A Short History of the Woodstock Presbyterian Church

The earliest Presbyterian services were conducted in Woodstock in the fall of 1793 by the Rev. Mr. Nash Legrand who held services both in Woodstock and Powell's Fort Valley. However continuous services were not held here until 1822 when the Rev. Mr. William Henry Foote began to teach in the Woodstock Academy and organized a church in the county. On May 15, 1824 the Union Church of Shenandoah was organized with 15 members at Strasburg and 16 at Woodstock. In 1826 the church divided and became the Presbyterian Church at Woodstock and the Presbyterian Church at Strasburg.

In 1817 the Woodstock Academy was incorporated by the General Assembly of Virginia. There were 12 trustees, six Presbyterian and six German Reformed. A building was erected on the lot where the Sydney P. Laughlin Chapel was later erected. The German Reformed and Presbyterian ministers were the teachers at the Academy. It is unknown who preceded Mr. Foote, but the services conducted by him were held in the Academy building in 1822.

In 1834 the Woodstock congregation acquired the lower half of the Academy lot and in 1835 built its first church, a brick building which caught fire and burned in October 1864. It was rebuilt on the same site in 1867 and as far as possible with the same brick. This is the same sanctuary we worship in today. Many of the timbers in the building are hand hewn. In 1893 the church was remodeled, putting in a metal ceiling and the stained glass windows. The windows had been much wider and square at the top instead of arched.

In 1880 the congregation acquired the Academy building and the remainder of its lot. In 1884 the Academy building was converted into a Sunday School and lecture room with sexton's house attached. In 1902 the Session accepted the generous offer of George, William and Samuel Laughlin to build the Sydney P. Laughlin Memorial Chapel in memory of their mother, and authorized its erection on the church lot. The Academy building was torn down and rebuilt on a lot behind the church on Church Street and was used as a sexton's house until the fall of 1959. The Memorial Chapel was used as a Sunday School until pressing needs made it necessary to build the wing which connects the sanctuary and Chapel in 1952. One class and a nursery were still held in the Chapel.

Early in 1960 the officers of the church recognized that the ten class rooms added in 1952 had been outgrown. Upon their recommendation the congregation voted to acquire a strip of land about 32 feet wide running the entire length of the church lot in exchange for the sexton's house and lot. The congregation also approved employment of an architect and later decided to remodel the Laughlin Chapel into an education building upon the architect's recommendation.

The building was subsequently remodeled from a one-story chapel into a two-story educational building with ten rooms. The largest room served as a parlor and general meeting room. One room is used as the pastor's study and another for the church and Sunday School office. The building was used for the purposes for which it was designed for the first time on October 28, 1962.

The exterior of the remodeled chapel was changed from the Gothic style of architecture to blend with the exterior of the sanctuary which is of colonial design. Many of the old colonial churches built in the period of this sanctuary had plastered additions on them. The remodeling was an effort to provide needed space for Christian education and restore the church to what it might have looked like had it all been built in 1835.

In 1965 a worship committee was appointed by the Session to look carefully at the interior of the sanctuary to be certain it was in conformance with Presbyterian beliefs, and that it was adequate in terms of space to meet the projected