

## The Building

The congregation first met in the meeting house and Court House on the town square. It was able to buy a lot from John Crow and move into its own meeting house on Main Street near the current sanctuary in 1789. In 1812, the congregation moved to the “Brick Meeting House,” which was built on the west side of the original wooden structure. The “New Meeting House” was completed in 1831 to accommodate the church’s growing membership. It was designed and built by Robert Russel and Robert Russel, Jr., who were both Elders in the church and were responsible for several of Danville’s early brick buildings, including Old Centre and Trinity Episcopal Church.

The Brick Meeting House was used for lectures and debates during the 1830s. Then it was turned over to the Black members of the congregation for their prayer meetings. They were allowed to use the building for regular worship services after the congregation divided in 1853. After the Black Presbyterians elected to go with the northern church, the Deacons at First Church ordered the building to be torn down. Salvageable materials were taken to the corner of Walnut and Church streets and used in the construction of the new Concord Presbyterian Church.

The New Meeting House now serves as the church sanctuary, and it has gone through several renovations. In 1853, a vestibule, a main front door, and a bell tower were added. In 1880, the boxed pews were replaced with open ones, and arched windows and a crenulated roof line added Gothic features to the building’s exterior. In 1949, the sanctuary’s interior was reversed, with the minister joining the choir on the Walnut Street side of the church. Additions to the original building included the Tarkington Memorial Chapel (1899) and the Caldwell Annex (1938) on the Fifth Street side of the church, and Rice Hall (1959).

After the reunification vote in 1969, First Presbyterian became the future home of the combined congregations. The two churches worshipped together at Second church while repairs and renovations were going on at Old First. The sanctuary’s ceiling was removed to expose the roof beams, and a new balcony was built on the Main Street side for the choir and the organ. The Tarkington Chapel was removed because of extensive termite damage, and a new Fifth Street entrance was added that included the John C. Young Memorial Window from Second Presbyterian. The pews in the sanctuary were replaced with pews from Second church, and stained-glass windows from the Second Presbyterian library were used in the new chapel. The work was not completed until 1973. In 1995, the church began another renovation project, and in 1996 moved into a beautifully restored sanctuary and expanded facility that included a new Fellowship Hall and a modern kitchen.