

Historical Sketch  
First Christian Church  
(Disciples of Christ)  
Radford, Virginia

On January 5, 1890, the church now known as the First Christian Church of Radford, Virginia, was organized under the leadership of W. J. Coche, who had been sent by the Virginia State Board in January, 1889. The church, with about thirty charter members, began holding services in the old Mayor's Office. The first building, one of the finest in the city, was erected at a cost of \$4,500 on a lot donated by William James Shelburne. At the dedication service on May 17, 1891, an estimated crowd of 1,500 people came to share in the program.

This fine structure at the corner of Fairfax and Second Avenue served the congregation for many years. However, the need again arose for more and better facilities. The Marion property at the corner of Tyler Avenue and Clement Street was purchased for \$10,200 in 1925 as a future building site.

Rev. P. P. Hasselvander was called in 1935 to the church for his third ministry to this congregation. Under his able leadership the new church was built at a cost of \$20,000. The congregation moved in on January 30, 1938, and the building was dedicated to the Lord on May 15, 1938, almost 47 years to the day after the dedication of the first structure.

Seventenn years later (1955), the church again felt the need to build. With the help of the Board o Church Extension of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), sketches of a proposed building were presented to the congregation. The proposed structure would cost about \$90,000. In 1963 an earnest campaign began to realize the present structure. Finally, on November 20, 1966, the first service of worship was held in the new sanctuary. It was appropriate to the history and character of the First Christian Church that the second service was the annual Community Thanksgiving Program. Two hundred sixty-five people attended the November 20 service, and three hundred twenty-five people attended the November 23 Thanksgiving service.

The existing structure was remodeled and the old sanctuary became the social hall. The new structure included educational space and a sanctuary with a seating capacity of 350, almost double that of the old building. The final figures for the project ran to \$185,000.

For one hundred twenty-one years this congregation has been faced with many responsibilities. Under able leadership by both ministers and lay people these tasks were met with faith, hard work, and victory. Over the years a vigorous missionary program has been promoted, and a large portion of each year's budget has always gone to missions. It is significant to note that even during the building programs, missions, rather than being cut, was actually raised. There

has also been a keen sense of the need to witness here on the campus of Radford College. Radford College students and personnel have always found a warm new “home” here. Many of our people have gone forth to witness through varied professions, but the influence of the church on our people is best seen in the fact that ten members entered the Christian ministry (Daniel D. Gilbert, A. W. Jones, Eldridge Ambrose Stump, Clifton C. McCoy, A. C. Meadows, Jr., Trigg Linkous. C. Eugene Akers, Elaine Wilson Austin, Lisa Wilson Davison, and Russell Boyd), and one member, Jonathan Webster, transferred his ministerial standing from the Baptist Church into the Christian Church).