

Churches in the Shenandoah Valley

Dry Run Christian Church

8398 Fort Valley Rd

Fort Valley, VA 22652



A brief History

Dry Run Christian Church's beginnings go back at least to 1841, when a small Christian congregation began meeting in the new brick Union Church at Dry Run. In 1830, landowners Daniel and Mary Munch had deeded a plot of land along Dry Run (a tributary of Passage Creek) on which to build a school and church, specifying that the latter was to be "Free for all Christian Denominations." Through the next decades, Fort Valley Christians met either at the brick church or in one another's homes.

In 1879, the 18 members of the little congregation followed Elder William A. Dofflemeyer

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in pledging their allegiance to the American Christian Church and in signing the Covenant of Christian Belief. The main tenets in that Covenant remain those of the successor denominations (Disciples of Christ and United Church of Christ) today. These are: (1) because Christ is the head of the Church, no human authorities can dictate to believers about how to use the Bible; (2) each believer is free to make his own judgments about scriptural interpretation; (3) the only test of a true Christian is "his or her character and vital piety."

Between 1879 and 1921, the congregation continued to meet in the Union Church. Because preachers always came in from outside of the Fort, distance and uncertain weather conditions frequently deprived members of "preaching services." Nonetheless, they met regularly and kept careful minutes throughout the years. In 1899, the congregation split into two parts, with some congregants forming a new Disciples of Christ church, and the rest remaining members of Dry Run Christian Church. Both continued to meet in the Old Brick church, as it had come to be called. By 1908, the dissidents returned and the breach began to heal.

After World War I, members dreamed of erecting their own church building nearby. The new Dry Run Christian Church building was dedicated in October 1921, and the congregation prospered. In 1957, members voted to follow the national Congregational Christian Churches in joining with the Evangelical and Reformed Churches to form the United Church of Christ (U.C.C.). Dry Run remained a part of the U.C.C. until the 1990s, when, under the leadership of the Rev. Alfred Lawrence, it withdrew from the national church and became the independent Dry Run Christian Church. A recent Homecoming bulletin provides the following description: "Dry Run is a small country church, and visitors are always likely to feel at home here, as we gather to worship between the majestic Massanutten ridges, surrounded by God's Glory in Nature."

Written by Meg Trott, March 2012

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