA) Toward the end of the decade, Clifton's Primitive Baptist Church, Fairfax County's first African American Church built by freed slaves, held their last official Sunday service, and Ivakota Farm ceased operation. (Images of America) Times change. For everything, there is a season . . .

Some in our congregation remember the 50's, but our "Mr. Stewart" remembers **Clifton** in the 50's. He remembers attending the old frame 1912 school for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, then going to the new school for 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> grades. The new school had movie night, and the PTA made popcorn for it by scraping corn cobs and popping the kernels! (There was a machine for that!) He remembers nickel cokes at Weavers' General store, and a lady being hit by the train, which led to the crossing gates being installed. He also remembers, fondly - I think, what there wasn't in the 1950's. Discover what was missing in those days in "the rest of the story."

Others may remember . . . Fifteen minute news programs reporting on the Korean War, and the relief felt with the welcome news of Jonas Salk's Polio Vaccine in 1955 . . . Huntley-Brinkley bringing news of the Cold War and reminding school children to "Duck and Cover," just like Bert the Turtle! (Some remember ducking and covering under one's desk!) Some may remember the reporting on the passage of the Interstate Highway Act, but in 1959, this author was there at the peaceful integration of Stratford Junior High School in Arlington, VA. Big news on all 3 major networks! Virginia's policy of "Massive Resistance" ends! On a lighter note, who among us remember the milk man delivering milk to one's door, the scissor grinder's truck driving by every so often - something always needs sharpening - the Good Humor Man's bell promising popsicles on summer evenings, the wonderful aroma of burning leaves announcing fall, and TV sales skyrocketing! - I Love Lucy and the Lone Ranger - 45's playing Elvis on Hi-Fi's (Alice saw him in person! - There is more to her story, too.) - and Billy Graham becoming a super star. Lord, we are grateful for the seasons, for the poetry of the Old Testament in Ecclesiastes 3, and . . . for humor.

\*In 1956, folk singer, Pete Seeger, improvised a melody to the poetry of Ecclesiastes (Greek, meaning teacher) Chapter 3:1-9, "*Turn, turn, Turn.*" He felt that beautiful melodies and lyrics unite people. In the age of the Atomic bomb . . . this is important.

*The rest of the story.....*

*Let's hear more stories by CPC Members  
Alice Bearinger and Stewart Cranston  
of their memories of the 1950's!*

### *Alice's Fond Memories of the 50's*

*Alice's teen years in the 1950's were "quiet, peaceful {except for the Korean War, the Cold War, and Communism,} and uneventful." Perhaps uneventful is not the right word . . . for in January 1951, during her sophomore year, a friend introduced her to Bob! "So, life was always wonderful and happy for the rest of the 50's!" Bob was a junior and drove a 1950 Studebaker. Evidently cars were a big part of the teen social scene in Orlando. There were drag races on the streets of Orlando after Friday night football games (Zero to 60 in an 88 Oldsmobile); Drive-ins with carhops; and Drive-in movies - some in Technicolor. Alice and her girlfriends saw Elvis in concert at the City Auditorium in 1956. She says the Church members were all upset, but they went anyway - and they loved him - he had such charisma! Rock 'n Roll had arrived, but in the 1950's, for young ladies, it was still white gloves, hats, and proper etiquette . . . and according to Alice, lots of rules! Maybe the very best part of the story . . . she and her high school sweetheart were married on Sept. 1, 1957.*



## *Stewart's Memories of Clifton in the Early 1950s*



*Clifton was a magical place in the 1950s, at least for a young boy with access to a horse. The area was rural, and Clifton was still a farm town. Buckley's store was still a true general store with everything from penny candies to farm hardware. The store across the street was a Texaco service station where you could get a bottle of Coke for five cents. The population of Clifton according to the 1950 census was 269 people. We used to ride our horses all over the area through the woods and fields. There were no "No Trespassing" signs, and Dr. Ferguson, who had a large farm that bordered on our property, didn't seem to mind if we rode our horses through his cornfields. We would often go with our friend Charlie, who lived on the south side of Clifton on what is now Kincheloe Road and ride our horses to Bull Run down what was known as Yates Ford Road. (There were no names on the roads in those days - everybody just knew where they went). At times we would go across the ford and all the way to Manassas. Most often we would wade the horses up Bull Run to the remains of the Bull Run power station. The millpond was still largely intact, and the turbine chamber and the generator were still in place. One winter morning when there was snow on the ground and ice forming on Bull Run, as we waded our horses towards the power station, Charlie's horse stepped on a large boulder and stumbled and dumped them both into the water. He was soaked and freezing as we got him out, and we built a fire on the bank to dry out his clothes. There were no fire regulations in those days.*



*I loved the summer thunderstorms. There was no AccuWeather in those days, but we could see the thunderstorm building off to the southwest. If we were in the fields, we would race home, put the horses away and go sit on the farmhouse front porch as a freshening wind stirred the trees along the edge of the field. Soon the temperature would drop, and large raindrops were thumping down on the tin roof. I relished the feeling of being safe and dry as we watched the rain fall. In the winter we would sled on the large hill below the farmhouse, but the cold weather also meant that water to the barn was cut off and we had to haul water for the animals in five gallon buckets.*



*Carrying a 5 gallon bucket of water weighing 45 pounds was hard work for a body that itself only weighed 70 pounds.*

*I also loved the occasional warm, 70-degree day in February that felt like summer, and I could lay in the hay in the old red barn and feel the sun streaming through the cracks in the siding.*

*There were no restaurants in Clifton in those days, but there was a barber shop where you could get your hair cut for 50 cents. Since there were no commercial gathering places in Clifton, the churches and the school became the place for social gatherings. The PTA sponsored movies in the new school to raise money, and I remember shelling popcorn from a local farm that we then would pop and sell at the movie showings. My brother George and I were baptized in Clifton Presbyterian Church by the new minister, Rev. Howland. The new Fellowship Hall that Reverend Liddell had encouraged the congregation to build became a great place for church fellowship. And we finally had a real place for Sunday school.*

*As I reflect back on those years, Clifton truly was a magical place to grow up as a young boy.*

