

St. John's Parish Church Historical Timeline



1734 - 1738

The roots of St. John's Parish are nearly as deep as those of its grand neighbor, the 1500-year-old Angel Oak. In 1706, "The Church Act", as it was called by the General Assembly, ordered the creation of seven parishes in Berkley, Colleton, and Craven Counties. April 9, 1734, the parish of St. John's Colleton was established which included Johns Island, Wadmalaw, and Edisto Island. By 1742 the first church of St. John's and parsonage was completed. The Church building, built of brick, was begun during the Colonial period

1734-1738. When the Revolutionary War ended, the parish church lay in ruins, perhaps as a result of imperfections in the tabby work.



1817 - 1864

No regular services were held until a new church was completed in 1817 on the site of the original church. It was a larger Ante-Bellum style wooden church. The second church was designed by Robert Mills, a noted South Carolina architect. In 1837 Sunday School began.

The Abolition movement was in full swing by the 1840's and the parish continued its commitment of bringing the Gospel to the black community. In 1818 there was one black communicant but by 1847 there were

347. As the congregation grew by leaps and bounds, St. Johns planted another Chapel in Legareville in 1856 and a "neat chapel" to the African Americans on Wadmalaw in 1858. During the Civil War in 1864 a fire swept the island and destroyed the Legareville chapel and St. John's Parish church.

Adelaide Dotterer Hill Walpole (1907-2002) was a devoted member of St. John's Parish in worshiping, serving, teaching, and dedicating herself to God and her parish for seventy years. She painted the four historical periods of St. John's representing the Colonial, Ante-Bellum, Post-Civil War, and the present church.

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1873 – 1950's

After the Civil War and when reconstruction reached the Lowcountry, a new church, the third on the site, was built and consecrated on April 27, 1873. In the late 1880's modern pews were installed after the church was extended 15 feet and the chancel recessed. In 1893 the Great Hurricane unroofed the church and destroyed the plastered walls. Following efforts were made to repair damages. Between 1906-1911, the memorial windows were placed at St. John's and the church was repainted.

In 1946 the rectory was built followed by the Parish House in 1947. With more space the congregation grew and so did the ministries. By the middle of the twentieth century the church had been outgrown. The third church was deconstructed and torn down and the present church building augmented by 'some handsome gifts' was built on the same site in 1955.



1955 - Present Day

The earthquake of 1886 and the hurricane of 1893 created persistent problems for the structure of St. John's Parish. In 1955 repairs became too much and the church was finally torn down and replaced with the fourth worship building on this sacred ground.

The first service was held November 27th, 1955. Several month later the steeple was added - the gift of Bishop Thomas. The church was furnished with Altar, Communion Rail, Pulpit, Lectern, pews and a Baptismal Font

as memorials to loved ones and listed in the Book of Remembrance.

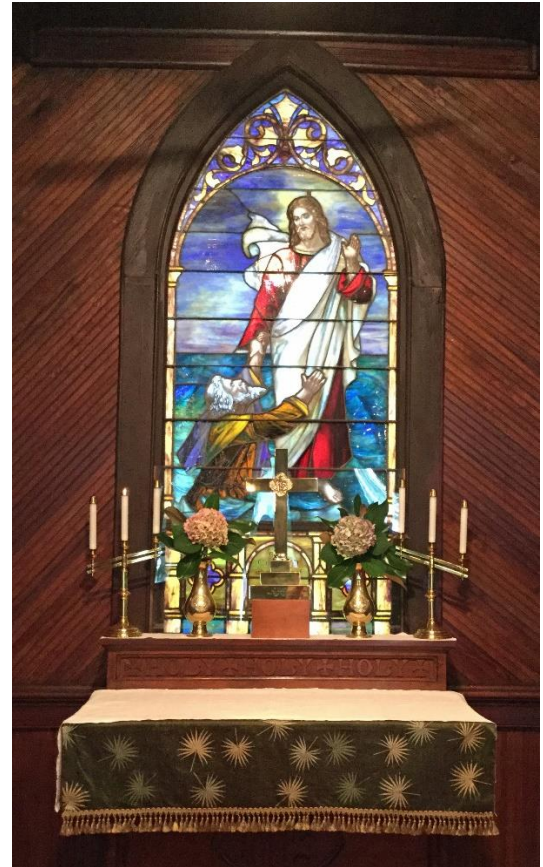
On July 23, 1961, the fourth church was consecrated with a congregation of about three hundred persons present.

The body of Christ here continues to press on in the 1701 charge of the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts" 282 years and counting.

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Grace Chapel Built in 1884



Louis Comfort Tiffany stained-glass window at Grace Chapel

Originally known as *The Church on the Rock*, Grace Chapel was built in 1840 for \$1500 as a “chapel of ease” to serve those families who, seeking to escape the heat, mosquitos, and miasma of the plantations, summered in the village of Rockville.

Unlike its mother church, St. John's Parish Church, and a sister chapel at Legareville, Grace Chapel was spared damage during the Civil War. It received its present name in the immediate post-war period, at which time it served as the main meeting house of the parish.

Due to unclear title to the land on which the chapel sat, the building was moved to its present location in 1884. Several improvements were also made at this time, including the addition of a chancel in 1890.

Following the great Sea Island Hurricane of 1893, Grace Chapel was used as a meeting place by Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross, who came to Rockville to organize humanitarian efforts. As part of storm damage restoration, the Chapel interior was lined with its distinctive wood paneling.

In the early years of the 20th century, a new altar was dedicated, and the porch and belfry were added. The beautiful Tiffany-esque stained glass window was also installed at this time.

The Louis Comfort Tiffany stained-glass window in Grace Chapel, depicting Peter and Jesus walking on the water, was given by an anonymous donor after the great Sea Island Hurricane of 1893 when the chapel was rebuilt and the new altar installed. The Grace chapel window matches the Tiffany stained-glass window in the church at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis

The great Sea Island Hurricane of 1893 damaged many buildings and in the years following funds were contributed to chapels in the south to have Tiffany stained glass windows installed once their churches had been rebuilt.