

In the first decade of the nineteenth century, two separate, but similar religious groups that became the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) sprang up across America's frontier. The Barton W. Stone-led movement in Kentucky whose followers dissolved their Presbyterian relationship in favor of a church less complicated, less dedicated to the use of creeds as tests of belief and more open to the reunion of Christians, took the name "Christians" because it was biblical and nonsectarian. The other group rose almost simultaneously in western Pennsylvania, led by Thomas and Alexander Campbell. This movement, whose main goal was Christian unity, rebelled against dogmatic sectarianism and chose the name "Disciples of Christ" because the members felt it was less pretentious than "Christian Church." The two groups—Christians and Disciples—inevitably discovered each other because they both were strong in the Kentucky-Ohio-Pennsylvania region and had much in common. The movements, each seeking union of all Christians on a simple non-theological basis of the New Testament, united with a handshake on New Year's Day, 1832, at a meeting in Lexington, Kentucky. These combined movements, or "brotherhoods," were strong on freedom and diversity and spread rapidly along the frontier.

At the end of the nineteenth century, a survey of Protestant religious sects in the United States showed "reformed and evangelical" denominations with the vast majority of church members. The findings revealed that the Methodists members numbered 6,000,000; the Baptists, 5,000,000; the Lutheran and Presbyterian each, 1,500,000; the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), 1,120,000; the Mormons, 350,000; and the Christian Scientists with 80,000.

At the turn of the twentieth century the small Southwest Virginia town of Blacksburg, with its population of 768, experienced a burst of church building activity by established congregations. The Baptists built a new church in 1903, the Presbyterians in 1904, and the Methodists in 1906. Other "reformed and evangelical" denominations made their initial appearances in Blacksburg during the early 1900's, and one such Protestant denomination was the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ (DOC).

Prior to the completion of the new facilities for the Blacksburg Baptist Church seven men, eight women, and three young people founded and organized the Blacksburg Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) on April 12, 1903. Five days later, and many

miles to the east on April 17, 1903, Dr. Josephus Hopwood, having previously established a Christian College in East Tennessee (Milligan College), founded Virginia Christian College (now Lynchburg College), a Christian Church (DOC) affiliated institution of higher learning in Lynchburg, Virginia. Six months later on October 15, 1903, the eighteen devotee Blacksburg charter members together with a few others as a congregation purchased the old Baptist Church located on the northeast corner of Roanoke and Church Streets and established the original “House of Worship” for the new denomination in Blacksburg. Through contributions from members and friends the congregation purchased the small multi-level building for \$800.

The list of contributors, consisting of many individuals, two local churches and several business establishments, numbered seventy-five. The gifts, ranging from fifty cents to one hundred and fifty dollars, over-subscribed the purchase price by sixty-five dollars. Unlike most of the early Christian Churches (DOC) in southwest Virginia’s New River District (now Districts I, II, and III), the Blacksburg congregation was not founded in the nineteenth century. A little over a year after the Christians and Disciples came together in Christian unity in Kentucky, Snowville Christian Church in Hiwassee, Pulaski County, Virginia, formally known as New Salem, then as Cypress Grove, and finally Snowville, was founded in 1833. This congregation became the first church of the new denomination to organize within the New River District. Many of Blacksburg’s neighbors followed Snowville’s lead and established their congregations in the following order: Alleghany Christian Church between Blacksburg and Christiansburg, 1836; Edgemont Christian Church in Christiansburg, 1843(formally two churches—Auburn and Big Meadow Creek); First Christian Church of Pulaski, 1878; Centennial Christian Church of McCoy, 1880; First Christian Church of Radford, 1890; Draper Christian Church, 1891; and Radford Christian Church in 1899. (The last congregation to be established within the boundaries of the original New River District was Westhampton Christian Church of Roanoke in 1954).

In the thirty years preceding the birth of the new Protestant denomination in Blacksburg the largest major employer in the local community and the surrounding New River District was Virginia Polytechnic Institute (known today as Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University or “Virginia Tech”) was predominately a brick campus.

However, beginning in 1901, and extending through 1903, the College's architecture and construction began shifting to a new façade facing material—limestone known as “Hokie Stone”—for its new Gothic style of architecture. As the neighboring land-grant college changed its image, the newly formed congregation elected their officers to lead the church through the formative years. Mr. J. H. Borden was elected “Elder”; Mr. F. W. Eheart was elected “Elder and Chairman of the Board”; and Mr. C. C. Campbell, Mr. A. F. Jackson and Mr. H. L. Price were elected “Deacons.”

As the end of 1903 approached and the congregation's membership remained at eighteen, a historical event took place many miles southeast of the beautiful mountains of Montgomery Country that would change the life styles of people everywhere forever. On December 17, 1903, Orville Wright became the first person to fly a powered, heavier-than-air machine on the beaches of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. Orville stayed aloft for twelve seconds in the airplane designed and built by his brother, Wilbur, and him. The aviation age had officially begun. Meanwhile on the ground the automobile was fast becoming a practical means of transportation. There were 8000 autos registered in the entire country but only ten miles of paved roads for them to use in travel.

In 1904, the 8.88 miles of the Virginia Anthracite and Coal Railroad was completed, linking the town of Blacksburg and the Merrimac Mines to the Norfolk and Western Railroad in Cambria, Virginia. A small depot was built in Blacksburg in the vicinity of the present library. However, the Virginia Anthracite and Coal Railroad, nicknamed “The Huckleberry Line,” was soon purchased by Norfolk and Western Railroad. The new owners razed the original station and built a new station on the site of the present Municipal Building, “Town Hall,” on Main Street in Blacksburg. These historical tracks and station served Blacksburg and VPI until the early 1950's, when the Cambria were removed and the station razed to establish a new municipal building. These tracks or a portion of their route are now the bed for the walking/bike path from Depot Street to Airport Road. From the time this route originated in 1904 to it demise in 1960, these tracks and those miles beyond Cambria to the east allowed trains to transport VPI's Corps of Cadets annually from Blacksburg to Roanoke and Roanoke Victory Stadium for the traditional Thanksgiving Day football game between VPI and VMI (Virginia Military Institute of Lexington, Virginia). VMI also traveled by train from Lexington to Roanoke

simultaneously on game day. At the crack of dawn each cold Thanksgiving morning both schools' Corps of Cadets marched from their barracks to the train station in their respective towns, boarded their trains, traveled to Roanoke, disembarked and marched separately down Jefferson Street through Roanoke to Victory Stadium.

About the time construction began on the Panama Canal and Cy Young pitched the first perfect major league baseball game in 1904, Reverend E. B. Kemm was hired as the first Full-time minister of the Blacksburg Christian Church. During that year, the church grew from eighteen original members to forty-four members. This was an increase of twenty-six new members; eight by baptism and eighteen by transfers. Reverend Kemm served the church well for three of its formative years until he moved in his ministry to another pastorate in 1907. In this same year, 1907, Oklahoma was admitted to the Union as the 46th state and Blacksburg High School, one of only two high schools in Montgomery County, recorded an enrollment of 195 students and a teaching staff of 9. The church, having grown to seventy-seven members, installed Reverend E. B. Motley as the congregation's second minister. However, Reverend Motley resigned his pastorate after only one year and from 1908 to 1914 the early church had no full-time minister.

During the six-year period without a pastor two very important events occurred within the church that affected the lives of its membership for decades to come. On September 15, 1909, the second child of Robert and Ida Stanger was born. Although the blessed event—the birth of Allen Borden Stanger—occurred during this point in the life of the young church, it would not impact the church in any significant way for almost twenty years. Allen and his sister both joined the church as time passed. During 1910 as the most successful and popular organization for boys, the Boy Scouts of America, was chartered on February 6 and as Allen celebrated his first birthday, the congregation decided to raze the present structure's upper level. Using the original basement walls as a foundation, the church began construction of a new multi-level brick facility. In that same year on June 19, Father's Day was celebrated for the first time in Spokane, Washington.

Two years later, in 1912, the year in which Woodrow Wilson was elected the twenty-eighth President of the United States, the congregation (still without a full-time minister) occupied their newly-completed, upper-level sanctuary and remodeled

educational/fellowship space on the lower lever. In 1914, the year World War I began and Mother's Day was officially established in America, the church proclaimed the day and celebrated the coming of Reverend H. A. Blake as its third minister. To enhance its ministry and its existence, the church purchased a two-story wood frame house at 606 North Main Street as its first parsonage. If the house were standing today, its location would be in the vicinity of the Blacksburg Auto Parts establishment. In 1916, Elder James H. Borden, one of the two original elders, died leaving only Dr. F. W. Eheart as elder. In a special election, Mr. W. H. Borden was elected to serve as Elder of the Blacksburg Christian Church. In 1918, the final year of World War I, Reverend Blake resigned after serving the church throughout the four long years of the costly and bloody war. As the country was almost totally unprepared, life in America changed from leisure to a feverish pace in a strong effort to win the war. The Allies won final victory in 1918. Bulgaria, the Ottoman Empire, Austria-Hungary and Germany signed armistices. During Reverend Blake's pastorate he became the first minister to preach in the newly-completed sanctuary and the first minister to live in the Main Street parsonage. Upon his departure the church found itself once again without a minister—this time for three years.

During the three-year vacancy in the pulpit, the Panama Canal opened and the League of Nations was organized to maintain peace among all nations. Finally in 1921, with the church's membership at eighty-six, the congregation extended the call to Reverend S. C. Crawford to become the church's fourth minister. During his two-year ministry, thirty-two additional newcomers joined the church, establishing a total membership of one hundred and eighteen. In 1923, Reverend Crawford's successor, Reverend A. E. Simms, served only one year before his departure in 1924. Shortly after Reverend Simms' departure, Reverend J. W. West arrived as the church's sixth full-time pastor. In the second year of Reverend West's pastorate the choir was instructed by the church's General Board that they could no longer sing "Amen" during a worship service. On July 5, 1925, the General Board met immediately after a baptismal service with Mr. C. L. Hutton presiding in the absence of the board chair, Dr. F. W. Eheart. During the meeting the subject of singing "Amen" by the choir was discussed and finally tabled until Dr. Eheart and the organists could join the discussion. On September 5, 1925, the official board met

and unanimously voted “to cut out ‘Amen’ in our church services and Mr. J. O. Luster volunteered to announce it to the choir that it would not be used anymore—AMEN!”

In 1927, after having completed his third year with the Blacksburg Christian Church, Reverend West resigned and departed for another pastorate. Almost immediately, Reverend M. E. Turner answered the call to become the church’s seventh minister. However, as quickly as he arrived, he departed leaving within seven months. In the same year Reverend G. C. Ziegler became the church’s eighth minister. Thus, the Blacksburg Christian Church had realized three full-time ministers within a single year. Even though the length of stay for the last five ministers was sporadic, the congregation perhaps realized that this period was the beginning of a strange phenomenon in the life of the church. Records reveal that the church would not be without a full-time minister for longer than a couple of months from 1921 to 1973—fifty-two years of continuous pastors.

Walt Disney Productions, in 1928, introduced its most famous animated character, Mickey Mouse, in the cartoon “Plane Crazy;” Herbert Hoover was elected the 31st President of the United States in a landslide Republican victory. That same year, the church celebrated its twenty-fifth birthday and, of course, aviation’s “The Flight of Man” and Lynchburg College each observed their twenty-fifty anniversaries. On December 1, 1929, a full year after these celebrations, Allen Borden Stanger returned to Blacksburg after completing two years at Johnson Bible College near Knoxville, Tennessee and after reaching his twentieth birthday. On this special occasion, Allen B. Stanger would be ordained into the ministry in his home church. Thus, Allen became Blacksburg Christian Church’s first Timothy. This ordination was a great event in the lives of this young congregation and in an even younger member and Blacksburg native. In twenty-seven years the population of the Town of Blacksburg grew by 632, thereby, increasing its population in 1930 to 1400 citizens. In late 1930 Reverend Ziegler resigned, and Reverend S. M. Bedford arrived as the church’s ninth pastor. He would serve the church three years and leave for another pastorate. In 1934 Reverend C. B. Reynolds became the church’s tenth minister. During the pastorate of Reverend Reynolds the church purchased one silver bread tray and two silver cup trays for communion and hired Miss Luster as music director for \$10 per month.

Reverend Reynolds served the congregation for four years before leaving Blacksburg in 1938. In that year the world experienced real and false panic: the “real” panic—the start of Jewish persecution in Germany by Adolph Hitler—and “false panic”—Orson Wells’ radio production of the “War of the Worlds.” This radio drama, heard around the world, caused audiences to falsely panic as many believed this dialogue and action to be true.

Also during this time, thirty-five years after its beginning, Blacksburg Christian Church called its eleventh pastor, a young man and recent graduate of Lynchburg College, and his lovely wife. This newly-married couple, Reverend B. P. Edwards and his wife Ruby, began their three-year devoted ministry in Blacksburg. (Fifty years later in the life of the church, the congregation would honor the Edwards on their 50th Anniversary.) During Barney’s ministry the church purchased the small, Cape Cod, R. L. Fagg house and property directly behind the church on May 28, 1939, for \$2,500. The property had been vacant for a long period of time and the church spent an additional \$350 for needed repairs. With a new parsonage and a new minister in place, Blacksburg Christian was ready to meet the challenges of the approaching decade. Church records indicate about this same time that the church board voted to suspend Sunday School and dismiss church services in time for its members to attend the Sunday morning graduation exercises at VPI on June 4th. A month later, the church installed a church sign and a concrete sidewalk along the church property on Roanoke Street. As fall approached, the board voted to address one cent postcards and send them to incoming VPI students who were affiliated with the Christian Church (DOC). On September 7, 1941, student and associate church membership status was initiated by the church.

Shortly before the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and American’s involvement in World War II began, Barney and Ruby concluded their ministry to be followed quickly by Reverend A. H. Eubank. Reverend Eubank, age fifty and also a graduate of Lynchburg College, began his eight-year service as pastor of the Blacksburg Christian Church and served with other Blacksburg ministers as a Chaplain of Virginia Polytechnic Institute (VPI). Until the seventh of December the church had only two officer positions on the official board: board chair and financial and church secretary; but, on that Sunday, the congregation established the position of vice chairman of the

board and Mr. M. C. Lucas was elected. Since the date of the formation of the church in 1903, Dr. F. W. Eheart had served as the board chairman: a total of thirty eight years!

Many improvements to the physical plant were made during the war years. On November 7, 1943, the board voted to correct the unsafe front entrance steps because the bottom riser and last step was within a few feet of the curb and busy Church Street traffic. However, these steps were not remodeled until 1930 when Mr. Charles Heavener, member and local contractor, installed a platform at the front entrance level and a pair of steps each in opposite directions to the sidewalk level along Church Street). On March 1, 1944, the second parsonage's note was paid through the efforts of Mr. J. H. Mahaney, Mr. C. L. Hutton and Mr. C. A. Montgomery. The church board voted on July 23, 1944, and the congregation on August 13, 1944, to install stained glass in the sanctuary windows.

High Point Glass and Decorating Company of High Point, North Carolina, was hired to furnish and install the new windows for the price of \$75 each for the ten large openings and \$50 each for the four small openings. The total cost associated with the sanctuary enhancements was \$1024.05. In September of that year the church purchased a small communion holder in a leather carrying case for traveling to shut-ins' homes. That same year, Mr. Ray Albert began producing and printing bulletins at home every Saturday for each Sunday worship service. In June of 1946, the choir seating was rearranged in the sanctuary to allow additional seating and larger choir participation. In September 1944, the entire church was rewired.

Reverend Eubank served until his untimely and tragic death on Easter Sunday afternoon, April 17, 1949, as he prepared to preach the funeral services of Mr. J. H. Mahaney. Members of the congregation stated that Reverend Eubank had a very strenuous day prior to his death. He conducted the early morning Easter Sunday services and performed his regular duties in the pulpit during the usual Sunday morning worship service while being very distressed over the death earlier that morning of another church member, Mr. John E. Albert. Reverend Eubank died of a heart attack as he collapsed in the arms of bystanders at the home of Mr. Mahaney. Soon after this vacancy was created in the pulpit, Reverend R. D. Wilson arrived to serve for two years. On June 30, 1949, Dr. F. W. Eheart, Trustee, Board Chair for more than forty-four year, Mayor of

Blacksburg, and member and chair of the local school board, died. The following year on May 14, 1950, the board approved the purchase of a new organ for the sanctuary as partially paid for by the Fidelis Class. (This organ was used each Sunday morning until the arrival of the new organ on April 2, 2003).

That same year, the Korean War began and continued for three years before an armistice was signed at Panmunjams, Korea. During this world conflict, Reverend Wilson concluded his pastorate in 1951, and Reverend Robert T. Wilkerson arrived to serve as the church's fourteenth minister from 1951 to 1957. These last three ministers together served the Blacksburg Christian Church for sixteen years. At the end of Reverend Wilkerson's second year America's population had grown to nearly 161,000,000, and the dollar was worth about \$0.52 compared to its 1935-1939 equivalents. In this same year, 1953, the congregation observed and celebrated its 50th anniversary on April 26. On this special occasion, Reverend Doctor Orville Wake, President of Lynchburg College, was speaker during the morning worship service. Reverend Alien B. Stanger, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and Director of Religion (Chaplain) of Lynchburg College, was also present and took part in the services. That afternoon, at 3:00 p.m., the Lynchburg College Choir presented a program in Squires Hall on the VPI campus for the church members and the public. Not only was Dr. Wake an outstanding president for Lynchburg College, but also he was the son of one of the first ministers of the Snowville Church, the Reverend Arthur Wake. During the celebration the church recognized the devoted leadership of its fourteen ministers and countless members who had contributed to its growth and development.

Shortly after the first fifty years celebration the Board Chairman, Dr. L. A. Pardue, appointed chairmen for each of the "Standing Committees" on January 3, 1954. Among those ten (10) committees was the new Constitution and By-Laws Committee chaired by Mr. J. W. Sjogren. On May 2, 1954, the Board approved the Constitution section and recommended that this section be presented to the congregation when the By-Laws part was approved. During the Board's regularly scheduled meeting on July 4, 1954, the By-Laws section was approved. At a special Congregational Meeting on October 3, 1954, the new official Constitution and By-Laws were approved to become effective on January 1, 1955. This document was to supersede all rules and regulations in force from

1903 until December 31, 1954. In the By-Laws section, the “Standing Committees” of the church were reduced to seven and the first sentence stated that the church year shall begin on January 1.

While the board members dealt with the formation of the First Constitution and By-Laws, the Board, on February 7, 1954, received its “Official Gavel.” This gavel was purchased in 1909 by Lottie McPherson at the International Convention of Christian Churches. Four months later on June 6, 1954, the Board voted to obtain a safe deposit box in a local bank. On October 3, 1954, the Board announced to the congregation that the church now had a safe deposit box in the Farmers and Merchants National Bank (later known as First National Exchange Bank [FNEB], Dominion Bank and now, First Union Bank at the corner of North Main and Jackson Streets in downtown Blacksburg).

During that same year, 1954, the small but proud 1910—1912 structure’s only immediate neighbor in the same block and on the same side of Church Street between Roanoke and Lee Streets, the United Methodist Church, razed their two story wood-framed house and began construction of their new sanctuary addition. While construction continued next door, the Blacksburg Christian Church installed cup holders on the back of each pew and began redecorating the sanctuary’s nave and chancel areas. In 1955, as the sanctuary remodeling concluded, the Methodist congregation moved into their much larger and overpowering new facility.

Each year, during a portion of the spring and all of the hot summer months, the sanctuary’s double-hung windows would be raised each Sunday morning for ventilation through the small, but heavily populated nave. Simultaneously, the opened windows allowed voices raised in song to escape the premises and travel the short distance between buildings into the new Methodist Sanctuary and vice versa. These sometimes disturbances and interruptions to the normal serenity of the worship services never were in complete harmony. The format of the worship service was rearranged to reduce the occurrences of these disturbances and street noise during the services and at the closing exercises at noon.

In that same year, 1955, the board voted to schedule their meetings on a bi-monthly basis. Three years later, in 1958, the members of the church installed new steps to the chancel area and the congregation approved the board’s recommendation that the

church's fiscal year begin on July 1. (Now the fiscal year begins on April 1 of each year.) Earlier that year, Reverend Wilkerson departed and Reverend Paul D. Richardson became Blacksburg Christian Church's fifteenth minister. After serving one year, he was followed in the pulpit by Reverend Cecil Taylor in 1959. On September 6, 1959, a choir loft was added to the right side of the chancel area. On December 6, 1959, a three-person committee was appointed to investigate selling the church. Selling price, if they were successful, was to be \$35,000.

All these events took place as Hawaii became the 50th state in the Union; on July 4, 1960, the 50-star U.S. flag, reflecting the admission of Hawaii, became official. Having little or no success in selling the church, the three-person committee was disbanded and a five-person committee was appointed to begin studying the possibility of adding to the existing structure.

On May 1, 1960, based on the recommendations of this committee, the congregation voted to build an annex forty-eight years since the last building endeavor. Architects Worley and Elarth (both architectural professors at VPI) were hired to design and produce documents for the new addition because the church's membership had outgrown its small quarters and was in need of additional educational fellowship spaces. Plans were finished and submitted to the Town of Blacksburg for approval. The building permit was denied based on new zoning ordinances for proper frontage setback. On an appeal later the church was issued a building permit and Graves Construction Company of Blacksburg was hired to build the facility: a one-story, brick façade education wing was built for \$13,895.00. Even though this building was designed as educational space, it included a kitchen, and when needed (removal of folding dividing partitions), a large fellowship hall. On September 17, 1960, 125 new Christian Church hymnals were purchased. In 1961, not long after John Fitzgerald Kennedy was inaugurated as the thirty-fifth President of the United States, Reverend Taylor prepared to leave Blacksburg after only years as minister of the church. As Navy Commander Alan B. Shepard, Jr., became the first American in space on May 5, 1961, aboard Project Mercury's Capsule, Freedom Seven, Reverend Robert F. Seward was asked to become Blacksburg Christian Church's sixteenth minister. On August 20, 1961, the congregation approved the board's recommendation to sell parsonage #1 on Main Street for \$14,500. Nearly two years later,

on February 10, 1963, the congregation approved the board's recommendation to purchase the Cupp house, for \$18,000, at 1308 Highland Circle in the Highland Park Subdivision of Blacksburg as a parsonage. On March 13, 1963, Reverend Seward and his wife, Connie, moved into the parsonage as its first residents. Before the year's end President Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963. In 1966, as the Motion Picture Academy presented Sound of Music with the Best Movie Award, the Swards made plans to leave the Blacksburg Christian Church. Upon their departure, Reverend Eddie K. Stubblefield and wife, Nonna, arrived to serve the growing congregation for four years. During the transition period between Reverend Seward and Reverend Stubblefield, Boy Scout Troop 150 was organized and sponsored by the Blacksburg Christian Church. Prior to the National Football League's first Super Bowl football game on January 15, 1967, between the Green Bay Packers and the Kansas City Chiefs, won by Green Bay, 35 to 10, the church, in late 1966, after sixty-three years of fulfilling its mission on the original downtown site with three other larger churches in the immediate area, each within walking distance of the university, began a comprehensive study of its future. After evaluating the effectiveness of its ministry, the adequacy of its location and facilities for the present and future growth, the congregation concluded that it should relocate and build new facilities as the beginning step in launching a new era in its ministry.

Working with consultants from the General Church (DOC) in Indianapolis, Indiana, a site selection committee was appointed to investigate five proposed new sites within Blacksburg and immediate surrounding county. Upon the committee's recommendation, the congregation voted to purchase the 2 ½ acres parcel of land on the northwest corner of Toms Creek Road and Watson Avenue within the then developing McBryde Subdivision for \$22,500. The total cost for the site was retired within one year thanks to one large donation from Clyde S. Givens and many other contributions giving witness to the dedication of the member of the Blacksburg Christian Church. In 1967, soon after the congregation decided to relocate, the church launched a three-year building fund campaign to raise approximately \$40,000 for part of the estimated construction cost to build the new facilities.

A study committee was appointed by the board in 1967. During that year and well into the next, this committee with the guidance of the general church again, began assessing the present and future needs of the church. After receiving the report from this committee, the church established a Building and Plans Committee consisting of members to review the study committee's report, to define the church's mission, goals and programs, and with professional and skilled assistance to plan and develop a plan to accomplish those goals and programs. Upon the Building and Plans Committee's recommendation, the congregation voted to employ the architectural firm of Robert L. Mills and Associates to design and produce construction documents for the first phase of the overall three phase master plan. In late 1968 as the Provisional Design-Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)—the denomination's compound name that recognized the historical coming together of two movements in 1832, was being accepted by the General Assembly in Kansas City, plans and specifications for the proposed building were presented to the congregation for approval and then advertised for bids.

Following the acceptance of the "Provisional Design" in 1968 by the General Assembly, the "Symbol," the red chalice bearing the "X"-shaped Cross of St. Andrew, which has come to the symbol of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), was developed in 1969. The chalice symbolized the centrality of the Lord's Supper as well as the cup of Christian self-giving for the world.

On February 21, 1969, the church received three proposals from local contractors to build the 7,650 square feet first phase. In the order of the highest to the lowest, the three bids were opened and read aloud: Frye Building Company of Roanoke with a bid of \$153,000 and 180 calendar days for construction; B & J Construction Company of Blacksburg with a bid of \$121,998 and 200 calendar days for construction; and finally, Boone & Walsh, Inc., of Radford and 180 calendar days for construction. Working with the apparent low bidder, the Buildings and Plans Committee devised a list of nine items of deductions and/or omissions totaling \$11,678 that could be implemented by the church members or deleted from the contract since all bids were higher than expected. During this investigation and negotiation period, the congregation authorized the trustees to borrow \$50,000 from the Board of Church Extension of the General Church on a 6 ½ percent ten-year note. On March 30, 1969, the congregation unanimously approved

Boone & Walsh, Inc. as the general contractor to build the new facility and on April 17, 1969, (five days beyond the church's sixty-sixth anniversary); the church signed the contract for \$106,988.66. On Sunday afternoon, April 13, 1969, prior to the signing of the contract and just one day beyond the founding day, two hundred members and friends witnessed groundbreaking ceremonies on the new site.

As the heavy equipment began grading the site in preparation for the contractor to begin construction, the congregation on May 12, 1969, received and approved another recommendation from a three-person and ad hoc committee of the Buildings and Plans Committee. The congregation voted to add \$11,000 to the construction cost to construct a 2,580 square foot basement under the administration wing of the facility under construction. The realization of a basement, which was not included in the original design of the bid price, was due to the foresight and efforts of a three-man basement solicitation committee. A basement was feasible at the location with a few revisions to the plans and with a lot of additional excavation and grading, materials, manpower and cost; all of which were appropriated separately.

By May 12, 1969, when the proposal was presented to the congregation, all but \$1,000 of the extra costs was raised through many additional donations. The total cost for the new plant, which included the revised basement addition, many new furnishings and professional fees totaled \$126, 988.66. While the congregation and the committees were agreeing on these construction issues, the church had realized \$54,980 from the sale and trade of the former buildings and property on Church and Roanoke Streets.

On July 16, 1969, as construction was progressing at a steady pace, Apollo 11, manned by Neil Armstrong, Edwin Aldrin and Michael Collins, was successfully launched to the moon. On July 20, 1969, Armstrong and Aldrin entered the module "Eagle" for their descent to the moon's surface. Touchdown on the moon came at 4:17 p.m. EDT and six hours later, Neil Armstrong became the first person to set foot on the moon. On November 23, 1969, as finishing touches were applied to the new facilities, the last worship service was held in the original church in downtown Blacksburg. This was a sad day for many members, but nevertheless during the next week nearly everyone in the church began moving Sunday School classes, metal chairs, folding tables, office furniture, equipment and many other items into the new church on Watson Avenue. The

church had purchased a new pulpit for \$270 and communion table for \$210 from Winebarger Church Furniture Corporation in Lynchburg, Virginia, for the new sanctuary. The chancel chairs were refurbished and returned during the week for their location and use the new pulpit and communion table. Sunday, November 30, 1969, was a glorious day in the life of the Blacksburg Christian Church. On that day, just seven months after breaking ground and sixty-six years since the founding of the church, Reverend Eddie Stubblefield led the first worship service in the new brick multi-level plant at the corner of Toms Creek Road and Watson Avenue. On this special occasion, the congregation and guests sat on metal chairs brought from the old church and witnessed the worship services without permanent ceiling lighting. On that day, to honor that special celebration, the congregation paid tribute to Reverend Doctor Allen Borden Stinger of Lynchburg College and the church's first Timothy. Dr. Stinger spoke during the morning service and was honored on that day on the fortieth anniversary of his ordination at a church dinner immediately following the unforgettable service in the sanctuary. This special dinner was delayed until the sanctuary could be transformed into a fellowship hall. The first meal in the new facilities was indeed held in the then combined sanctuary/fellowship hall (yes, eating and drinking on the new carpet) because dinner in the "to be" fellowship hall in the unfinished basement was not feasible.

On the exact date of the 67th anniversary of the church, April 12, 1970, with the new moveable metal/plastic chairs and permanent sanctuary lighting installed, the new facilities were dedicated to the glory of God, symbolizing the continuing dedication and devotion of many people who shared in the ministry of the church. For that special occasion, two separate services were held. Reverend Robert F. Seward, the church's sixteenth minister, was the guest speaker for the regular morning worship service; and Dr. O. Eugene Moore, then Regional Minister in Virginia, was speaker during the afternoon service of dedication.

With flexibility in mind by design, this newly completed structure, consisting of an opened octagon-shaped sanctuary/fellowship hall, a large narthex, two supportive educational wings for Sunday School classes, was conceived as the first phase in this multi-phase master-planned building. At this time, in addition to the administrative wing, only one educational wing (a single story unit) was built to house the children's seven

classroom, nursery, two smaller children toilets and the corridor connecting the central narthex. Another education wing was planned for the future.

Shortly after moving into the new facilities in 1969-1970, continued renovations and expansions in the overall church were in evidence. Many church members were responsible for the installation of finish materials, equipment, and completion of interior spaces. In a timely manner members and friends began installing those items omitted from the original construction contract such as sanctuary lighting, classroom folding-dividing partitions, and vinyl asbestos tile floor and rubber base, while completing the basement shell. Once finished, the basement provided the congregation with a larger fellowship hall, additional men and women's toilets, a storage room, a separate Scout room, pantry and a complete kitchen. This basement addition came completed with a separate rear entrance/exit on grade. Also, these church laborers, who numbered proportional as required, furnished and installed the "Krinklglas" (a colored Plexiglas insulation cover) on all the sanctuary's obscured, glazed, clear story and vertical operating windows for \$710. This additional glazing product (color selected by women's groups) reduced sunlight glare and enhanced the sanctuary with color for each worshipper.

Eddie Stubblefield resigned his pastorate in Blacksburg for a position with the General Church in Indianapolis, Indiana, in June 1970. Reverend Stubblefield provided the leadership for the congregation through the successful, demanding, but rewarding building program for the future. One month after the Montgomery County Schools reopened in the fall, Reverend Warren P. Brubaker and wife, Virginia (Ginny), became the church's nineteenth minister on October 18, 1970.

In 1970, as the church continued to celebrate its new surroundings in McBryde Village, the nation observed its first annual "Earth Day" in many cities and towns across the country. In early September, once the regular public schools reopened, Gilbert Linkous Elementary School, located directly across Watson Avenue from their new neighbor, the Blacksburg Christian Church, found their enrollment much larger than had been anticipated and certainly too large for their allowed occupancy. As a result Montgomery County School Officials, looking for alternatives, turned to the church for

help. Through accelerated negotiations, both parties agreed on a “fixed fee” arrangement for renting certain rooms in the two educational wings on an as-needed basis.

During the four years that the school system occupied the building five days a week, the church was able to provide a meaningful and much-needed service in the local neighborhood and the community of Blacksburg. In 1970-71 school years the church realized \$9,900 in rental fees; 1971-1972, the fees were \$7,065; 1972-73, they totaled \$11,520; and finally in 1973-74, the fees were \$5,760. All totaled, the rent was \$34,245.

In late August 1974, Harding Avenue Elementary School was completed and opened in the fall of that year, relieving the over-crowded conditions in the community schools. In keeping with its desire to use the building during weekdays and provide continuous service to the community, and to utilize the proceeds of these endeavors in its ministry, the congregation voted to establish a non-profit childcare center on July 28, 1973. The Blacksburg Christian Church Child Care Center (BCCCCC) opened its doors on September 17, 1973, and constantly occupied a majority of the building for fifteen years. During the last year of public school occupancy in the building the child care center occupied all but four classrooms.

During those four years while Gilbert Linkous Elementary School was the church’s guest, the congregation voted to broaden its ministry by authorizing construction for an additional education wing in 1971. At that time the church launched another building fund campaign to build the new addition and again authorized the trustees to borrow \$22,500 on a 7 ½ percent, five-year construction note from the Church Board of Extension, even though the original church note was not paid in full.

This new space for the church, the second phase in the overall master plan, was accelerated by the local school board’s guarantee to use the building to reduce over-crowded conditions in the public schools until a new elementary school could be built in the future. The church’s third wing, consisting of another 2,850 square feet, was designed and built by church members, friends and a few selected subcontractors on an as-needed basis for \$33,537.50. This single story unit, built of the same materials and scale as the Phase 1 Watson Avenue Wing, was placed opposite that wing and connected to the two-story administration/education wing that paralleled Tom’s Creek Road. This much-needed unit included two additional toilets (children’s toilets), outside storage

room, corridor/entrance foyer and a large-opened versatile learning and recreational space ideal for church and school activities.

With the implementation of these new quarters for use by the public schools and later the church's child care center from 1972 until recent years, the church's master plan was two-thirds complete. This wing, together with the original wing paralleling Watson Avenue, as designed, created an outdoor area the church would name "Courtyard." This courtyard, enclosed by the building on three sides, was planned for use by Sunday School classes, receptions, celebrations, outdoor devotional space and many other church-related functions.

Landscaping and terrace benches were not included at this time. During the three-year building fund campaign, started when construction of the new addition began, the church realized \$29, 242 in pledges to defray the cost of construction. Also in 1971, while everyone's attention was directed toward the new wing, three Girl Scout Troops were given permission to use the Fellowship Hall for their meetings and related functions. These three troops, which considered Blacksburg Christian Church home, were Junior Girl Scout Troop 206, and Brownie Troops 562 and 623.

Not to be outdone by the invasion of so many young girls, the congregation voted on September 11, 1973, to organize a Cub Scout Pack for boys. With the addition of Cub Scout Pack 150, the church's commitment to provide a complete scouting program in the local community was realized. On December 31, 1973, while Richard Nixon was in his second term in the White House, Reverend Brubaker ended his ministry after only three years of service, but three very important years during the formative years of the church in its new surroundings. During the interim period between ministers, the church, on June 9, 1974, purchased and installed a six-foot high chain link fence around all of the church's real playground area and adjacent child care center's smaller playground.

Seven months after the departure of Reverend Brubaker, Reverend Jack McComas began his nine-month pastorate in the church on August 25, 1974. Reverend McComas' sudden departure came on May 15, 1975, about the time the Vietnam War reached its conclusion and the 70-story Peachtree Plaza in Atlanta, Georgia, the tallest building in the South, was completed.

Six and a half months later on January 1, 1976, Reverend Kenneth Hughes and wife, Roberta, began their four years of service as the church's twenty-first minister. Just prior to the arrival of Reverend Hughes, the church received a new, memorial communion set "Given in memory of Our Mother, Mrs. Dorothy R. Heavener" donated by the two Heavener daughters and two Heavener sons. On Sunday, December 14, 1975, this beautiful set was dedicated during the morning worship service. One year later, through continuous devoted giving by church members, the church paid the second construction load (Phase 11 addition) simultaneously with the election of America's 39th president, James Earl "Jimmy" Carter. On May 2, 1976, the church painted and installed a wooden church sign at the corner of Watson Avenue and Tom's Creek Road. This was a wonderful addition to the church property. Then, in December 1977, the church through additional fund-raising efforts by mail, telephone and personal contact, paid the original construction note of \$50,000 in full two years ahead of schedule and appropriately in time for the 75th Anniversary Celebration scheduled for April 1978. Earlier that same year, the church's "handymen" renovated two adult classrooms adjacent to the Pastor's Study for a church parlor—a carpeted, multi-purpose, meeting room and library, enhanced by beautiful plywood paneling. Also in 1977, while all this was happening in the church, America and the world was saddened by the untimely death of Elvis Presley.

On April 16, 1978, four months prior to the first successful transatlantic balloon crossing from Maine to Paris, the church celebrated another significant milestone in the life and history of the Blacksburg Christian Church, its 75th anniversary. As a focal point in the celebration service, the church conducted a "Note Burning Ceremony" in which the "Paid" notes, one and two, were reduced to ashes. It was through the note burning ceremony during the anniversary service that the church celebrated, giving God the praise for the remarkable sacrifices of love made by so many persons that made the debt-free period possible. These notes, paid ahead of schedule, were a most significant accomplishment when one considered that the congregation had been in the new plant less than ten years.

On this special day, Reverend W. Kenneth Hughes presided, as Reverend Lewis S. McPherrin, Regional Minister in Virginia, gave the morning address during the worship

service. Also participating in the morning celebration was Reverend Robert F. Seward, 16th minister, who gave the Invocation; Dr. Allen B. Stanger, the church's first Timothy, provided the Pastoral Prayer; Reverend Warren P. Brubaker, the church's 19th minister, sang the anthem "The Holy City"; and Reverend Barney P. Edwards, the church's 11th minister, gave the Benediction. The morning service was followed by an afternoon open house for all families and friends of the church.

Two months later in 1978, a beautiful stained wooden cross was given and installed on the front wall in the sanctuary. This cross, the focal point of all worship services to come, was dedicated on June 18, 1978. The attractive and meaningful symbol of Christian faith was gift to the Blacksburg Christian Church by M. Lucille Grubb, in loving memory of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. W. K. Grubb. Also during that year, the two original wings of the church were re-roofed since each had flat built-up roofs and both were leaking. The total cost to re-roof these structures was \$14,640; \$7,500 of which was borrowed from a local bank.

As the church lived through many much-needed repairs, the church board appointed a six person Baptistery Committee in December of 1978. Numerous monetary memorial gifts specifically for a baptistery had already been given to the church. Since the original construction documents excluded a formal baptistery in the then multi-purpose sanctuary/fellowship hall, and many of the faithful members were becoming impatient, the committee began to evaluate the possibilities and reality of a baptistery in the sanctuary or an appendage to the sanctuary. A baptistery, however, was scheduled to be designed in the final phase of the master plan, the formal and larger sanctuary at the intersection of Watson Avenue and Tom's Creek Road.

After concluding their investigations, the church, on July 1, 1979, employed the Blacksburg architectural firm of Gregory and Rogers, to design and produce construction documents for implementation of a new baptistery. Three bids were received and opened for the proposed baptistery and on September 23, 1979, the congregation voted to accept the lowest bid of \$10,910 as submitted by William Dillon Builders, Inc., of Blacksburg. To finance this project, even though many memorial gifts had been received, the congregation authorized the church to borrow \$10,000 from the Church Board of Extension on a five year, 10 percent note. However, on October 15, 1979, by the grace of

God, those arrangements were canceled because the gifts in hand and continuous pledges and gifts, in less than a month, had exceeded all expectations, making it possible to finance the project without borrowing a single cent. The baptistery, flanked by two large dressing rooms, became a reality and was completed in November of that year.

The baptistery complex was dedicated on Sunday, November 25, 1979, during the morning worship service and that afternoon the newly completed baptistery and dressing rooms were used for the first time, not by the Blacksburg Christian Church, but its sister church across Brush Mountain and the Jefferson National Forest, the First Christian Church of Newport, Virginia. This significant and meaningful addition brought anew and beautiful dimension to the sanctuary and to the hearts of the congregation and leading advocated, Reverend W. Kenneth Hughes. God's Holy Spirit moved so many people in support of this vital and much-needed addition. Because of one large gift from Robert Sjogren's family, a memorial plaque, in honor of Flora and John Sjogren, was mounted directly on the front oak wall leading to the left dressing room, adjacent to the present organ location. The total cost for this baptistery was \$12,509.67; \$10,910 for the construction cost and \$1,599.67 for the architect's fees. Blacksburg Christian Church, however, would not use its own baptistery until early June 1980, as six young teenagers were baptized by Reverend Hughes. These six youngsters were: Curtis Marshall Estes, James Michael Estes, Johnny E. Layman, Jr., Sherry Renee Layman, Byron Alan Long and Charles David McCoy.

During the four-week construction period for the new baptistery, the church received two more generous memorial gifts for a special purpose in the sanctuary improvements. On October 25, 1979, these two gifts were given to purchase a piano suitable for the sanctuary and to enhance the new baptistery. At that time, a three-person piano committee was appointed to select and procure a beautiful, upright percussion stringed instrument. This memorial gift, given in honor of Mr. Lloyd McPherson, Jr. and Mr. Clarence McPherson by Evelyn McPherson and Mary McPherson, would grace the sanctuary with music and beauty for many years to come. A memorial plaque was placed on the back of the piano, signifying the gift and givers.

The decade of the 1980's began with Ronald Reagan being elected as the fortieth President of the United States while 52 Americans were held captive in Iran for 444 days.

Reverend Hughes, in 1980, formally submitted his resignation that would conclude his productive four-year pastorate as the Blacksburg Christian Church's twenty-first minister.

With the departure of Kenneth and Roberta, the church began a long year and a half without a full-time minister. The Hughes' would be the last church family to live in the third parsonage in Highland Park. At first the parsonage remained vacant until the church realized that the process of searching for a new minister would take longer than anticipated and placed the property on the rental market. Once advertised, the multi-story house stayed rented. On September 13, 1981, the board voted to sell the property. The church found that selling the property was not as easy as renting, but nevertheless, on March 7, 1982, the parsonage was sold for \$58,000. The church would not realize the entire amount all at once; the church opted to finance the sale of the house at a twelve percent, thirty-year mortgage.

During the Christmas season shortly after the parsonage was advertised for sale, the church was designated to be the host of District 11's Advent Service since the facilities were relatively new and had not been visited by the District's membership. On November 28, 1981, over three hundred persons crammed into the small sanctuary and narthex for the service. Approximately 180 expected (which the worship quarters could easily handle), but to have 300 present was overwhelming and a huge challenge for the host. People were seated and standing throughout the sanctuary, narthex and both educational wing corridors—the church survived!

As this period of searching for a minister continued, the church decided on March 7, 1982, to re-gravel the Watson Avenue parking lot and to refurbish the pastor's study with a fresh coat of paint, new carpet, and new wall-hung bookshelves. Later that year the board, by a vote of 10 to 6, moved the worship service from June 13-September 5, ahead one hour to 10:00 a.m. and thus eliminate Sunday School for the summer months. During this adjusted time frame in the church's history, Reverend Paul Jarvis-Parker, with wife, Reverend Anna Jarvis-Parker, became the church's twenty-second ministers. Simultaneously, Reverend Joseph Hardy resigned his pastorate at the historical Snowville Christian Church on July 11, 1982. Soon Joe and Jean Hardy became full-time members of the Blacksburg Christian Church. For the first time in the church's history, the congregation had the resources of three clergy under a single roof.

As the new ministers were getting better acquainted with the staff and the church members, Mr. Lincoln B. Sheppard, the church's custodian for many years in both the old and new facilities, died. Mr. Sheppard was not only the church's janitor, but he was everyone's friend. Although he was not a member of the congregation, he was honored during a memorial service on Sunday, July 27, 1982. No one, but no one, will ever fill the shoes nor replace this kind, gentle and humble man, who was handicapped with only the use of one arm for most of his life.

On August 1, 1982, a second pastor's study, an office for Anna, was established at the south end of the Watson Avenue educational wing. A two-way communication system was installed so Paul and Anna could converse and perform daily business without leaving their separate quarters. After several months and many hours of fine-tuning by the Constitution and By-Laws Committee and finally, by the board, the congregation voted and approved revisions to the church's constitution and by-laws on September 19, 1982, by a vote of 48 to 3.

Seven months later, on March 6, 1983, the board voted to recommend to the congregation that \$15,000 be appropriated for church-wide improvement and equipment procurement. On March 20, 1983, during the regularly-scheduled, congregational meeting, this recommendation was approved. The capital improvement "wish list" included such items as sanctuary remodeling with pews and new light fixtures, development of the courtyard, remodeling the nursery, spruce-up and painting of the plant's interior, sprucing-up the plant's exterior with new landscaping, and a new church sign, and to purchase slide/overhead projectors, audio tape systems, service equipment (typewriter and copier); and finally, new cribs for the nursery and high-chairs for the fellowship hall. The board was authorized by the congregation to borrow \$15,000 at a 12 ½ percent, 3 year note, for all of this. However, all items listed above on the "wish list" would not become a reality at this time.

The church began a three-year fundraising campaign and at the end of those three years, more than \$30,000 was pledged. On September 11, 1983, one of the improvements would begin to take shape. Landscape Architect, Allen Winslow, produced and submitted a courtyard plan for approval. The plan included a patterned concrete surfaced activity and sitting area. This flat, opened-space surface, extending from the

church's narthex egress doors, was bordered on two sides by fixed wooden benches with narrow landscaped lawn strips adjacent to the three brick facades of the church and an opened-landscaped lawn stretching from the benches through the perimeter trees and shrubs to the linking longitudinal concrete walk closing the "U"-shaped open space. Through a very large bequest from one life-long member's estate, the courtyard soon became a reality and would be known as the "Connie Lucas Memorial Courtyard."

On the day that the courtyard's architect, contractor and nursery company began work, the church submitted the concept for a new church sign to the Town of Blacksburg for approval. This request was denied when the town made a recommendation that the church curtail their efforts for several years due to the proposed widening of Tom's Creek Road along the church's property line and intersection of Tom's Creek Road and Watson Avenue. Two weeks later, on September 23, 1984, the Town of Blacksburg, working with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) purchased a large portion of church property from the intersection extending beyond the entrance of the upper parking lot to the rear property boundaries for \$12,630 to implement the widening improvements.

To celebrate Allen Borden Stanger's fifty-fifth anniversary of his ordination in the ministry, the Blacksburg Christian Church held a celebration service and reception on November 4, 1984. Friends and colleagues from around the region, and country gathered for a joyous day of Christian ministry celebration. More than forty-five Disciples' congregations were represented as well as Lynchburg College and Christmount Christian Assembly of North Carolina. The overflowing crowd heard "Tributes and Blessings" from Elder Stanley Kessinger of the host congregation; Jan Linn, Professor and Chaplain at Lynchburg College; and from the President of Christmount, Melba Banks. Greetings were also read from the General Church of the Christian Church (DOC) and brought-in person from the Regional Church by Associate Regional Minister, Jack Austin. A handcrafted Certificate of Appreciation and an album of letters, greetings, pictures, and mementos of the occasion were presented to Dr. Allen and Nellie Stanger in the afternoon service. A gift of favorite music was presented by the Blacksburg Choir Sextet. The Reverends Paul and Anna Jarvis-Parker presided during the joyful reception following the service.

In 1985, Reverend Paul submitted his resignation and ended his pastorate. Following the departure of Paul and Anna, the church went through another period without a minister. Finally, in 1986, Reverend Douglas W. Frank and wife, Rhonda, became the church's twenty-third minister. Before the arrival of the Franks, the courtyard was completed. To celebrate this long-awaited event the church dedicated the Connie Lucas Memorial Courtyard on November 3, 1985. During the first month of Reverend Frank's pastorate, the church installed a fire alarm system throughout the seventeen-year-old facility as one of the requirements in the new state/federal laws and guidelines for operating a child care center on the premises of a church. These guidelines also prohibited the center's children or staff from eating as a group in the basement Fellowship Hall since that level of the plan had only one exit directly to the exterior. Later, on July 13, 1986, additional constitution and by-laws changes were approved by the board for recommendation to the congregation. The congregation approved these changes and a new constitution and by-laws were adopted. On January 11, 1987, the Watson Avenue parking lot received repairs and a heavy coating of asphalt for \$7,290. This resurfacing was the result of a \$3,000 anonymous gift to the church. On November 8, 1987, after being in place for eleven years, the wooden free-standing church sign was demolished making room for a new church sign already in the planning stage.

To honor the church's eleventh minister, Reverend Barney P. Edwards on the 50th anniversary of his ordination and marriage to Ruby, the board on July 17, 1988, voted to proceed with plans and obtain the appropriate gift and type of celebration for this special occasion. On Sunday, November 6, 1988, the church witnessed the planting of a young dogwood tree surrounded by several appropriate shrubs during a special part of the morning worship service in honor of Barney's faithful and long service as minister, interim minister whenever called during periods without a full-time minister, and friend to the congregation. In the absence of Reverend Edwards, who was at home recovering from a recent illness, a Certificate of Appreciation, a record of the tree planting of this special service and many written and verbal words of speedy recovery, praise and thanks from the congregation were taken to Barney and Ruby in their Salem, Virginia, home that afternoon.

Before the dogwood tree was planted in honor of the Edwards', the church once again submitted plans for a new church sign on September 11, 1988, to the Town of Blacksburg for review and approval. On this occasion, the request was approved. In the spring of 1989, a permit was purchased for \$15 and the construction crew purchases materials and construction began. Later that year, the brick structure, glass-enclosed and shingled roofed sign designed to match the church's educational wings façade was completed. The two-sided sign is lighted by interior fluorescent bulbs at night. This publicly-displayed notice of the church is strategically placed on the corner of the church's property at the intersection of Tom's Creek Road and Watson Avenue.

Simultaneously with the purchase of the building permit for new church sign, the board, during its regularly scheduled meeting on Sunday, March 5, 1989, entertained a motion that all "loose offering" (coins) collected in the offering plated during each Sunday morning worship service would be given to the local food pantry. The motion was unanimously approved. At its next board meeting two months later on May 6, 1989, it was announced that timers were installed on the baptistery dressing room heat lamps, since one light remained on for a week after a recent baptism service; the required asbestos inspection had been conducted and the existing vinyl asbestos floor tile consisted of 3 percent asbestos—no alarm for the membership. Proper monitoring was required; and if replaced, proper abatement procedures were to be used by a professional abatement contractor. It was also announced that the Alton B. Caldwell Memorial Softball Tournament would be held on May 22, 1989.

During the May board meeting, the chairperson appointed a five person pew committee with the minister, Doug Frank, and board chair, Annette Perkins, service as ex-officio members. This committee was directed to continue to refine the proposed plans and cost estimate submitted during the meeting. After several meetings with Virginia Church Furniture, Inc., of Pulaski, Virginia, the committee submitted revised plans and cost estimates for 14 fixed rows of pews, 19 moveable matching chairs (for the choir and other needs), a solid modesty rail section to enclosed the choir, and a refurbishment of existing chancel chairs to match the upholstery of the pews at an estimated cost of \$9,169.65. On August 20, 1989, during a special congregational meeting, the membership approved the proposal and board's recommendation by a vote

of 45 to 9 and authorized the committee to begin a three month fund-raising campaign to raise \$11,000 for the pews and new sanctuary lighting.

The fund-raising campaign exceeded its goal by \$4,150 and, thus, the total amount pledged was \$15, 150. However, the pews were modified during fabrication and the final cost for the permanent sanctuary setting increased to \$13, 366.56, including the cost of a \$373.06 memorial plaque. The remaining funds totaling \$1,473.44 were placed in escrow for future sanctuary lighting improvements. The pews were installed during the last week of March and first week of April 1990, and on April 29, 1990, the plaque was hung on the rear wall of the sanctuary and the pews were dedicated. The plaque displays the memorial gift roll.

At a board meeting on July 9, 1989, the congregational representatives voted to partition Room 4 (the large open-room located in the rear educational wing). However, the plans to construct permanent walls and divide the large area into 4 individual classrooms were placed on hold until a specific plan and appropriate means to fund the project could be finalized and presented to the congregation for approval in November. Only weeks later, the board's consideration to remodel Room 4 began to take a different twist and fade away due to other more pressing matters of operating a church. A special meeting of the church board was called by its leaders on August 30, 1989. A letter from the Blacksburg Christian Church Child Care Center's Administrative Committee was read to the nearly full-house of twenty-two members. The letter recommended that the Center cease operations and to do so expeditiously. After much discussion and prayerful consideration, the board voted 19-9 to cease operations immediately and close the Center by September 29, 1989. There were only four weeks in which to inventory the business and help with relocation procedures of the many children and staff in the early months of its sixteenth year of operation. The Board published the following reasons for closure: serious personnel problems made it difficult to operate the Center in a efficient and effective manner; the program of the center was no longer of the same high quality standards and esteem once valued within the community of Blacksburg; the operation of the Center required a great deal of time, effort and energy by many members of the congregation which the church was not able to provide at the present time; and the church's liabilities were becoming increasingly more difficult to manage.

At the following board meeting on Sunday, September 9, 1989, the members learned that the church would realize approximately \$15,500 from the closing of the Center after all bills were paid. The members were also gratified to learn that closing procedures progressed well and many of the children and staff had already been relocated. In early October, after the Center had closed, the congregation learned through the church's newsletter, "The Messenger," and church announcements, that every child and staff member was relocated to other child care centers or employed elsewhere.

In less than a year after the demise of the child care center, Reverend Frank, after four years of service, submitted his resignation and expressed his desire to relocate with the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ, to another community in Virginia and continue his ministry. Reverend Frank resigned his pastorate at the end of July 1990, board meeting and vacated that position in August.

The Blacksburg Christian Church again found itself with a full-time minister. Even before the departure of the Frank family, the board chairperson appointed a search committee to begin the arduous task of filling that vacancy. During the next regularly scheduled board meeting in September, the board gave approval for the three man work crew to proceed with Room 4 remodeling and divide the large multi-purposed opened space into four large rooms designated to become classrooms and a new choir practice and robbing room. At the same time, the board gave approval to expand the renovations to include a small portion of Phase One's original wing, once remodeling of Room 4 was completed, and to create a new larger Pastor's Study.

On November 12, 1990, Reverend Johnny T. Loughridge arrived to fill the vacancy as an interim minister. Four weeks later, as Reverend Loughridge continued his church-wide visitations, the congregation, during the December 2, 1990 morning Advent worship service, witnessed the dedication of the just-completed, re-configured and refurbished educational wing. While the congregation and Reverend Loughridge worshipped and grew together, the Search Committee continued to struggle in their endeavors to locate "Mister or Mrs. Right." Reverend Loughridge petitioned that committee to reconsider their earlier agreement not to include him for the position of minister and now enter his name as a candidate.

On Sunday, May 5, 1991, the congregation participated in “A Service of Celebration and Installation” for Blacksburg Christian Church’s twenty-fourth minister, Reverend Johnny T. Loughridge. During the morning worship service, Reverend Doctor Walter “Topper” Franke, Elder, Westhampton Christian Church in Roanoke, Virginia, and retired minister delivered the sermon. In the afternoon service of installation, Dr. Richard Frahm, Chairman of the Search Committee, and Dr. Roderick Reasor, Chairman of the Board, presided as Reverend Al Payne conducted the Covenant of Dedication and Reverend Marilyn Taylor, acting Regional Minister, gave the charge to the new minister. A reception followed the installation service in the memorial courtyard.

As the church prepared to honor another anniversary day and the founding of the Blacksburg Christian Church, pew Bibles, the latest edition of the Good News Bible, was placed throughout the sanctuary in the book racks attached to the backs of each pew on Sunday, April 11, 1992. These Bibles were purchased through special donations from many worshippers and friends of the congregation.

The four Sundays of Advent season preceding Christmas each year focus the worshippers’ attention to the celebration and birth of the Christ child, but on Sunday morning, November 29, 1992, as the Church realized the twenty-third anniversary of the first worship service in the present sanctuary, the congregation witnessed the birth of a new church tradition—the Hanging of the Greens service. The Hanging of the Greens service was the formal opening of the Christmas season in the church, preparing one’s heart by scripture, song, prayer, and beauty through these decorations. Such a service provided each member an opportunity to put in proper setting and incorrect focus, many of the traditions and lovely customs associated with Christmas.

The sanctuary was adorned by the eight beautiful green wreaths hung on six of the eight brick surfaces that establish the octagon-shaped nave and chancel and on two of the flanking walls of the baptistery. These wreaths—two stars, two hearts, two crosses, and two circles—provided an elegance, beauty and grace never before presented as an act of worship in the sanctuary at Christmas. The wreaths that were hung that day and will be hung for years to come were provided by Annie Mae and Ray Albert as a memorial in honor of Annie Mae’s brother, David Slusser. Each wreath was designed and built by Dorothy Sanchez and Johnny Loughridge. During the Advent season, the “handymen”

installed a tall wooden power pole and dusk-to-dawn flood light between the playground fence and the Watson Avenue parking lot. Then the church replaced the regular light bulbs of the two main entrances soffit fixtures with new dusk-to-dawn bulbs. Combined, these new lights provided enough illumination for church members and other organizations using the facilities after dark to walk safely to their automobiles in the parking lot.

With the arrival of 1993, the Blacksburg Christian Church would realize another significant milestone in the life of the congregation. In four short months, the church would be ninety years old. Therefore, four-person anniversary committee was preparing for a new celebration that would be held in the spring on the actual date of the church's birth, April 12th, or later, perhaps in early summer. The timing of any events would depend on the availability of the church's first complete history being written.

While the church's attention was focused on the anniversary, the church choir donned their new choir robes for the first time. These flowing full-length garments were a magnificent burgundy and gray with a large chalice to symbolize the church, Disciples of Christ. Memorial and other gift were used to fund the new robes. On Palm Sunday, April 4, 1993, the beautiful new attire was dedicated. Prior to the dedication of these robes, one of the worse winter storms covered the entire eastern United States, from Atlanta to Boston, leaving at least 43 persons dead.

Not only did the church survive the "Blizzard of 93," but also it survived the exodus of our retirees (who had been gone for nearly six months) to Florida and other southern states. Although snow had come again during the first week in April, by Ester Sunday the warmth of the sunlight managed to break through and offer everyone a bit of hope. To commemorate our 90th year, the anniversary committee wisely scheduled the celebration for Sunday, June 27, 1993, so as not to conflict with Easter Sunday. The long-awaited history of Blacksburg Christian Church would be published, as well as the several of the past ministers and members of the church would be able to make their return trip to Blacksburg.

As Steven Spielberg's new movie JURASSIC PARK roared into theaters across the country, Blacksburg Christian Church celebrated their ninetieth anniversary. Of course, one of the focal points in the celebration, a copy of "The History of Blacksburg Christian

Church” was available for everyone in attendance. The fifty-nine-page booklet, written by Bobby Perkins, took nearly three years of research and writing to bring together for the first time the 788,400 hours of church history. I also took an enormous amount of time and effort by Debi McCoy and Annette Perkins to produce the document. (The first ninety years of church history brought the reader through the end of 1992. That fifty-nine page volume is part of the “history” that you now have in 2003).

On that special celebration day in 1993, the Reverend Johnny Loughridge presided as the Reverend Anna Jarvis-Rhea (22nd minister, Anna Jarvis-Parker) gave the morning message. Also participating in the morning celebration were Reverend Al Payne of Blacksburg and Virginia Tech; Mrs. Melinda Buchanan, member; and the Reverend Jack Johnson from the Christian Church in Virginia's regional office in Lynchburg, Virginia. During the lengthy worship service, two members of the church were recognized as living descendants of two charter members: Mrs. Cora Dickerson, niece of W. H. Linkous and Mrs. Brenda Bishop, niece of Miss Betty Wygall. After the morning service in the sanctuary, everyone stayed for a reception—a full course meal and a historical display in the Fellowship Hall. Many items, pictures and memorabilia were celebrated. One of the items that was on display was “the ashes” from the note-burning ceremony, which was the focal point of the church’s 75th anniversary celebration in 1978, fifteen years earlier.

As thousands gathered in Washington, DC, to mark the 30th anniversary of Martin Luther King’s historic “I Have a Dream” speech, the church began a study program called “People of the Covenant” (POC). POC, a study program for small groups, was designed to enable the congregation to become biblically informed, globally aware, and relationally sensitive to God, self and others. Only one group of nine people, lead by Annette Perkins, made the commitment at this juncture in the life of the church. (For the record, there was only one man and eight women!) This group continued to meet each week for seven years and completed three study books a year for each of those seven years.

Also in 1993, about the time that the World Trade Center in New York City suffered bomb attack in the underground parking garage of one of the buildings, and the World War II Holocaust Museum opened in New York City, the Worship Committee, led by

Phyllis Blevins with assistance from Johnny Loughridge, planned “Love on the Cross” for the 1994 Lenten season. “Love on the Cross” would extend for the six-week period of Lent as each worshipper of the congregation celebrated God’s love as exhibited by Jesus Christ’s dying on the cross. The worshippers present each Sunday of Lent, would be challenged to allow their faith to grow and expand toward God. To do that, every worshipper would receive a small wooden cross, unpainted but sealed, and an eight-page devotional booklet on the first Sunday. Each week thereafter, a different symbol would be added to the cross and every worshipper was given a new devotional for that week. The symbols were: Week One—Heart, Week Two—Cross, Week Three—Circle of Thorns, Week Four—a Crown, Week Five—Bread and Cup, and Week Six—Olive Branch. (After the six Sundays of Lent, the seventh Sunday is Easter.) Every Sunday of Lent, the church member was asked to contemplate one of the major themes on the wooden cross through scripture, symbols, devotional hymns and the sermon. Through the programs, every worshipper would be prepared for the Risen Lord in the Easter celebration. (Perhaps for this history and for the record, the wearing of these wooden crosses hanging loosely, from each worshipper’s neck during the six Sundays of Lent and Easter, remained popular for the next two years; a total of three continuous years—1994, 1995, and 1996.)

Several months later, while the church’s attention was still on the “love on the Cross” and Los Angeles, California, had been devastated by the 6.6 Richter scale earthquake, repairs were finally underway on the Watson Avenue educational wing and the narthex flat roofs. The administration wing roof also needed repairing, but because of funding, it was postpone. Not only were the people of Los Angeles devastated by the earthquake, but also Blacksburg Christian Church was distraught by the sad news that the Reverend Allen B. Stanger, the church’s first Timothy, had died. Reverend Stanger was well known and loved by Christians everywhere in the General Church (DOC) of the United States. On August 24, 1994, Blacksburg Christian Church held a memorial service for Reverend Stanger. Reverend Johnny Loughridge, Reverend Rex Mix, Dan Gilbert and Reverend John Dunstan participated in the service. Elders Rod Reasor and Bob Perkins gave the prayers at the communion table. Dr. Stanger had been cremated and some of his ashes

were secretively spread in Blacksburg, his birthplace and his home church, as well as other parts of the country. Only a few people know where!

So many persons from all walks of life benefited from just knowing him or being in his presence. To name just a few: Lynchburg College and the students who would go into the ministry that he taught; the summer campers at Lynchburg College in the forties and fifties; Blacksburg and Blacksburg Christian Church, and Indianapolis, Indiana, the headquarters of the Christian Church (DOC) in America. Perhaps not everyone who knew Allen knew that his Timothy church was Blacksburg Christian Church, but we knew and were blessed because he was one of our own.

In addition, 1994 was also the year in which the church voted to remove the old sanctuary pew hymnals and the smaller paperback copies of the Spiritual Life Song Book and purchase new pew hymnals, the “Chalice Hymnals.” It may be of particular interest that in 1987, the General Assembly of the Christian Church (DOC) in America had called for the development of a new hymnbook for Disciples worshippers.

More importantly, in 1991, work on the new hymnals began in earnest with the establishment of a fifteen-member Hymnal Development Committee. The committee would meet regularly in Indianapolis, Indiana, and would be under the joint auspices of the Christian Board of Publication in St. Louis, Missouri, and the Division of Homeland Ministries in Indianapolis, Indiana. Serving on the Hymnal Development Committee was Reverend David Edwards, the son of Reverend Barney Edwards, our eleventh pastor from 1938-1941. Barney was also our Interim Minister on many occasions in the new church facility on Watson Avenue during his retirement in the 70’s.

Also serving from 1987 to 1993 on the National Board of the Division of Homeland Ministries in Indianapolis, Indiana, was our own past board chair, Annette Seward Perkins. (Annette is also the first cousin of our 17th pastor, Reverend Robert F. Seward, who served from 1961-1966 Bob Seward was also one of the ministerial students at Lynchburg College that Reverend Doctor Allen Stanger taught. A small world!)

The church voted to order 97 copies of the hymnals as replacements in the sanctuary and an unknown quantity of copies for individual members for their homes. The church paid \$1,444.02 for the 97 copies. There would be 15 hymnals assigned to the choir, 75 copies for the sanctuary pews, 5 large print hymnals and 2 accompanist edition hymnals

for the piano and organ. These hymnals were not printed nor shipped until 1995 by the Chalice Press in St. Louis, Missouri. The previous hymnals that were used by the church were “The Christian Worship” hymnbook printed in 1941 by the Bethany Press also from St. Louis and the “Spiritual Life Songs,” a thin, one inch thick, five and one half inches wide and eight inches in length, paperback edition that was published by the Abington Press in Nashville, Tennessee and New York City, New York.

During the year of 1994, the year in which Major League Baseball, including the World Series, would be cancelled by the Major League owners due to the “strike” by the players, Reverend Loughridge became the church’s secretary, a paid position. Also in late 1994, a long range planning committee, chaired by Benjamin Evans, began focusing on such sanctuary improvements as new lighting, since it had been three years since the new pews were added.

The year 1995 arrived as notable because one hundred sixty-eight (168) people died as a truck bomb blast demolished the nine-story Alfred P. Murral Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and Microsoft launched globally, its much-hyped “Windows 95” computer software. Reverend Loughridge continued to serve as minister and secretary and finally the Chalice Hymnals arrived and were used for the first time in worship in July 1995.

The church records also show that in 1994, the church voted to send the proceeds of \$133.70, from the Alton B. Caldwell Memorial Softball Tournament, to Craig Springs Camp and Conference Center in Craig County, Virginia. These funds had been held in the treasurer’s books since 1987. The church received a “thank you” letter from Craig Springs Camp Facility Manager, Lynne F. May. She stated that through the continued donations and efforts of many volunteers plus gifts, such as ours, the ministry of Craig Spring would be kept alive and growing. Alton Caldwell had a fondness for the camp. If he had lived, he would have furnished and installed wrought iron gates for the camp’s main entrance, which is directly across the highway from where the camp’s bowling alley once stood.

During the same period of time America’s sixteen-year old manhunt ended with FBI agents arresting the Unabomber, Theodore Kaczynski, in 1996, Blacksburg Christian Church observed its ninety-third birthday by celebrating the installation of new sanctuary

lighting. The addition of more illumination for the pews was a product of the 1994 Long Range Planning Committee's efforts. This lighting-remodeling project consisted of several improvements. First, new valance, fluorescent lighting that is dimmable, was installed. This new twenty feet long strip lighting was constructed on the existing brick sills of the sanctuary's clear-story windows formed by the peaks and valleys of each of the sixteen radial-folded panel roof; second, two new wall lights with bulbs were mounted on the rear walls of the dressing rooms of the baptistery, the sanctuary's exterior walls; third, a single spotlight for the chancel's pulpit and sanctuary's communion table was added, an octagon-shaped (eight-sided) Plexiglas lens light fixture was centered beneath the sanctuary's concentric ring supporting the roof. All of the new additions were dimmable from the redesigned switch panel adjacent to the narthex entrance. The new system was designed to be compatible with the existing dimmable lighting. Only the two new light fixtures shining on the wooden cross and brick wall were purchased off-the-shelf. The other two additions were made in other locations and assembled on site.

Ben Evans, an architectural professor at Virginia Tech, and Bob Perkins, an architect in private practice, formulated the design and delineated the working drawings for the remodeling project. The workmanship of the wood fascia of the valance was provided by Tommy McMahan while the electrical renovations and new additions were done by Tony Houff Electrical Contractors. The valance lighting consisting of twenty-four fluorescent light bulbs, the single adjustable spotlight, and the center fixture with nine halogen lights were the only additions to the original lighting design of 1969. Where the center fixture now hangs, only four of the original sixteen suspended down lights were removed. The center fixture is illuminated by nine 50/75-watt halogen bulbs mounted horizontally on the concentric ring shining toward the center. Included in the construction cost was fourteen-foot aluminum ladder for changing the now higher light bulbs and keeping the Plexiglas lenses clean.

On March 23, 1996, American's fifth largest cigarette company, the Leggett Group, Inc., admitted liability in the largest class-action cigarette lawsuit. The other four larger cigarette firms involved feared that this landmark decision opened the way for continued litigation. Nearly two months later on May 5, 1996, the Church Growth Committee presented their evangelism plan to the board and two weeks later to the congregation.

This six-page plan for the church was titled “Partners in Evangelism” (PIE). It was the committee’s belief that through PIE, each person in the congregation would make a conscious decision to grow spiritually. Hopefully, the congregation would also grow numerically, through the evangelism efforts. As published, the committee, lead by Wilda Siburt and Reverend Loughridge, presented their “rationale for doing evangelism” which would involve many of the church’s six standing committees. The committees that would be directly involved and would have a leading role were: Worship, Membership, Christian Education, and of course, Church Growth. The evangelism goal was to spread the good news of Jesus Christ to the world. The plan was approved by the board and the congregation. Sadly, because evangelism requires an enormous amount of effort by everyone involved, the lack of complete coordination the committees, and cooperation from the members, the program was never fully understood nor implemented.

In Atlanta, Georgia, a pipe bomb left two people dead at the Centennial Olympic Park during the 1996 Summer Olympics. Shortly thereafter, as summer was coming to end in Blacksburg, the church records reported another roof repair project. This time, it was the shingle replacement of the sanctuary’s radial folded panel roof. Of course, as the repairs progressed, the congregation was continuing to appreciate the magnificent artificial lighting improvements beneath the newly weatherproofed roof. At the appropriate time, just prior to the coming Advent season, and without any notification by Reverend Loughridge, Ben Evans silently provided the church with a new frontal view perspective of the church. This perspective would be reproduced weekly, and on other special occasions, and would grace the cover of the Sunday bulletins. How delightful, graceful and refreshing was the new image. With the introduction of this new cover, the previous image was retired quietly. This earlier perspective of the church had gone beyond its time. The older image of the church, delineated by Bobby Perkins, had been used for the bulletin covers for a number of years.

With the arrival of 1997, the newly constructed Centennial Christian Church in neighboring McCoy, Virginia, was happily planning their dedication services. Centennial Christian Church was founded in 1898, five years before Blacksburg was founded in 1903. (The land for Centennial Christian Church was given by Moses McCoy, the great, great, great, great, great grandfather of Gary and Jeff McCoy.) To

assist the McCoy congregation in their celebrations and dedication on Sunday, May 18, 1997, the Disciples of Christ Churches in District II were asked to contribute toward the purchase of an appropriate-sized wooden cross for their sanctuary. This cross would be similar to, if not the same as, the cross hanging as the focal point in the sanctuary of Blacksburg Christian Church. Blacksburg and a few other churches for the district contributed. On that Sunday in May, Associate Regional Minister, Reverend Marilyn Taylor delivered the morning message at Centennial. With the new cross positioned above the baptistery on the rear wall of the sanctuary, architect Bobby Perkins, was recognized and thanked for being the church's architect. Mr. Wayne Campbell of Campbell Construction Company, in Roanoke, Virginia, was also recognized during the dedication celebration.

Shortly before the celebration in McCoy, Blacksburg Christian Church's active Property Committee launched several more maintenance and improvement projects for the twenty-eight-year-old facility on Watson Avenue: the repainting of all exterior paintable surfaces and the replacement of the corridor fluorescent light fixtures in the three corridors of the educational wings. During this same period, on April 15th in Augusta, Georgia a young golfer named Tiger Woods won his first Master's Golf Tournament with the all-time scoring record of twenty-two under par and a total score of 270 for his four rounds. He shot 70 on the first day, 65 on the second day, 66 on the third day, with a 69 on the final day, Sunday, April 15th. This meant that with April 15th being "Tax Day" every year, except this year falling on a Sunday, all tax payers got an extra day for filing their income taxes!

Later that same year in early September, as the United States shared in England's grief over the loss of Princess Diana, who was killed as her limousine crashed in a road tunnel in Paris, France, the Blacksburg Christian Church received a plaque from the church's Cub Scout Pack 150. This plaque was in appreciation to the members for allowing Pack 150 and other scouting programs the use of the church for so many years in the past and for the many years, hopefully, in the future. As Advent approached again, as it does every year, the church board approved the recommendation that Benjamin Evans be awarded the honorary title of "Elder Emeritus." It was a complete surprise when Ben was given his pin for his long, devoted service to the church and God as an Elder. Ben

became the third Elder in the church, since the program began, to be given the status of Elder Emeritus. The other two recipients were Mr. Stanley Kessinger and Reverend Joseph Hardy. At the close of 1997, During an Advent Sunday, the Blacksburg Christian Church was honored to have the regional minister of the Christian Church (DOC) in Virginia, Reverend Lee Parker as guest minister.

It was fitting that in the early months of 1998, as the congregation's attention was focused on the church's 95th birthday in the upcoming spring, the Property Committee, never without something to do, completed some Fellowship Hall renovations and had, with approval, contracted to have the administration wing re-roofed. At the same time in a room directly above the Fellowship Hall's kitchen area, the Young Adult Sunday School Class led by Jeff McCoy, began renovations to their classroom. The goal was to relocate the Library, which had limited resources, outdated books and limited accessibility in the Fidelis Classroom/Church Parlor, to their classroom adjacent to the Minister's Study. The thinking was that in a room of its own, the Library would be remodeled, painted, and updated with new books being purchased each month. To begin the book replacements, the class planned to purchase fifty new titles.

Nearly three decades have passed since the Blacksburg Christian Church sold the original house of worship on the corner of Church and Roanoke Streets in Blacksburg's business district to the Odd Fellows Lodge in 1969. After twelve years of occupation, the Odd Fellows sold their lodge to the Blacksburg Jewish Community. Soon after the Jewish Community moved into their new Temple, they realized that parts of the older Christian Church stained glass windows were inappropriate for the Jewish faith. Twelve of the stained glass windows were modified by the removal of a "shield" in each, leaving a small void to be filled. These voids were quickly filled with "like-kind" shaped panels colored blue. These shield were not destroyed by the Jewish Community, but were placed in storage by Freda and Marvin Blecher for seventeen years until the spring of the year of 1998.

In late January of 1998, as the new year was only a few weeks old, The Reverend Johnny Loughridge discovered that the panels existed. Unknown to the Blacksburg Christian Church congregation, Johnny finally located and received the shields from the Blechers. Once the shields were obtained, they were taken to Custom Originals, a stained

glass company in Salem, Virginia, to be cleaned and prepared for hanging. On Sunday night, April 11, 1998, Ann and Roger Van Tassell, who knew about the well-kept secret, carefully hung the shields on the inside surfaces of the five tall exterior windows of the church's sanctuary. During the three months that it took to locate, obtain and clean the shield, Johnny and his daughter, as well as the Van Tassells, a huge debt of gratitude and very special thanks for the return of these beautiful treasured shields, a part of our heritage to cherish now and hopefully forever.

On Sunday, April 12, 1998, k Easter Sunday morning, the church celebrated its ninety-fifth year of continued ministry in Blacksburg and the surrounding communities. The return of the painted shield of glass that were the centerpiece of the twelve stained glass windows of the 1912 structure on the corner of Church and Roanoke Streets was especially meaningful on this day of celebrations. However, in retrospect, perhaps the church should have taken the windows, not just the shield, back in 1969 and had some of them integrated into the new structure on Watson Avenue and Tom's Creek Road. It was discussed during the planning stages of the new building back in 1966, 1967, and 19668. Each time it came down to cost; extra costs to remove the windows, or just the glazing; extra costs associated with replacing of filling the openings, and perhaps additional costs for the transfer and for making them work. The church can be thankful that members of the Jewish Community kept the shields and returned them to us.

One month later, Dr. Douglas "Duke" Watson was given the honorary title of Elder Emeritus on May 3, 1998. A congregational meeting was called on this day by Board Chair Sean Arthur. A resolution was passed by unanimous vote by the congregation present declaring Doug Watson "Elder Emeritus" and that May 3rd by declared "Doug Watson Day." A Plaque was presented to "Duke" by Rich Oderwald, Elder Chair. The Fidelis Class, the class that Duke taught for many years, presented him with a brick paver to be placed in the new Blacksburg Bicentennial Walkway that was under construction across from the Town Hall. Dr. Watson was recognized by Mrs. Wilda Siburt, Trustee; Jim Shuler, Delegate to Virginia's General Assembly; and Eva Eppely, for his service to the church, the academic community, and the Town of Blacksburg. Duke Watson joined Stanley Kessinger, The Reverend Joe Hardy and Ben Evans, as Elder Emeriti.

On May 27, Bobby Perkins was nominated and elected as the Second Vice-Moderator of the Christian Church (DOC) in Virginia during the 163rd Regional Assembly on the campus of Lynchburg College. Bobby's duties and responsibilities would be to plan, organize and conduct the 164th Regional Assembly in the year 2000 at Lynchburg College.

Annually, the Blacksburg Christian Church has held a Christian Women's Fellowship Day during the 11 o'clock Sunday morning worship service. Thus, on Sunday, July 19, 1998, the Christian Women's Fellowship honored two very important ladies on the congregation during the worship service. Cora Dickerson and Annie Mae Albert were recognized and honored for their devotion and dedicated service to the church and the community. Each of the honorees had more than fifty years of service; 56 years and 54 years respectively. Nancy Martin, wife of The Reverend Dennis Martin of Radford Christian Church, was guest speaker for the celebration and worship. On this special day, the church members demonstrated their appreciation and love for the inspirational leadership of the women of our congregation. Through the celebration, the congregation expressed its gratitude for the many ministries of the CWF in the life of the church. (Two days after the CWF Day, American's first man in space, Astronaut Allen B. Shepard died at the age of 74 on July 21, 1998. About that time, Mark McGuire of the St. Louis Cardinals hit his record-breaking 70th home run, beating outfielder Sammy Sosa of the Chicago Cubs by 4 home runs in St. Louis, Missouri.)

On September 27th, the second "People of the Covenant" (POC) group was formed and began weekly Bible studies. Jeff McCoy agreed to teach the group. Then, on October 29, 1998, Senator and Astronaut, John Glenn, at the age of 77, became the oldest man in space aboard the space shuttle "Discovery." About the time Senator Glenn was getting familiar with weightlessness again, the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) in New York City produced the world's first digital television broadcast with the Disney cartoon, "101 Dalmatians."

In Blacksburg, Virginia, Virginia Tech had long since started their fall semester and the church received a five-foot tall and beautifully built wooden stand with a removable wreath candleholder with multiple usages in the sanctuary. With the wreath holder, the stand became the Advent Wreath. Without the candleholder, the stand is used as the

“Christ Candle” holder from Christmas to Easter. Around this same time, Bill Murdock and Jack Sparks lovingly built a beautiful wooden stand to hold our guest register which is still in use today!

Within two weeks, the Church Board met and approved the Nominating Committee’s slate of officers, new elders and also new deaconate members for the year 1999 and 2000, which then would be approved by the congregation. The congregation would have to approve the two new policies proposed by the Elders. At the regularly scheduled congregational meeting on November 22, 1998, the slate of officers and Elders’ two policies were presented to the congregation for their approval. Normally, most items from the Board pass easily, but not this time. The Board’s recommendation that the new slate of officers, Elders and Deaconate be approved was readily accepted by the church members.

Then, the congregation was presented with the two policies from the Elders. First, the Elders proposed that the members of the church establish a policy that would allow the “scattering of ashes” of deceased members on the church grounds. The policy read that in those events when a deceased church member is cremated, the relatives of the deceased may scatter ashes on the church grounds. No permanent marker of the location of the ashes would be made, nor would there be any reference to the scattering of the ashes or the location is made in the permanent records for the church, and no restrictions on use of the location would be made. Policy One was passed. Secondly, in some instances, church members or relatives may wish to commemorate a deceased church member. For these cases an “In Memoriam” plaque would be established and would hang in the church’s narthex directly outside of the sanctuary. The policy stated that those wishing to commemorate a deceased member may have prepared a nameplate of a size suitable for the plaque showing the name of the individual to be commemorated and a date such as the date of commemoration, the date of death, or other dates as those placing the plates may desire. The nameplate would be attached to the plaque. Discussions were pro and con. After a very lengthy and sometimes heated discussion on the second policy, a “Motion to Table” passed. The vote was: 22 year and 15 no. Thus, the motion to have a plaque was tabled.

With the arrival of January 1, 1999, the congregation would soon be entering the ninety-sixth year, and the church building soon would be thirty years only. This was the year that Johnny Loughridge and Phyllis Blevins, chair of the Worship Committee, realized a need for a memorial service to honor the life of those members, relatives of members, and friends of the church that had died during 1998. On January 10th, the past conducted a short memorial service as part of the Sunday morning worship service. The morning bulletin listed the deceased persons. Those that were honored that morning were: Hester Long, Doris Perdue, Janie Bikin, and Roberta Hughes, wife of former minister, Kenneth Hughes. The Reverend Hughes was the church twenty-first minister. At that same worship service, the new church officers were installed.

As winter continued and the Dow Jones (stock market report) broke the 10,000 point mark (10,006.78) and continued to stay above it for the first time in history. The life of Blacksburg Christian Church would also continue as usual. On Sunday, January 24th, the regional minister, The Reverend Lee Parker preached from the pulpit for the second time in twenty-four months. Less than one week later, the closest neighboring church, Northside Presbyterian Church, used some of the church's facilities for their church office's retreat. Northside expressed their appreciation for the kindness and reciprocated by inviting us, should the need ever occur, to use their church only two blocks away.

On March 14th, during the regularly scheduled board meeting under "New Business," Chairman Rich Oderwald brought Cora Dickerson's request that an "Organ Fund" be established and that all memorial donations thus far and perhaps those in the future, contributed in Randolph Dickerson's memory, be designated for this new fund. The existing organ was purchased in 1950. The Fidelis Sunday School Class indicated that its contribution would go into the Organ Fund (\$87.50). It was moved by Gary McCoy and seconded by Debi McCoy that a non-operating account be established call "Organ Fund." The motion passed. Therefore, a non-operating account was established for a new organ. (Just a note for the records: the tabled "In Memoriam" plaque for the scattered ashes as not brought to the congregational meeting.)

Throughout the next several months, the church continued to make improvements and hopefully to satisfy the needs of the congregation, a new, sturdier mailbox was installed adjacent to the Watson Avenue parking lot and the entrance walkway to the church from

the parking lot. The Property Committee removed two Bradford pear trees from the courtyard that had been severely damaged by heavy winds. At the same time, the Watson Avenue and Tom's Creek parking lots were repaired and repaved.

On April 18th, two weeks after Easter 1999, the church found itself changing the Sunday morning worship services starting time from 11:00 a.m. to 10:55 a.m. (In October, only six months later, the church changed the worship service time back to 11:00 a.m.) Two days later, April 20th, Columbine High School in Denver, Colorado, a couple of juniors shot 12 fellow classmates and one teacher before taking their own lives. Twelve days later, the Christian Women's Fellowship (CWF) celebrated their fiftieth anniversary on May 2, 1999. Because the women in the CWF throughout the years have provided so many ministries in Christ's name, the congregation welcomed the opportunity to celebrate this milestone in the history of the Blacksburg Christian Church with CWF. The summer and fall of 1999 was a time of many significant events, not only in the life of the church, but worldwide.

During the summer months as the church and the world were poised for the new millennium that would be arriving in less than six months, the well-known son of President John F. Kennedy, John F. Kennedy, Jr., and wife Carolyn, died when the private plane that John was piloting crashed into the Atlantic Ocean west of his designation of Martha's Vineyard. In September at the close of the summer, the Christian Education Committee initiated two new Sunday School classes. Jeff McCoy's previous class began meeting again and the "Christian Faith in TV Shows" began meeting in the library with Johnny Loughridge as teacher. As the committee organized these new classes, the church realized the need and hired a part-time secretary. The new secretary would work from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Monies to fund this position were taken from the church's investment account in the amount of \$10,000. The board would re-evaluate the position after a year. Continuing its benevolence work, the Missions and Benevolence Committee sent 188 "Heart Kits" plus \$100 in donations to be used by Church World Service for Kosovo refugee effort in that war-torn area.

It was fitting that the CWF host Church Women United World Communion Day on Friday, November 5, 1999. A week later, a proposal by the Elders was approved first by

the church board and then by the congregation at the November congregational meeting. R. D. McCoy was honored as Elder Emeritus. The motion passed unanimously. R. D.'s wife, Mary was asked to present the Elder Emeritus pin to her husband, of ore than 50 years. R. D. McCoy joined Stanley Kessinger, Joseph Hardy, Benjamin Evans, and Duke Watson as the fifth Elder Emeritus.

As the year 1999 and the twentieth century came to an end with the arrival of a new century, regular passenger flights from New York City to Havana, Cuba, began again after almost forty years. New things were happening at the church also. The new hard-surface accessible route was completed to the Fellowship Hall from the asphalt surface parking lot to the existing concrete walkway that connected to the church basement. This new walkway meant that there would be no more walking through grass or muddy, slippery terrains. In the church's interior, more specifically in the sanctuary, a new nativity scene had been placed beneath the Communion Table for all to enjoy during Advent and Christmas. The set had been donated by Gary and Debi McCoy. Now, the church was certainly ready for the twenty-first century. Bring it on!

While everyone was concerned about "Y2K" when the "ball" would fall from on high in New York City, at the stroke of midnight, January 1, 2000, most would celebrate the new century as usual New Year's Eve. It was a new century, not a new millennium, at least not yet. Reverend Lee Parker, Regional Minister of the Christian Church (DOC) in Virginia was correct in his bi-monthly article "Reflections" in the Virginia Christian. He stated that the new Third Millennium would begin with the year 2001. So all would have to wait yet another twelve months for the Third Millennium to arrive!

Nevertheless, during the first year of the new century or New Millennium, Reverend Johnny Loughridge completed his ninth year as the 24th full-time minister of BCC. Church records (those that could be found) and most recently that the 1993 church history, confirmed that Johnny Loughridge surpassed The Reverend Alva Eubank's (1941-1949) long-standing record of eight years. As you may recall, The Reverend Eubank died while he was on his way to preach a funeral in the afternoon of an Easter Sunday in 1949. Another pastor, The Reverend Robert Wilkerson (1951-1957) with six full-time years, was the third longest full-time minister in the church's history.

It is of particular interest that back in 1998 the Region (Christian Churches in Virginia) offered for sale “Hometowne Collectible” replicas of the Spring House at Craig Springs (campground of the Regional Church). Because it was so popular, another “Hometowne Collectible” of Craig Springs was commissioned in late 1999 and was available from the Regional Office. This replica was of the Blowing Alley. Annette and Bob Perkins purchased two of these replicas, and later placed them in the church museum room. (The 2003 Centennial Committee decided to purchase replicas of the two houses of worship for sale for the Centennial celebration!)

As the Regional of Virginia’s eleven districts and one hundred seventy-one congregation looked to the year 2000 with optimism, the Blacksburg Christian Church, being one of those regional churches, and one of twenty-one churches in District II, had hopes for another good year or one even better than those of the past. On January 9th, the church began the year by changing its order of worship. The “Collection of the Offering” would follow the Communion at the end of the service. This was done to enhance the movements of Elders and Deaconate serving during the service.

Also, on January 16th, the annual Installation and Memorial Service was held. The Elders, Deaconate and Trustees were the only officers installed. On even years the officers do not change unless there is a vacancy. Immediately following the installation, the memorial time was held to remember those persons who died in 1999. Near the time of our memorial event, on February 12, 2000, the cartoonist who created the “Peanuts” comic strip, Charles Schulz, died in his sleep after a battle with colon cancer. Many in the congregation mourned his death. During the season of Lent that year, the congregation was introduced to “Love on the Cross” again. It had been four years since the congregation had celebrated this Lenten activity.

In early April, The Reverend Loughridge and others began looking for the old communion set (a stainless steel set that was used prior to the 1975 communion set donated by Dorothy Bodell and her sister, Susie Siburt in honor of their parents). As the last days of April approached, nationally it would be the last days of six-year-old Cuban refugee, Elian Gonzalea, in America. Elian had been at the center of an international dispute between the courts of America, the Miami police, Cubans in Miami, Elian’s Miami relatives, and Cuba. On April 22nd, federal agents raided Elian’s relatives’ home

and took him at gunpoint to a reunion in the United States with his father. As spring began, Craig Spring Camp and Retreat Center had survived another winter high up on Craig County's mountaintops.

Time was approaching for the 164th Regional Assembly at Lynchburg College in Lynchburg, Virginia, scheduled for May 26, 27, and 28. With "Welcome Jubilee: A Fresh Start" as the Assembly's theme, Second Vice-Moderator Bobby Perkins led the three-day convention. Emily Arthur, member of the Regional Committee, and Annette Perkins, chair of the Credentials Committee, both from the Blacksburg congregation, and the church's 19th minister, The Reverend Warren Brubaker (1970-1973) were three of many who assisted Bobby in making the first assembly in the new century a great success. The general minister and president of the Christian Church in the United States and Canada, Dr. Richard L. Hamm, and senior minister of the National City Christian (DOC) in Washington, DC, Dr. Alvin O. Jackson, were the keynote speakers. Also, presentations by the moderator, Buddy Westbrook and Regional Minister, Lee Parker, plus Professor Dr. Rev. Joseph Jeter, Jr., of Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University and the Lynchburg College music/drama production of "Lazarus" made the assembly the best yet! Each of the two sessions plus worship services of the assembly, all began with a "Call to Jubilee—the Blowing of the Shophar." Shophar or Shofer, a ram's horn, was the instrument that sounded in biblical times to announce certain religious celebrations. Often times, the word Shophar was translated as trumpet. This assembly was attended by Bobby and Annette Perkins, Emily Arthur, Jeff McCoy, Shannon Loughridge and Johnny Loughridge, all of Blacksburg Christian Church. Richard Learner from the Jewish synagogue in Lynchburg, Virginia, furnished and blew the ram's horn for all occasions except the worship services.

With summer approaching, the church was busily preparing for expected high temperatures. Four new air conditioners were installed at different intervals as they were purchased—two in the nursery's two rooms, one for the pastor's study, and one in the secretary's office. With the use of memorial funds (not the Organ Fund) by the board's approval, a new public address system was purchased and installed in the sanctuary. In order to keep up with modern technology, the church required that a second telephone line (540-552-1873) be installed. The new line would be dedicated to the church's

internet connection. With this new phone line in place, David Richard built the foundation for a new web site for the congregation—www.bev.net/bcc. As the warm summer continued, the board found itself with five resignations from positions on the church board. At the regularly scheduled board meeting in July, the five positions were filled. During this meeting, the Chair, Gary McCoy, read a letter from Steven Critchfield stating that as an ongoing tribute to his grandmother, Esther Critchfield, Steve would like to offer \$1000 a year to underwrite two scholarships of \$500 each for higher education purposes for members of the congregation. The scholarship was to be used in the following ways: trade school, business school, undergraduate school, graduate school or seminary. The Esther Critchfield Educational Fund would send a check each year in the amount of \$1,250 for two scholarships with the remaining \$250 to be used by the church. The money for the church was to be used at the board's discretion. The terms of the scholarship funding would be for four years, after which the Critchfields and the church board would jointly review the program. The recipients for the year 2000 were Zach and Jena McCoy. The scholarship would be awarded in September of each year. (At the November 12, 2000, board meeting, under "New Business," the board established that the Esther Critchfield Education Fund monies of \$250 be used for the purchase of round tables for the Fellowship Hall.)

On Sunday, July 23, 2000, the old communion set was used during the worship service for the first time in twenty-five years. For nearly six months, the congregation had been searching for the old stainless steel set without any success. Gary McCoy found the set, which had been stored downstairs in the Fellowship Hall storage room. The communion set was also used on the last Sunday of July. (About the same time that this set was found, a Concord jetliner crashed near Paris, France, killing 113 passengers. This was the Concord's first ever crash. The French-owned airline was grounded indefinitely.)

At the close of the summer of 2000, the church held its regularly scheduled board meeting and a special committee was formed under the leadership of the Christian Education committee. This special group was organized to control the childcare in the nursery. Approximately at the same time that the committee began its functions, two "Welcome Back Students" banners appeared. These banners were displayed in two

separate locations on the church property, one along Tom's Creek Road and the other along the Watson Avenue parking lot. Each was displayed for four weeks. The banner along Tom's Creek Road was stolen from the church property, never to be seen again. With the arrival of new and returning students at Virginia Tech, it was time for the church's annual "Back to Sunday School" Sunday breakfast that would kick off the new Sunday School year. The regulars returned (so to speak) to where they had never left; it was simply the start of another church school/school year.

As the summer ended and the Sunday School classes began with the new curricula for the fall, the two classes that started last year decided to become one. Jeff McCoy and Johnny Loughridge would co-teach a class for all ages. Once everything quieted down and everything was back to normal, the board appointed another committee. The Centennial Committee was formed to plan for the Year 2003—the 100th anniversary to be celebrated on April 12, 2003, during Palm Sunday weekend.

Also in September, the CWF announced that they had realized \$1,102 from their recent rummage sale. Simultaneously with the rummage sale, the CWF placed a new jungle gym set in the Fellowship Hall for children to play on while the adults finished their meals. In addition, a small de-humidifier was placed in the Fellowship Hall. Not to be out-done, the Missions and Benevolence Committee sent 121 "Heart Kits" to New Windsor, Maryland, for distribution. These kits consisted of clothing, sewing and educational items for the refugees in Kosovo. During the final three months of 2000, the walls of the Fellowship Hall were enhanced with wooden chair railing and new wainscot paneling.

In November of 2000, the United States participated in the last presidential elections of the century. In December, the Supreme Court sealed George Bush's victory by a 5 to 4 vote. During November, the church was notified by Greg Campbell, the church's attorney, that the church childcare center's records must be kept for each child until that child has reached his or her twenty-first birthday. Personnel records may be disposed of ten years after the closing of the child care center. The Blacksburg Christian Church Child Care Center closed at the end of September 1989. More than likely, nothing will be discarded for another ten years in the year 2010. In September of that year, every child will have reached age 21.

Sunday, November 12, 2000, was a very special day. The congregation honored “Minister from the Pews.” One former member of the congregation stood out! One person who had truly stepped from the pews and served us all was The Reverend Joseph Hardy. On this day, the Congregation dedicated November 12, 2000, as “Joe Hardy Day” in honor of him and his ministries in southwestern Virginia. On this day, we not only honored Joseph Hardy, but we welcomed Bobby and Linda Hardy, Bill and Celeste Hardy, and Tommy and Gloria Moore. Several District II churches were represented as well—Centennial Christian Church, McCoy, Virginia, John and Judy Scott; Radford Christian Church, Radford, Virginia, Bernard Tilly; and Snowville Christian Church, Hiawassee, Virginia, Jack and Steel Gray Shanklin. Everyone was surprised when the church received a new handcrafted wooden communion set, made by Billy Hardy, Joe Hardy’s son. The set consisted of an 8 inches tall chalice with a cross, bottom plate and lid with a cross for the four communion cup trays, and four communion bread trays. All items were lovingly hand-made by Billy Hardy in honor of his father, Joseph Hardy. These pieces were used for the first time on that Sunday during communion. What a wonderful gift to the church and what a special way to honor the Reverend Joseph Hardy!

In late December 2000, wisely the church voted to demolish the playground, located behind the Watson Avenue parking lot. This playground was demolished after twenty-nine years of use. The playground equipment was primarily built for the childcare center’s older children. The children of the church family also enjoyed playing there for many years. The old equipment was becoming unmanageable and very dangerous. Church members feared that it would have been only a short period of time before someone from the church or the neighborhood would have been seriously injured, so the wooden equipment met its demise.

As the 2000 Advent season began, the congregation welcomed the thirty-one-page Advent Devotional booklet that was written entirely by members of Blacksburg Christian Church. Copies of these wonderful devotionals, as offerings of faith and written to the glory of God, were available in the narthex every Sunday of Advent for all families of the congregation and visitors. The ten authors were: Johnny Loughridge; Jane Carr (2), Phyllis Blevins (3); Rich Oderwald (5), Gwen Evans (1), Jeff McCoy (6), Gary McCoy (2), R. D. and Mary McCoy (2), Terry Arthur (2) and six were anonymous. (The

numbers beside the names above were the number of devotionals that each person wrote.) Thanks be to God for these writers. We were blessed. Let the reader say, Amen! And so the 20th Century comes to an end! What a year!

As the year 2001 began, the church's sanctuary and baptistery was used for a baptismal service and the new twenty-first century and the Third Millennium became a reality. Even though the service was that of another church in Blacksburg, Blacksburg Christian Church was grateful that the church was here to have been of service. The Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church minister, The Reverend Gordon Wooland baptized two persons. Johnny Loughridge had scheduled the event but could not be present for the service. Bobby Perkins gladly represented the church.

In the interest of all Christian Churches (DOC) in the United States and Canada, the Christian Board of Publication announced a strategic alliance with Cokesbury of the United Methodist Publishing House in Nashville, Tennessee. Beginning in February, Cokesbury worked in partnership with CBP to provide retail sales services for the Christian Churches. CBP will continue sales of the Chalice Hymnals, Sunday School curriculum and program resources, such as Christian Women's Fellowship materials.

At the January board meeting of the Blacksburg Church, Johnny Loughridge informed the board that the one-year funding of the church secretarial position would come to an end. As you may recall, beginning in April of 2000, for a period of twelve months, the secretarial position would be funded by the church's investment funds. By Board action, after lengthy discussions about the shortfall in the church's budget, the church secretarial position would be terminated, effective March 30, 2001. Perhaps it should be noted, that in the same period, the Christian Education Committee received only ten responses from the Sunday School survey as to why the early morning church school attendance was declining. However, as you no doubt realize, the Sunday School's six classes prevailed even through the attendance was at an all time low.

As agreed to in January, Johnny Loughridge would have to pick up more of the slack now that the church was without a secretary. It was also agreed that The Reverend Loughridge would continue the duties of secretary if there was some assistance from members of the church who would be available during normal working hours. This arrangement worked for a few months, but eventually Johnny was doing 90 percent of the

work. Therefore, the Board had to revisit the secretarial position or the lack of funding for the position. The Stewardship Committee asked the Board to appropriate to pay Johnny the funds. This meant that Johnny Loughridge would again be the minister and secretary. Although this is not the most desirable way to operate a church, the small congregation of 120 active members could find no other solution.

(In February, when the church realized that The Reverend Loughridge should be paid for his extra work even though the hours did not increase, FBI agent Robert Hanssen was charged with spying for Russia for fifteen years and the U. S. submarine, Greenville, sank a Japanese fishing board, killing nine people.) On a happier note, Johnny announced in mid-June that he had gotten married on June 15, 2001, in Blacksburg. He married the minister of the Boones Mill Christian Church. Coretha Morra. The couple began looking for a suitable house in Salem, Virginia, as the Salem area was approximately equal distance from both Blacksburg and Boones Mill. A celebration was held in Salem, Virginia, on Sunday afternoon, September 2, 2001. They announced that they had made a down payment on a house in a section of northern Roanoke County, north of Interstate 81 in the Catawba area.

In July, the Church Board realized that in less than two years, the congregation would celebrate its 100th Anniversary and as a result selected Phyllis Blevins and Bobby Perkins as co-chairs of the Centennial Anniversary Committee. Also, during that same meeting, the Stewardship Committee presented their proposal for Johnny's extra duties as secretary. Johnny would be paid an extra \$400 a month, and this additional would be retroactive to July 1, 2001. The committee reported that the funds to pay Johnny would come from the over-subscription of pledges since April 1, 2001, the beginning of the church's fiscal year.

(During the summer, as most members of the congregation took vacations, the United States Congressional Budget Office, in response to the dwindling budget surplus, attributed this rapid change in the nation's fortunes to the slowing economy, and the President's tax cut.) Near the close of the summer, a new Sunday School class on "Disciples Heritage" began with a three-week session on the Cane Ridge Revivals Bicentennial (200th Anniversary). The class would then study the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) past, present and future. As the Sunday School class progressed, the

Coffee Fellowship moments normally held between Sunday School and worship was moved to a time immediately after worship in the courtyard. This change would be for only two Sundays: Sunday, August 26 and Sunday, September 2, 2001. It was appropriate for the Membership Committee to orchestrate this change that allowed the congregation to become better acquainted with new and returning Virginia Tech students. The August Sunday was the better of the two Sundays because that weekend was the move-in weekend for all students and their parents. September was also the month for awarding the Esther Critchfield Scholarships for Higher Education. The 2001 recipients were Mariah Zirk and Anneke Walters and were selected during the September 9, 2001, Church Board meeting. At the same time, the church received another \$250 from the Critchfield Fund.

Just two days after the September Board meeting, at approximately 9:20 a.m. on Tuesday, the United States of America was devastated by four terrorist attacks, all within a very short period of time. Hijackers, three to four in each jetliner, flew airplanes into the Twin Towers of New York City's World Trade Center and into the Pentagon in Washington, DC. The fourth hijacked jetliner crashed harmlessly, but not without casualties, in a field eighty miles outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, as a result of heroic actions taken by the plane's passengers. The toll of the dead and injured was in the thousands. Within days of the attacks, Islamic militant, Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda terrorist network, were identified as the parties behind the attacks.

A community prayer group organized prior to 9/11 held its Tuesday night prayer session (an interfaith group) at the Blacksburg Library. The Reverend Johnny Loughridge was one of the organizers, working outside of the church, of this bi-monthly interfaith prayer group. On Wednesday, September 12th, one day after so many persons had lost their lives, a prayer vigil for Blacksburg and Virginia Tech as held on the Virginia Tech Drill Field.

Also prior to the disaster of September 11th, at the September 9th Board meeting, Johnny Loughridge announced that there would not be a specific Thanksgiving worship service this year. However, he was planning a community worship service on Martin Luther King Day, January 21, 2002. He also announced that he would soon start

commuting from points east, North Roanoke County, to work each day except Thursdays and Saturdays, his days off from work.

In early October, less than one month after 9/11, US and British forces launched a bombing campaign on the Taliban government and the al-Qaeda terrorist camps in Afghanistan in response to September 11, 2001. The bombing continued for many months. Approximately two months into the new Sunday School year (the year starts on the first or second Sunday of September each year), the young couples in the church formed a new Sunday School class. With the start of this new class, Sunday School attendance was up greatly. For the four or five weeks that the class met, attendance fluctuated between the low twenties and high thirties.

During the month of October, America faced another scare. This time it was the anthrax scare that riveted the nation, as anthrax-laced letters were sent to various media and government officials. Several postal workers died after handling the letters. While its interest was firmly on America's continuous fight against terrorism, the Church Board conducted its November meeting. During the Board meeting, the McCoy family informed the members present of their intention to purchase the American and Christian flags with stands to be displayed in a prominent location in the sanctuary. Also, the Christian Education Committee proposed a nursery policy change.

The Board also agreed that the \$250 annual gift to the church from the Esther Critchfield Scholarship Fund should be used to purchase larger round tables for the Fellowship Hall. The old rectangular tables were in a state of disrepair. The goal was to have enough six-foot round tables, ten persons at each table, to seat all who might attend the 2003 Centennial Celebration.

While the Blacksburg Christian Church's attention for the immediate future was on the appalling local weather forecast, 2002 made its debut. On Sunday, January 6th and 20th, the church's Sunday School and worship services were cancelled due to heavy snowstorms. On Sunday, January 20th, Coretha Loughridge was scheduled to preach in Blacksburg and Johnny in Boones Mill. However, they would have two more Sundays in which they could exchange pulpits: Sunday, March 17th and May 28th. Nationally, the weather in Texas had nothing to do with Kenneth L. Lay's resignation as CEO of the bankrupt energy giant ENRON. ENRON was under general investigation for hiding debt

and misrepresenting earnings in the past. On Monday, January 21st, one day after The Reverend Coretha Loughridge was scheduled to preach at Blacksburg Christian Church, the Blacksburg Minister's Association sponsored a Service of Remembrance and Celebration in honor of Dr. Mart Luther King, that Johnny had reminded the church of the previous fall.

As the United States and Afghan troops launched Operation Anaconda against the remaining al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters in Afghanistan in March 2002, the church at its March Board meeting agreed again that the \$250 to the church from the Esther Critchfield Scholarship monies should be used to purchase larger round tables for the Fellowship Hall. On Sunday, April 14, 2002, the Blacksburg Christian Church celebrated its 99th anniversary with an old-fashioned fish fry. The fish were provided by the three fishermen, better known as Blackie Blevins, Bill Burdock, and Sean Arthur. These men cooked, yes cooked the fish outdoors, of course, and furnished coleslaw and fried hushpuppies from their own recipe. It was suggested that everyone bring whatever goes with fish and the non-fish eaters bring another kind of meat to share. What a wonderful time was had by all! Now the fish fry has become an annual event.

While the church's interest seemed to be on eating, two Board members resigned during the May Board meeting—one officer of the Board and a Standing Committee chair. The positions were filled shortly thereafter. At the same meeting, the Board agreed that the \$250 from the Esther Critchfield Scholarship monies be used to purchase larger round tables for the Fellowship Hall. In the fall, two more recipients would be chosen to receive \$500 each. (For the church record, the July Board meeting scheduled for July 14, 2002, would never take place. The meeting was cancelled because summer vacations throughout July and August would not allow for enough members present to have a quorum.

On Sunday, June 9th, the Reverend Loughridge concluded the morning worship service with everyone in attendance being invited to come forth during the invitational hymn to receive a baptism stone. Each person came forward to the communion table and selected a stone from a container. These stones were to be carried with love everyday to remind one of his/her baptism and commitment to Christ. These small, smooth surfaced stones were made available several Sundays afterwards. Then on Sunday, August 25,

2002, the congregation would be invited to bring a stone (different from the baptism stone) from one's special place or time of one's life. These stones will be placed in a large owl and remain in the glass bowl throughout the year 2002. Once filled with stones, water will be added and the "Foundation of Faith" will be displayed in the sanctuary for the remaining Sundays.

Between the time that members of the church picked up their baptism stone and the time each member participated with their special stone in the Fountain of Faith, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania witnessed a coalmine disaster. As miners drilled and blasted walls of coal, one wall was a retaining wall holding back large amounts of underground water. The blasts caused the flooding of all tunnels except for a chamber above the water level at the end of one tunnel. The miners were trapped for 77 hours, nearly 3 ½ days, in total darkness before being brought to the surface through a freshly dug emergency shaft. The miners were rescued on July 28, 2002.

Two months later, on September 15, 2002, the church held its fifth Board meeting of the year. (Meetings are bi-monthly). During the meeting, the usual committee and special reports were presented, received or referred to old or new business. The Property Committee declared a church-wide workday for Saturday, October 5th. The Elders' report was referred to new business. Under new business, John Critchfield drew the recipients' names from those who had submitted letters of request for the Esther Critchfield Scholarship. Mariah Zirk and Jena McCoy were chosen to receive \$500 each. The Nominating Committee of six persons was appointed by Board Chair, Gary McCoy. Next, the church had been approached from St. Mary's Catholic Church with a request to rent space in the church for their current middle school until their new parochial school is completed. Their request included 3 classrooms in the rear wing, restrooms and Fellowship Hall usage to serve lunch (which would be brought in). They wanted to rent the space for approximately 3-5 years. The motion was made that the Stewardship and property Chairs, along with the Chairman of the Board, to negotiate the rental structure. The motion passed.

The meeting continued. As agreed, the Elders' report was next. Johnny Loughride, Minister/Secretary of the Blacksburg Christian Church, resigned his positions after eleven years as full-time minister of the church. After Johnny read his resignation letter,

dated September 8, 2002, a motion was made and seconded that the minister's resignation be accepted with regrets and to pass it on to the congregation for approval on September 22. The motion carried. The Elder Chair that a financial package is provided as follows made another motion: salary, housing, pension, health insurance and annuity are paid through March 31, 2003, unless equivalent employment is found. The motion carried. The Elders also asked Johnny to continue to minister to Grew Evans until her death. The Elder Chair then stated that, Regional Minister Lee Parker said that it was possible that an interim minister could be in place by November 1st since Johnny Loughridge's last Sunday will be October 27, 2002. It was moved and seconded that Debi McCoy be employed as interim secretary, beginning November 1, 2002 to March 31, 2003, with renegotiation taking place in March of 2003. The motion carried. Thus ended the three-hour meeting.

(The Reverend Loughridge and the church continued their ministry in the small quiet college town in the New River Valley, while further north in Northern Virginia, Southern Maryland and the District of Columbia, snipers preyed upon the population wounding two and killing several persons between October 2nd and October 24th. John Allen Muhammed and John Lee Malvo were later arrested in Western Maryland). On Sunday, November 3, 2002, Clayton Tinnell came to the Blacksburg Christian Church as Interim Minister and Debi McCoy began her duties as Interim Secretary. The church was fortunate and grateful to have them answer the call to continue the work of the Lord at this time of need in the life of the congregation. Praise God!

Prior to President Bush's signing of legislation, which created the cabinet-level Department of Homeland Security on November 25, 2002, the church held its final Board meeting of the year on Sunday, November 10th. Church records stated that as the church completed its ninety-ninth year in Blacksburg, the Congregation's final membership figures are: 117 active members and 112 inactive members, which is 229 total members. Especially significant was the announcement that a new Bible study group was to begin meeting during Lent in 2003 using the book, THE JESUS CONNECTION, by the Reverend Jan G. Linn. Jan Linn was a former chaplain at Lynchburg College in Lynchburg, Virginia, and past professor at Lexington Theological Seminary in Lexington, Kentucky. The church ordered 25 copies of the book, and the group met for

the first time on March 9, 2003, with thirteen persons at the first session. In the November Board meeting, it was also announced that the Esther Critchfield Scholarship would continue in 2003 for its fourth year. Also the Board Chair appointed a seven-member Pulpit Search Committee to begin meeting with the Regional Minister, Lee Parker, to begin the task of calling a new minister for the church. The committee consisted of Jeff McCoy, Chair, Steve Butler, Annette Perkins, Tine McPherson, John Critchfield, Bobby Perkins and Debi McCoy with Board Chair, Phyllis Blevins as an ex-officio member. As the November 10th meeting closed, The Reverend Tinnell stated that as long as he serves as Interim Minister, he prefers that his paycheck be given back to the church to be placed in a special fund for special needs of the church.

As the year 2002 ended the church family felt blessed as we entered the Advent season. The church and the Centennial Committee realized that time was getting closer to the celebration of our 100th Anniversary on April 12th (just six days before Lynchburg College officially becomes 100 years old on April 18, 2003). Last year, Lynchburg College planned a sixteen (16) month celebration beginning during Homecoming Weekend, October 4-5, 2002. However, Lynchburg College will celebrate their Centennial and Convocation on Saturday, April 12, 2003, the very same weekend that the Blacksburg Christian Church will celebrate our Centennial Anniversary. Usually things happen or come in threes. Three it will be—for in 2003, the United States and the world will celebrate another 100th Anniversary. Of course, it will not take place until December 2003. That's right; it's the 100th Anniversary of the "First Flight" by two brothers, Orville and Wilbur Wright at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina on December 17, 1903. So the three are: the Blacksburg Christian Church's celebration, Lynchburg College's celebration and the world's celebration of the Wright brothers launching of aviation, the first flight by man. 1903 was certainly a great and wonderful year, a year of many special beginnings. With excitement, everyone is ready, let's celebrate and be thankful for all our many blessings and those who have brought us to this year, 2003.

From our earliest days, we, as Disciples, have tried to state in writing our covenantal relationship with God and one another. A task group of the Commission on Brotherhood Restructure discovered this in the decade of the sixties. It found and studied a variety of

covenantal statements. This task group's file included statements of purpose of Disciples organization, constitutions of congregations, and other documents expressing corporate obligations. Aided by that task group's research and recommendations, the restructure commission wrote the opening paragraph of the church's "Provisional Design" as a declaration of our covenant in Christ:

As members of the Christian Church, we confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Loving God, and proclaim him Lord and Saviour of the world. In his name and by His grace, we accept our mission of witness and service to mankind. We rejoice in God our Father, maker of heaven and earth, and in covenant of love by which He has bound us to Himself. Through baptism into Christ we enter into newness of life and are made one with the whole people of God. In the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit, we are joined to one another in brotherhood and in obedience to Christ. At the tale of the Lord we celebrate with thanksgiving his saving acts and his presence. Within the universal church we receive the gift of ministry and the light of scripture. In the bonds of Christian faith we yield ourselves to God, that we may serve him whose kingdom has no end. Blessing, glory and honor be to him forever. AMEN. *

Since the Provisional Design's adoption in 1968, some congregations have incorporated this declaration in their constitutions. Others have used it as a model or point of departure for drafting their own statements. The Constitution of the Blacksburg Christian Church affirms the design state. Article 11 of the Constitution outlines our purpose for existence. The purpose of this congregation is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in faithful response to God's will and purpose as revealed through Jesus Christ and in the world; to see in all persons a faith and commitment to Jesus Christ; to serve the community of which it is apart; to bring the Gospel message to bear upon society; to sustain and be sustained by the General and Regional manifestations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); to work cooperatively with Christians in other communions; to seek the oneness of the Body of Christ; and in all ways to seek to make know the Love of God.

As we celebrate 100 years of existence and enter the eleventh decade of our being, may God's will and purpose for our lives be truly fulfilled.

*From the book, WE CALL OURSELVES DISCIPLES, Kenneth L. Teagarden.