

Clifton Presbyterian Church

Celebrating Fifteen (15) Decades of Service and Gratitude



Celebrating the 1980's

The Reagan Years! The Dawn of the Computer Age! Nancy Reagan visits Clifton! And CPC opens a Preschool!

Even with declining membership in the early 1980's, Clifton Presbyterian Church was committed to mission and community service. Mark Reimers was honored as Clifton Lions Club Man of the Year in 1980; homes were provided for the members of the Blackburn College Choir visiting from Carlinville, Illinois; and the use of the sanctuary was approved by the Session for St. Timothy's Sunday masses while St. Claire's was being constructed. Also, with the Session's approval, CPC's Preschool opened in September 1982, and its Christian ministry to the community began with 10 students, 1 director/teacher – Mrs. Tina Edwards, and enough funds for one month. There was a lot of prayer, community support, and hands-on labor provided by members of the congregation which enabled this dream to become a reality. Margaret Webb, President of the Women of the Church, put together a booklet (Clifton Presbyterian Church 1871-1982) celebrating church history; the newly approved Preschool's 3 day/week program, administered by the Christian Education Committee; and the Mother's Day Out 2 day/week program, available for children 18 months - 3years. It was also noted in this pamphlet that the Lord's Supper was now being observed monthly at CPC.

In "*Bette's Story*," Bette Ducote, a new member, may elaborate on an important event officiated by Reverend Crick in 1983. He announced his retirement the next year and delivered his last sermon on Jan. 27, 1985. Due to declining membership and financial resources, CPC could not fulfill its financial obligations to the Presbytery and became a designated redevelopment church. Reverend Robert von Oeyen, Jr. was supplied in 1985 to

lead CPC through this period of redevelopment, and was subsequently called to become the permanent pastor in 1986. His wife Sherry led the (20 member!) Children's Choir, and the Christian Education Committee initiated a weekly program entitled, "Conversations with the Minister." The membership was growing. "*Pat's Story*" tells of a chance meeting in Maine that brought her family to CPC. The Sykes, the George Cranstons' grandchildren – Beth and John, Jan Schneiderman, the Keens, the Ferences, Sue Kuhns, Paul Shortt, and the Scotts were among the new members joining Bette, and the Swansons in the mid to late 80's. Two worship services were begun; there was a newsletter, a men's organization, and the women's organization that expanded to add a night group. These groups supported mission around the world, the newly formed Western Fairfax Christian Ministries (WFCM), other numerous local charities, and provided for worship needs at CPC as well. In 1987 the 1st annual Family Camp at Glenkirk was held, and the Women of the Church officially changed their name to Presbyterian Women. By 1988 membership had grown to 177, and membership in the von Oeyen family grew by one, with baby Hannah's arrival on Dec 9, 1989! CPC was grateful for the many memorial gifts given during the decade including Hand bells and Orff Instruments, children's choir robes, the Dominion Valley Garden Club's landscaping restoration, and the establishment of the George Cranston Memorial Preschool Scholarship Fund for needy children.

Clifton in the early 1980's is still a relatively sleepy town, with little traffic except on Clifton Day in the fall, and the Clifton Community Woman's Club Homes' Tour in the spring. But, with a new pre-school in town, new restaurants opening, and restoration of the old buildings continuing, this would change. The Heart in Hand Restaurant opened in 1983 in the old Buckley Brothers' Store, and the Hermitage Restaurant opened in 1987 in the old Clifton Hotel. Mayor Wayne Nickum, supported and encouraged in part, by the CCWC, is credited with having Clifton placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985. That same year Clifton was filmed for the opening scenes of the movie *Broadcast News*, and at the invitation of the owner of the Heart in Hand, Suzi Worsham, Nancy Reagan made her first visit to Clifton in December 1985. Nancy Reagan and George Will visited the Heart in Hand Restaurant each December. Mrs. Reagan in her signature red suit made her 3rd and final visit on Dec. 22, 1988. Clifton is on the map! Traffic is on the rise.

As in every decade – there are events that capture the world's attention; innovations and breakthroughs that change lives – hopefully for the better; barriers that are broken; discoveries made; and fads and films that define the era.

The United States boycotts the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow to protest the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. (CNN, launched in June as the first 24-hour cable news program, most likely covered the story.) The Soviet Union then boycotts the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles in retaliation, but without the Soviet's competition, the US wins 83 gold medals, topping the Soviet Union's total of 80 in Moscow! The medal race continues . .

In 1981 Princess Di weds Prince Charles as the world watches, and the first space shuttle, Columbia soars into orbit as our nation holds its breath. Those little start-up companies from the 70's, Microsoft and Apple along with IBM PC and Intel begin to impact our lives as small computers become cheaper – and how many parents were practicing Space Invaders and Pac Man after the children were fast asleep? The Computer was Time Magazine's 1982 Man of the Year! Women continue to gain recognition. Sandra Day O'Connor is nominated by President Reagan to become the first woman justice on the Supreme Court, Sally Ride becomes the first woman in space, and Mrs. Reagan travelled the country with her "Just Say No!" campaign. The wreck of the Titanic was discovered two miles below the surface of the Atlantic. My Little Pony, the Rubik's Cube, Legwarmers, the rat tail, the mullet and - Farrah Fawcett Hair – all trademarks of the 80's. Ghostbusters, Goonies, St. Elmo's Fire, Back to the Future, and Top Gun – all among the big box office draws. Americans learn the words "glasnost" and "perestroika," and celebrate eased tensions with the USSR. And, while the runaway inflation of the 70's was abating, the only thing that actually went down in price was a gallon of gas!

And, as in every decade, disasters strike, lives are lost, and generous Americans send aid – including the Presbyterian Women at CPC. Early in the decade Iraq invaded Iran, John Lennon was shot, Mt. St. Helens erupted, and Air Florida crashed. In the middle of the decade Indira Ghandi was assassinated, an estimated 1 million people died of starvation in Ethiopia, the Challenger exploded, Mad Cow Disease was discovered in Britain, the U.S. bombed Libya in retaliation for their bombing in W. Berlin that killed a U.S. serviceman and 2 others, and the Chernobyl nuclear accident shocked the world. And as the decade came to an end, fighting ceased in Iraq and Iran, Hurricane Hugo slammed Charleston, SC, an earthquake in the San Francisco Bay area collapsed freeways and a section of the Bay Bridge, students protested in Tiananmen Square, and THE WALL CAME DOWN. The AIDS Virus was identified in the US and studied throughout the decade, and as cases grew, fears mounted. . . And Coca Cola, realizing the error of their ways, added "New Coke" to the list of disasters in the 80's . . .

Lord, we are grateful for this decade of big hair, big ideas, and big drama; for our nation's leaders; the CPC Preschool becoming a reality; for the growth in our church and the miracle of a new life; and for the generosity of the American People. And, we are grateful for Your continued blessings!

Published September 27, 2020