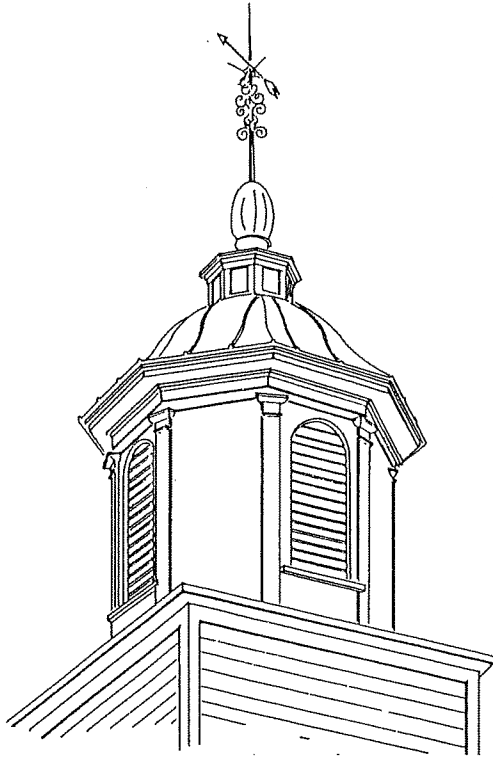


WELCOME TO
The Presbyterian Church on Edisto Island

FOUNDED 1685
CHURCH CONSTRUCTED 1830



The Mission Statement of The Presbyterian Church on Edisto Island:
In response to God's love and grace, through Jesus Christ, we commit to
learning, proclaiming, and living the love of God.

ASHLEY SANDERS, PASTOR
SHERI MELTON, MUSIC DIRECTOR
JACQUE LINDSAY, OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR

2164 Highway 174 PO Box 86 Edisto Island, SC 29438

Phone: 843.869.2326 www.pcedisto.org

Church Office Hours: Mon. - Thurs. 8:30 am - 3:00pm

Welcome to The Presbyterian Church on Edisto Island. This brochure includes a schedule of activities plus interesting information about our church and graveyard.

Our history is long. We believe the first congregation was meeting on the island as early as the 1680s. This current church was constructed in 1830 and renovated in 2002, reestablishing the original beauty and grace of the interior. We are proud of our church, but we are most excited about what we are doing.

Our congregation is active in missions, with a large food pantry serving approximately 80 island families. We support a Haitian girls orphanage we helped build. Our mission also includes Thornwell Home for Children, The Good Samaritan Clinic, our Preschool program with scholarships for those needing help, Hands of Christ, and opening our facilities to be used by mission teams to the island, and island churches that need a larger space for events/ services.

This is a church that believes in the power of prayer. That opportunity is open to the passerby through our Prayer Chapel. This quiet place is ideal to contemplate all the wonderful things we have been given and pray to God for help in dealing with our troubles and praise him for our blessings. Members pray for requests left on our board in the Chapel, both joys and sorrows. You are welcome to add your prayers there too.

Sundays are very special days for us and the Church. Breakfast is at 8:30AM in the Fellowship Hall, followed by Sunday School at 9AM with classes for all ages. All offer an opportunity to learn and grow in our faith. Worship services begin at 10AM. Numerous other events and activities like Presbyterian Women, and the Men of the Church are held throughout the month.

We welcome you to join us for any of our scheduled events to share in the joy of life in Christ.

Thank you for visiting.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Ed. By Walk Jones 1990

Updated by Jacque Lindsay 2020

The Presbyterian Church on Edisto Island is an exciting, vibrant congregation of Christians with a rich history and a profound hope for the future. The church lives in the present and hopes for the future, and it has an interesting story to tell.

Like the records of many colonial congregations those concerning the establishment of this church are lost in antiquity. The first permanent European settlement on Edisto took place about 1680. We know little about the religious life of the earliest settlers. The first record of a Presbyterian Church is 1704, however, there is a letter that refers to "Presbyterians meeting on Edisto" which is dated in 1689. An educated guess says that the church was founded around 1685.

The list of pastors who served this church reads like a "Who's Who" of South Carolina Presbyterians. The Rev. Archibald Stobo preached on the island between 1704 and 1728. In 1741, The Rev. John McLeod, a native of Scotland, was installed as our first pastor. Dr. Donald McLeod served immediately following the Revolutionary War until his death in 1821. A beautiful marble monument to Dr. McLeod's life and ministry is on the west side of the Sanctuary. His descendants continue to populate our pews today and often sit under this monument during services.

On March 7th, 1821, Dr. William States Lee came to Edisto Island and served as our pastor until 1872. The church survived these years of bounty and progress, war and chaos, reclamation and rebuilding thanks to the leadership of Dr. Lee. Looking at the beautiful Sanctuary, one notes the wealth made possible by Sea Island cotton and other crops before the War Between the States. The wealth was a result of the hard work of white and black residents of the island. Membership in the church was open to all these residents and the Session records clearly show a concern for the spiritual lives of its black slave members during this period. Dr. Lee's autobiography fondly mentions a cordial relationship between Episcopalians and Presbyterians in the community church on Eddingsville Beach. The monument to Dr. Lee is on the front left wall of the Sanctuary; his grave is thirty feet from the right side of the church. It is marker # III on the cemetery tour.

In 1861, the economy of the Sea Islands was shattered by the War Between the States. With the fall of Port Royal, white residents of Edisto evacuated on the orders of the Confederate government. Union troops

soon occupied Edisto and remained for many years. Black residents remained. Blacks who were members of the church came down out of the balcony, elected a Session and Pastor and continued the worship of God. During the war years, Lincoln freed the slaves, and missionaries from Northern states came to Edisto to teach reading, writing, and the Bible to the newly freed people. Three teachers from Massachusetts tragically drowned in the river on Christmas Day 1865 and are buried next to the Ministry Center.

Two years after the war's close, Dr. Lee and several white members obtained a writ from the occupying Federal government returning the Sanctuary and grounds to the white members. The black members went down the road and founded the Edisto Presbyterian Church. Dr. Lee wrote that it was a cordial and peaceful transfer; others remembered it as very tense. Today both congregations are members of Charleston-Atlantic Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The church continued its ministry in the 20th Century, through the Great Depression, and World Wars that called away many of Edisto's sons. A number of pastors served the church faithfully through these troubled times. During the fifties and sixties seminary students from Columbia Presbyterian Seminary in Atlanta often served the church as intern pastors. Several retired pastors and a hospital chaplain served us also.

The old island church now draws members from the new community of Edisto Beach, where the population has increased sharply. In 1974, The Rev. Herman Womeldorf and his wife Ruth retired to Edisto from Charleston and he served as pastor until 1980. The Rev. Stephen Keeler followed him in 1982. Under their combined leadership, the church doubled in size and built the Education and Fellowship Building and "The Omni", a gymnasium and classroom building. The Omni housed various community activities. The Rev. Charles F. Klotzberger was installed as pastor on January 21st, 1996. He retired in 2005.

In each century the church has had strong and able leadership from its lay men and women. For many years, the church was run jointly by the Session and the corporation of its members. The corporation held title to the property and controlled the finances of the church and the cemetery. In many ways, both publicly and privately, families and individuals have sustained this congregation through their prayers, gifts and leadership. In 1836, William Seabrook made possible the addition of the Doric columns and attached ceiling. In this century, Mr. J.G. Murray has been a leader of the local church and Presbytery. He was so admired and trusted by his colleagues in Charleston Presbytery that they elected him moderator twice! In 1982, Mrs. Sarah Hopkinson was the first woman elected to the office of Elder by this congregation.

The Presbyterian Women's organization has been known by a variety of names over its long history. In 1875, it was founded as the Ladies Aid Society. Members sewed garments which were sold to provide money for Thornwell Orphanage in Clinton, South Carolina. Mrs. E. Marion Seabrook Connor, twice President of the society and a leader of women throughout the Synod, wrote a fascinating history of the society in 1937. Today, the group meets for a Bible Study, fellowship and the support of mission work. The Presbyterian Women are by far the most active organization in our church.

In our historic cemetery the graves date from 1785. Before that time church members were buried on their plantations. The cemetery beside the church is reserved for church members; the one across the highway is available for any island resident. The small white building beside the church was a "Session House" for the Elders, or Session, to meet in. The date of its construction is unknown.

The Presbyterian Manse was built in 1838 with timbers from the church that had partially burned several years earlier. It is the third house to stand on that spot, approximately one mile from the Sanctuary. Each minister and his family has lived in the Manse. Before the Education Building was built, members held covered dish suppers in members' homes and at the Manse. On some cold winter mornings, worship was held at the Manse. In 1983, Laura Keeler, the daughter of Steve and Kay Keeler, was the first baby born to a Manse family in over one hundred years. There are poems and remembrances written by pastors and their families on the attic walls including a memorial to "Lady Bird -- Horse".

The service of the Lord's Supper at our church is unique among Presbyterian churches. Centuries ago all Presbyterians walked forward to stand or sit and receive the bread and wine. Today most Presbyterians remain seated as the Elders bring the elements to them. On Edisto, members and visitors walk forward and are seated at wooden tables made specifically for this sacrament. Originally, twelve people sat at each table, reminding us of the twelve disciples of Jesus.

In recent years three significant improvements have been completed. In 2002 a renovation of the sanctuary, included a careful rebuilding of the circular stairs leading up to the elevated pulpit that had been lowered during the tenure of Rev. William States Lee around 1870. The sanctuary now looks much the same as they did in 1830 when it was built.

In August of 2008 the historic Manse, originally built in 1838 was renovated and updated. A family room was added on the rear and the attic was finished to accommodate an additional bathroom and bedroom. Careful attention was paid to maintaining the integrity of the house and

it's fixtures. The Kitchen has been significantly expanded. An interesting feature of the renovation was that the inscriptions, described above, on the walls of the attic were preserved.

In November 2019, the renovation and reconfiguration of the Education and Fellowship Building into the Ministry Center was completed.

The rich history supporting the energy that abounds at this point in our life as a congregation bodes well for the future. Please join us for Sunday School at 9AM and worship at 10AM. There are many other activities each week in our buildings as we attempt to serve God and our community. God has done great things.

PRESBYTERIANS AND THE LONG TABLES

by The Rev. Robert Milton Winter

A unique experience of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

Because most Presbyterians in the American colonies came from Northern Ireland, it is important to understand the sacramental habits of Irish Presbyterians as background to the eucharistic practice of American Presbyterians. Presbyterians in Ireland early accepted as their sacramental standard the 1564 Book of Common Order, but as in the mother country they were somewhat casual in observing its rubrics. As in Scotland several parishes would unite for a communion and as in Scotland, "tents" were used for preaching to those who spilled out of the churches. The elements were carried in during the singing of a psalm following the sermon, at which time tokens were collected. Communicants gathered at tables set up before the pulpit and the minister gave the Table address, "fencing" it against the ill-prepared. Offerings were received for the poor. The elements were consecrated by the biblical words of institution and prayer.

The custom of receiving the elements seated around long tables was the norm among Irish Presbyterians until the mid-1800s. The 1841 Irish revisions of the Westminster directory speak of Communicants seated at the Table.

Life in Ireland was not ideal for the Scottish settlers. For religious and economic reasons many turned their hopes toward new settlements in America. The vast majority of Presbyterian immigration to America was by way of Northern Ireland, the so-called "Scots-Irish", and if, as some alleged, the Scots brought their shorter catechisms, they also brought their communion customs.

The earliest account of an American Presbyterian communion comes from Londonderry, New Hampshire in 1732. The Londonderry Church administered the sacrament twice yearly, in spring and fall, approximating the customs of Scotland and Ireland. Long tables were set up in the church. The communion season began with a fast the preceding Thursday and preparatory sermons on Friday and Saturday afternoons. As in the old country, the "sacramental seasons" were occasions for nurturing the faithful as well as instruments of evangelism. Not only white Americans, but also their slaves, were served at the long tables. As Scots-Irish moved west they maintained their distinctive communion customs.

In 1789 the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America completed its organization as a self-governing communion, adopting a revised directory for worship. Like the Westminster directory, the 1788 American directory gave permission for administration of the elements in pews, but the custom of receiving the sacrament seated around the Table remained the unchallenged practice of Presbyterians for years.

During the early national period the rural Presbyterian sacramental season continued almost as it was in the colonial period. Observances were usually held in spring and fall. Several congregations and their Pastors would unite for the occasions, which continued to inspire a large attendance. Appeal to the unconverted had always been a part of Presbyterian communion preaching, but in this era new stress was laid on this dimension of the sacrament. Efforts for the conversion of sinners rather than the strengthening of saints became paramount. The custom of the long tables was both defended and criticized on these grounds.

During the early 1800s revivals were almost always preceded by a sacramental meeting, but the character of these assemblies changed as the semi-annual sacramental season gave rise in many places to the revivalistic camp meeting. The camp meeting differed from the older sacramental season in that a much larger group of worshippers came to the camp meeting, so many that they could not be accommodated in the homes of their hosts and so camped near the assembly ground. Concern to convert the lost never absent from the older sacramental occasions, became pronounced, causing the shift more and more from sacrament to sermons which became more and more emotional in their appeal.

In time the Eucharist became a minor aspect, involving only a few. Camp meetings virtually disappeared in the 1840s. A few Presbyterians continued to hold camp meetings until the end of the Civil War, as at Bethesda Presbyterian Church, McConnells, South Carolina, where an encampment was held in 1864.

During the mid-19th century, as Americans became more affluent, Presbyterians sought to "improve" their services, making use of ornamental architecture and liturgical forms. Some developed new appreciation for their liturgical history in the examples of Calvin, Knox and the English Puritans. Greater use of these seemed one way of counteracting the emotionalism of revival preaching – a way of worship which seemed increasingly inappropriate to the manner of life most Presbyterians wished to pursue.

Also, Presbyterians were moved to a defensive posture by the inroads of the Episcopal Church. Possessing a liturgical tradition easily accommodated to the romanticism of the Victorian period, Episcopalians were believed to be attracting many from the Presbyterian fold. These losses caused both American and Scottish Presbyterians to become self-critical about their worship, including communion at long tables. Many wished for services with more richness, color, and dignity. Many in Scotland and in the United States admired the liturgical service of the Episcopal Church, while others found its Eucharist ceremony appealing, including distribution of the elements in the pews (the custom of kneeling at the altar rail had not yet become the Episcopal Church's invariable practice.) Presbyterians began to borrow usages from the Episcopal Church as well as from their own past for a richer and more dignified service.

It was at communion that Episcopal influences upon Presbyterian worship was most strongly felt. Presbyterians gradually gave up the long tables with benches in favor of a small table in front of the pulpit, from which the elements were carried to worshippers in their pews. The change in communion service did not cause as much debate among American Presbyterians as in Scotland. In America, Presbyterians began placing Holy Tables in front of the pulpit and taking the elements to Communicants in their pews as Episcopalians of this country had been accustomed to do.

The Episcopalians began to place their Holy Tables in chancels, separate from the pulpit and bid Communicants to come from their seats to receive the elements kneeling at the rail. It took a generation for both churches to adopt their "new" systems of administering the Lord's Supper. The result for Presbyterians was to give greater prominence to the Lord's Table for not only was the Sacrament administered more frequently, but the Holy Table itself now occupied a permanent place in the churches. Two American congregations have continued to use the long tables at communion: The Independent Presbyterian Church of Savannah, Georgia, and the Presbyterian Church on Edisto Island, South Carolina.

From earliest times the old manner of administering the Lord's Supper was a potentially powerful and equalizing force in the social relations of Presbyterians. Lairds and laborers, women and men, pastors and congregations,

black and white, sat with some equality as guests at the Savior's board. At communion, elders and ministers took the role of servants, women were served by men, and at these occasions, some women began to preach. Even when the egalitarian symbolism was not fully carried out, as when older members were seated first, or when black or Indian Communicants were seated last, the tables with the minister and Communicants seated around them, passing the elements from hand to hand, prefigured the heavenly feast, in which all would share as equals.

Today, the practice of receiving communion around long tables is worthy of interest and theological reflection. Unfortunately, little appreciation has been expressed for this historic practice that represents a distinctive Presbyterian contribution to the larger body of ecumenical history and practice, which is the heritage of Christians everywhere.

(Condensed for The Presbyterian Church on Edisto Island, South Carolina, by Betty S. Partenheimer, from a Doctoral dissertation, with the author's permission.)

***A GUIDE TO THE GRAVEYARD OF
THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ON EDISTO ISLAND***

Compiled February 1988 by Marie Asbill

Welcome to the Presbyterian Church on Edisto Island. Begin your tour in front of the Sanctuary and look for the lettered signposts designating each point of interest.

The current Sanctuary was constructed in 1830, replacing the original building erected in 1710. By the early 1800's, Edisto planters began to accumulate unimaginable wealth thanks to the production of Sea Island cotton. Worship was an integral part of their lives, hence when they began to prosper, that prosperity was reflected in a new church of Classic Greek Revival architecture. This structure has survived the civil war and hurricanes and is considered one of the most beautiful churches in the Lowcountry.

(proceed to the right of the Sanctuary)

A. Pulaski Obelisk -This marker remembers the Edisto passengers aboard the steamboat Pulaski. Traveling northward from Savannah in June, 1838, the Pulaski made a stop at Steamboat Landing here on Edisto Island, picked up several passengers, and then continued on its northward journey. Off the coast of North Carolina, one of the boilers exploded, and the steamboat sank, leaving no survivors.

(to your immediate right)

B. Earliest monument – to Sarah Deveaux, October 2nd, 1785. Prior to 1800, most burials occurred on plantation grounds in family cemeteries (A cemetery is a graveyard that is not connected with a church.) Some of these sites are still used today; however, most have been long forgotten. The stone used at that time makes it difficult to read the inscriptions.

(the raised grave on your right)

C. Robert Trail Chisolm – Suffering from a terminal illness, Robert Chisolm committed suicide and was promptly laid to rest in the Chisolm plot in the graveyard. Church officers later informed his wife, Mary Chisolm, that it was against church custom and law for suicide victims to be buried in hallowed ground and that she must remove the body. Instead, Mary secured bricks from Charleston and under cover of darkness had the plot enclosed. She subsequently convinced the church that this arrangement satisfied their concern and they accepted her compromise. Years later, Mary Chisolm was laid to rest with her husband. (Notice her name under his on the slab.)

(directly behind the Chisolm plot)

D. Rev. William States Lee – Enclosed by wooden, square railings, is the Lee family plot. Rev. Lee served as minister here for 51 years (1821-1872.) He was the first minister to preach in the new Sanctuary and the first to live at the current Manse. During most of his time as Pastor, Lee's congregation enjoyed the wealth of the Golden Era; therefore he was well taken care of though he himself was not a planter. He led his congregation in regaining possession of the church in 1866 from the former slaves who had occupied it for worship during the Civil War. They subsequently established their own church, which has remained a separate congregation – The Edisto Presbyterian Church – located approximately one mile east just off Highway 174.

(proceed approximately 100 feet)

E. Providence Mikell – A distinctive feature of this graveyard is the large number of graves with elevated, horizontal memorial slabs bearing tribute to the life and character of the deceased. This particular area is a fine example. Note the monument to Mrs. Mikell, some have surmised that the epitaph on her memorial tablet was taken from the eulogy presented by Rev. Lee.

(proceed to the small reddish brown building at the rear of the Sanctuary)

F. Along the way, especially around the Bailey graves, notice the number of children's graves. Unfortunately, infants often did not survive. Headstones followed closely by footstones usually indicate children's graves.

G. Legare Mausoleum (pronounced La-Gree) – According to Island legend, young Julia Legare could have been accidentally buried alive! This mausoleum originally included first one and then a second marble door that mysteriously were discovered open and broken, leading to speculation that her spirit wanted the tomb to remain open! The mausoleum no longer contains remains from earlier burials; the below-ground spaces were filled in and the marble door fragments were cemented into the present floor.

(walk back toward the Sanctuary and look toward the right)

H. Note the size and lovely stonework of monuments directly behind the Sanctuary. They speak of the affluence of families in the church between 1820-1860. Names such as Seabrook, Bailey, Mikell, Murray and Whaley continue among present Island residents. Ornate iron fences and gates were often used to define family plots. Particularly interesting is the ironwork surrounding the Seabrook graves which represents native oak logs as posts with branches and leaves twisting between them.

The two tall columns, which appear to be broken, were erected to represent "broken off" lives.

(turn right between the enclosed family plots and the rear of the Sanctuary and proceed to the raised brick grave behind the plot containing Sarah Annie Seabrook's grave)

I. Arthur Alfred Gilling – During the cotton era, Edistonians would spend their summers at the beach village of Eddingsville where Islanders would entertain visitors from far and near. On one such visit Mr. Gilling became involved in a dispute with a local resident, Mr. Bailey, that ended with the two meeting at "The Sands", a remote stretch of Eddingsville where dueling regularly took place. Gilling was known to be an expert shot, while Bailey was considered only a mediocre marksman. Fully expecting the worst, Bailey brought with him a surgeon and mattress which was to transport home his lifeless body. However, as the duel ensued, to everyone's surprise it was Gilling who received the death wound and whose body was brought back on the mattress, which Bailey had intended for himself!

(small white building)

J. Prayer Chapel – The modest white structure to one side of the Sanctuary was built in the 1800's as a Session House for meetings of the governing body of the church. Church elders would occasionally become involved in such heated discussions of church business that duels were actually challenged. The congregation was not pleased by such behavior and directed that this separate building be erected specifically for accommodating any unruly Session meetings. Notice that the dimensions of this building would be too narrow to permit the necessary ten paces required for a duel. Rededicated in January, 1998, as a Prayer Chapel and opened for public use, you are invited to spend a moment inside in prayer.

(directly in front of the Prayer Chapel)

K. Monument to Donors – This memorial was erected in the early 1800's to honor earlier members who had given substantial gifts of land, slaves and money so that the church would be a self-sustaining enterprise. Consequently, the more common practice of pew rentals was never necessary to support this church and its members could sit wherever they wanted. A century later, the Session became concerned about such "promiscuous seating" and imposed nominal rents to keep worshippers in their accustomed places.

(to the left)

L. Lawton Monument – Erected in later years by the descendants of William Lawton. This monument reflects the esteem in which he was held. This unusual cenotaph records that William Lawton is actually buried about a mile from this churchyard, in a private burial plot.

(proceed to the far corner beside the Ministry Center to the plot enclosed by a single iron railing)

M. Missionary Teachers – These three modest headstones, all bear the same date – Christmas, 1865. Three Christian teachers came south from New England to work among the freed slaves on Edisto during the war years of Federal occupation. Tragically, when returning from a Christmas dinner, their rowboat overturned and all three drowned in the waters of St. Pierre Creek. The teachers were purposely buried by friends at the edge of the graveyard, so as to be as far away from the southerners as possible, with their headstones turned away from the "evil secessionists" who populated the rest of this hallowed ground.