



**Congregational Profile of
The Episcopal Church on Edisto
Edisto Island, South Carolina**

**Inspired by our heritage, we endeavor to
share God's love unconditionally with all**



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Introduction: Welcome to The Episcopal Church on Edisto

Welcome to The Episcopal Church on Edisto. We are a vibrant Christian community that honors our Episcopal heritage. We rejoice in welcoming all people. Together we exist to love and serve both God and our neighbor, inviting all to share in the joy of God's unconditional love.

History

Established in 1774, our congregation has been affiliated with the Episcopal Church since its founding. For more than 235 years, we worshipped at Trinity Episcopal Church until 2012 when Trinity's vestry voted to leave the Episcopal Church. The Episcopal congregation, those members who felt called to continue as Episcopalians, left Trinity and began worshiping in the living rooms of various families. We were fortunate to have residents like the Rev. John Fisher and the Rev. Bert Hatch come out of retirement to serve as our priests.



As our numbers grew, we needed to find a larger space to worship. Everywhere we turned, we were met with great kindness from those in the community. We became known in the Diocese as the "BBQ Worshiping Community" because of a local businessman named "Bo Bo" allowed us to worship in his BBQ restaurant on Sunday mornings. In 2013, we were again blessed when the New First Baptist Missionary Church allowed us to sign a lease to use their historic sanctuary. We continue to worship there while we await the outcomes of the litigation surrounding the schism.

We were blessed with wonderful members of the clergy that answered the call to be our priest-in-charge. Those clergy include the Rev. Colton Smith, the Rev. Paul Gilbert, the Rev. Fred Thompson and our current priest-in-charge, the Rev. Bob Blackwell. In mid-summer of 2013, we began preparing our application for union with the Convention of The Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina as a Mission Church. At the Diocesan Convention in February 2014, we were granted Mission status. We continue to grow and are now beginning the process to apply for full parish status in the Diocese of South Carolina.

Although our story is unusual, it has been a true blessing and positively affected the character of who we are. Our experience has shown us that it is not the building that matters but the relationships built and the expressions of true Christian love that we have received that makes the opportunity to worship together each week so special.

The history of where we worship - the historic sanctuary of the New First Missionary Baptist Church – also known as the Old First Baptist Church



In 1818, the Old First Baptist Church was constructed through the faith and generosity of Hephzibah Jenkins Townsend, wife of Daniel Townsend, the owner of Bleak Hall. Bella, an enslaved African, is credited with helping her raise the necessary funds by making baked goods in the tabby ovens on her property, then selling them in Charleston.

Many enslaved and free African Americans on the island became members and participated in the governance of the church. In 1845, the church reported 461 African American members, and Hephzibah and her daughters were among the few white members. When she died in 1847, Hephzibah was buried in the church's graveyard, where her grave can still be seen. A marker has been placed in front of the church that tells her story.

In the 1860s, the size of the building was doubled with a new front section added on brick piers. The old section, now the back half of the church, rests on a tabby foundation. In 1880, a portico and four columns were added. The original section is the oldest church building to survive on Edisto Island. Many descendants of the original members of the Old First Baptist Church continue to worship today in the newer church next door that was built in the 1970s.



Edisto Island

It is said that when you cross the McKinley Washington Bridge over the Intracoastal Waterway onto Edisto Island, your blood pressure lowers, and a sense of peace and tranquility comes over you. Most who come here treasure this barrier island as a little bit of paradise. It is rich in both history and natural beauty and continues to evoke a time lost on many of the other sea islands along the South Carolina and Georgia coasts.



Edisto has a rich cultural heritage. It was originally settled by a sub-tribe of the Cusabo Indians, the Edistow. Both Spanish and English settlements were established, but by the late 1600's only the English settlers and their African slaves remained and increased in population in the ensuing decades. In the 1700s, a plantation system was established and reached its pinnacle with the cultivation of long-fiber Sea Island Cotton from 1790 until the Civil War.

This cotton contributed substantially to the antebellum prosperity of Edisto and the Charleston area. Large numbers of slaves were required

for the cultivation of the cotton, and many of their descendants still live on the island. Several plantation homes built during that era still exist today.

The population of Edisto is currently 60% Caucasian and 39% African American. There are approximately 2,600 residents on the island and 409 year-round residents on the beach. 20% of the population lives below the federal poverty level. The beach residents are primarily retirees or second homeowners who rent their properties during the summer. During the summer, the population of the beach swells ten-fold.

Edisto has 17 churches, one grocery store, three gas stations, one hardware store, a historical museum and one elementary school (K-5). Numerous organizations and social groups exist. There is an Art Guild, the Women's Club, the Lions Club, the Yacht Club, and the Edisto Island Community Association as well as book clubs, golf and bridge groups. Among the organizations specifically helping those less fortunate are the Edisto Island Food Pantry, Edisto Outreach, and the Edisto Island Home Mission Team. In addition, there is a very active animal rescue group known as Animal Lovers of Edisto.



Since tourism is the main industry, there are numerous restaurants and gift shops. Vacation rentals are available from several real estate companies. There is also an RCI resort – Wyndham/Ocean Ridge – which has both time shares, private homes and condominiums.

Edisto has a 1,255-acre state park offering camping, cabin rentals and day recreational activities on both the beach, the marsh and in interior areas of the island. Botany Bay Wildlife Management Area, managed by the SC Department of Natural Resources, is an island treasure encompassing 4,500 acres. It has significant historic value and natural beauty and is open to the public with no admission fee.

Many organizations are dedicated to preserving the non-commercial, environmentally friendly atmosphere of Edisto. Among these is the Edisto Island Open Land Trust which has contributed to the preservation of more than 50% of the land on Edisto via conservation easements. Another organization dedicated to preserving Edisto Island's unique way of life is the Edisto Island Preservation Alliance.

Sources – The Edisto Island Chamber of Commerce and the Town of Edisto Beach Comprehensive Plan 2010

Congregation



Currently, there are more than 100 people associated with The Episcopal Church on Edisto in some capacity. Presently we have 71 members in good standing and 51 pledging units. Some who attend belong to other Episcopal churches in South Carolina and worship with us when they visit their second homes on Edisto. Some who attend are from other denominations.

Most who regularly attend live on the island, and give generously of their time, talent, and treasure. The majority range from 60-75 years in age and are retired. Most can be

classified as moderate in their theological leanings. Our congregation strives to be inclusive.

Like many other churches our attendance dropped over the past two years due to COVID. We were one of the first to pioneer the virtual service in March 2020, coming together as a group virtually using Facebook to watch the recorded service together. We are now back to in-person services, averaging 30-40 people each week. We expect those numbers to grow into the 60s as more feel comfortable returning to the pews. We still record the services for those who are unable to attend.

We are watching to see how COVID will affect the population on Edisto. Anecdotally, we have heard many families purchased homes with plans to work remotely. If this turns out to be true, then this could be a phenomenon that could help grow our church.

Outreach Ministries

Outreach is very important to the members of The Episcopal Church on Edisto. When building our budget, we designate 10% of our pledges to both outreach and to the Diocese.

Plate collections on “5th Sundays” are given to organizations selected by the outreach committee. We support the Edisto Island Food Pantry, the Edisto Island Home Mission Team, Allen AME Food Bank, Good Samaritan Free Clinic, Edisto Island Youth Recreation and the Episcopal Relief and Development Foundation.

During the Christmas season we work with the local elementary school to identify children whose families cannot afford presents. This past year we provided 8 households with Christmas presents and gift cards for food. We work at staying connected to our community and when we hear of a



need, we try to respond with labor, money, or both. We have partnered with the Edisto Island Youth Sports League in their effort to build a recreation facility on the Island where their sports teams can play. This is a long-term plan, but so important as it gives the kids from the Island a view of what is across the bridge. We regularly support the Edisto Island Food Pantry with a monthly financial contribution as well as donations of non-perishable food. This past year we placed a Blessing Box in the front of the church that offers a wide variety of food staples for families in need.

Our parishioners are active throughout Edisto Island, volunteering with the Food Pantry, the Edisto Island Home Mission Team, The Literacy Project, Jane Edwards Elementary School, and the numerous organizations that work to protect and preserve the ACE Basin (one of the largest undeveloped estuaries along the Atlantic Coast) and its inhabitants.

Other Ministries

Altar Guild – we have a small but dedicated group of volunteers who make sure the altar is prepared for Sunday service.

Flower Guild – we have extremely talented group of parishioners who make incredible arrangements for our altar. This includes poinsettias for Christmas and lilies for Easter.

Church Service participants – since we are a relatively small congregation, people don't have to look hard for something to do. Each Sunday people fill the roles of Lay Eucharistic Minister, Old and New Testament readers, ushers, offering counters, Front Porch Fellowship, and even a Verger!

Valiant Seekers – members meet on the third Tuesday to discuss a book they have read together. Recently the subjects have focused on social justice. Most recently, they have discussed, “White Fragility”, “Caste” and “Supreme Inequality”.

Music – we have some great musicians in our congregation. Our music director sometimes sings solos, while other Sundays feature our Brass Ensemble, 5–6-member Choir, and ECOE Strummers.

Dancing for Joy – is a fun time for those who want some exercise and do it to music!

Men's Bible Study – this group meets every Monday morning at 8AM for breakfast and to discuss the Gospel and give the priest some things to think about when creating his sermon.

Family Bible Study – Meets Wednesdays at 10AM to discuss a book of the Bible. Most recently they studied the book of Mark.

Hearts and Hands Ministry - cooks and distributes meals to congregants and others in the community who are ill or bereaved.

The Caregivers' Support Group – provides support through bi-weekly meetings to those who are caregivers for loved ones. This is open to all residents of Edisto.



Lay Leadership Team

Our Mission Council members are:

Senior Warden – Betsy Daise ‘19
Junior Warden – George Hayworth ‘19
Secretary – Olivia Padgett
Treasurer - Bob King
Member – Emilie Cox ‘20
Member – Karen Mock ‘20
Member – Jim Gettys ‘21
Member – Nancy Skardon ‘21

In accordance with our by-law’s members serve a term of three years.

Elizabeth Galaida is our Music Director.
Karen Mock is chair of the Outreach Committee.
Emilie Cox is chair of our Growth Committee
Nancy Skardon is chair of the Parish Life Committee.
George Heyworth is the chair of the Finance Committee.
Jim Gettys is chair of the Transition Committee.

The work of lay leaders from the Episcopal Church on Edisto extends beyond Edisto Island. Lay members from our congregation have been elected to Diocesan Standing Committee, Diocesan Council, and delegate to the national convention.

Financial Information

The Episcopal Church on Edisto has been self-supporting since its inception. When developing the 2013 Budget, we projected \$61,970 in revenues and \$33,845 in expenses with a surplus of \$28,125. We ended 2013 with \$77,221 in revenues and \$39,375 in operating expenses with a surplus of \$37,846. Our 2022 budget has grown to \$222,250.00 that includes provisions for the calling of a full time Rector. It is important to note that although our attendance fell during Covid, our members paid, and in many cases, increased their pledges.

Characteristics of a Rector

Our congregation places great value on our commitment to The Episcopal Church and to our worshipping together as Episcopalians. We also hold in high esteem our commitment to the community in which we live and the friendship and fellowship that we share with each other and all who come to worship with us.

Our Church invites our new Rector to work with us in the articulation of a vision for our Parish; participates with us in the accomplishment of the objectives that we value as a



worshipping community and help us discover and live into our mission as the Episcopal Church on Edisto.



For The Episcopal Church on Edisto to thrive and grow, we need someone who commits to preaching and developing deep relationships with each member of the church. We hope our new Rector will choose to reside on Edisto Island allowing for involvement in the daily lives of our parishioners, the administrative affairs of the church and the life of the Edisto community. Part of that time should be dedicated to becoming involved in the Edisto community through membership in the Edisto Island Ministerial Alliance and attendance at special occasions –

community as well as church events. Just as most of our congregants are actively involved in community affairs, we likewise think it important for our Rector to exhibit this interest in activities beyond the walls of our church.

The Episcopal Church on Edisto encompasses very caring and supportive members, especially to those in need, both within our congregation and out in the community. Our sense of fellowship and responsibility comes up in conversation over and over and is probably due in part to our mutual history over the past few years. Our visitors often comment that they have never been made to feel more welcome when they have visited a church than when they come to the Episcopal Church on Edisto. Our members often comment that the sense of fellowship we have is one of the most important things about our church. We realize that we are on a journey together and that we have truly stepped out in faith. We desire a Rector who understands this and is eager to walk with us on this exciting and challenging journey.

We seek a Rector who will join us in accepting our brothers and sisters from all walks of life, who shares our vision of outreach into the community and challenges us to look for new ways to share Christ's love with our neighbors, who preaches from the heart with sound theology, who appreciates our parish and island's rich history, and who will walk with us along the path of our journey of faith and discipleship.

