



## **Saint Cyprian's Episcopal Church**

Darien, Georgia

Parish Profile

Consecrated April 30, 1876

Our Mission at St. Cyprian's Episcopal Church is to know Jesus Christ better and to honor Him as head of the church through our worship and fellowship, and to build up the body of Christ by increasing our membership.

## **Introduction**

St. Cyprian's Episcopal Church was constructed in 1876, and is located on Fort King George Drive in Darien, Georgia. It was built for the African American people in McIntosh County through the efforts of the Reverend James Wentworth Leigh, D.D., F.S.A., Dean of Hereford, England. The church is named for the martyred African Bishop of Carthage, Thascius Caecillanus Cyprianus. St. Cyprian's has been recognized as an historic church by the Georgia Historical Commission.

St. Cyprian's is located one block from St. Andrew's Episcopal Church. It is an independent parish of the diocese of Georgia and has traditionally been served by the clergy of St. Andrew's. Our 9:00 a.m. Sunday service is provided for an average of 35-45 parishioners. The current operating budget is \$50,000.00.

There is a positive relationship between St. Cyprian's and St. Andrew's. We embrace the concept of unity and we mutually respect and are committed to preserving each congregation's uniquely rich heritage. We feel that we can accomplish the mission of the Episcopal church through prayer, worship, and love for one another.

## **History of St. Cyprian's**

In December, 1873, a service was held for former slaves in a small room on Major Pierce Butler's Island by The Honorable Reverend James Wentworth Leigh. The next year, Father Leigh began holding service and Sunday School in a larger room in the overseer's house. Four adults were baptized and 22 candidates were confirmed by the Right Reverend John W. Beckwith, Bishop of Georgia. During 1874 – 1875, Father Leigh was asked by the parishioners to hold service in Darien as well as on Butler's Island. The services in Darien were held in a building rented by Henry Todd, a man willing to aid in any religious movement.

A year later, a regular church building was started in Darien on land given by Francis Kemble Butler Leigh, the wife of Father Leigh. The plans for the building were designed in England. Monies to build the church came from England and the north. Members of Butler's Island and Darien's congregations, led by senior Warden Lewis Jackson and local citizens, gave devotedly of their time and labor. One of the features St. Cyprian's offers is its construction of tabby, a common lowcountry building material used extensively in the 18th and early 19th centuries. The church is believed to be one of the largest tabby structures still in use in Georgia.

On April 8th 1876, Father Leigh presented 21 candidates to Bishop Beckwith on Butler's Island. The next day, Father Leigh and the Reverend Robert F Clute, Rector, St. Andrew's Darien, presented 9 candidates for confirmation to Bishop Beckwith.

On Easter, 1876, Bishop Beckwith consecrated St. Cyprian's. Father Leigh was to return to England. While the church was still under construction, Bishop Beckwith consented to hold the

consecration before Father Leigh's departure in 1877. St. Cyprian's was placed under the guardianship of St Andrews and the Reverend Robert F Clute, Rector.

During the succeeding 16 years, leadership was provided by lay readers, deacons, and vicars from St Andrew's. From 1892-1914, the Reverend Ferdinand Mann, served as the first black clergyman ordained in the church.

In September, 1896, St. Cyprian's was severely damaged by 2 hurricanes. The structure was rebuilt and consecrated on March 7th, 1897, by Bishop C.K. Nelson. In October 1898, St. Cyprian's was again severely damaged by a fierce storm. Work resumed on the church. The roof was completed March 2nd, 1901, and the first service was held on the Sunday after Easter.

Since 1915, St. Cyprian's has been blessed with the spiritual leadership of 19 priests. The most recent being Father Ted Clarkson, whose committed and faithful guidance carried us from 2006 to November 2020. A search committee composed of members from Saint Andrew's and Saint Cyprian's is diligently and prayerfully searching for a Rector/Vicar. Our interim priest is the Reverend Bill Barton.

### **Stewardship/Finance and Growth**

Each year we hold a stewardship campaign, encouraging our members to return to God some of the financial blessings that He has provided. Due to the economic status of some of our members, not all of our pledges reflect large amounts. With God's help we are able to support all operating expenses of the church. Given the current pandemic restrictions, our parishioners have continued to support the church, allowing us to remain in good financial standing. Although we have not had in-person worship for over a year, we have continued to employ our organist and housekeeper. A contracted payment to St. Andrew's is budgeted monthly to share in the compensation of the rector.

### **Repairs and Maintenance**

In 2003-2004, major termite damage was repaired at the entrance, sacristy, restroom, and the back of the nave. Floors and some walls and parts of ceiling were removed. Carpet and tiles were replaced where needed. The renovated shingles on the bell tower had to be removed due to damage from birds. The tower roof was re-covered with tin. In the Fall of 2004 a group of church members covered the stained glass and other windows with lexan to protect them from vandalism. A visitor to our congregation donated money which allowed for a new tin roof to be installed on the church in 2005. Our central air conditioning unit was replaced in February 2012. Our Stained Glass Restoration Project began in 2015. Our budget included the restoration of our 130+ year old stained glass windows. Schweitzer Glass Company removed and restored 8 double panelled stained glass windows. One of two larger 4 panelled windows have recently been restored and installed with the top small windows still out for repair. Many parishioners and visitors to our congregation have given generously to this cause. We are proud of this ongoing

project and the preservation of the history and beauty that these windows represent. Our Junior Warden tends to the church grounds and reports on the maintenance of the church building monthly.

### **Worship**

The worship style at St. Cyprian's is best described as traditional (Rite II). Our congregational choir sings primarily from the Lift Every Voice and Sing Hymnal. During holidays and cultural events we welcome a special hymn from one of our devoted parishioners. Our unique passing of peace involves a loyal line of members and visitors greeting one another. There are two lay Eucharistic ministers who assist the rector serving on Sundays and holy days. A lay reader is present to read the morning lessons. Four acolytes assist in the service as well. All services are virtual at this time.

### **Christian Education**

A 10:00 youth Sunday school program is available at the St. Andrews rectory. Beginning Easter Sunday there will be a Children's church offered during service time. Pre pandemic there was an adult forum offered at our church after the 9:15 service. An adult Bible study is available at 10:15 in the Parish House.

### **Fellowship**

St. Cyprian's has some members with long-standing roots and involvement in the church. A few of our members, one still active in our church community, were former students of the St. Cyprian's Day School which was under the supervision of Deaconess Anna Alexander along with her sisters, Dora Alexander, and Mary Mann in Darien and Good Shepherd, Pennick, GA. St. Cyprian's has a diverse membership. Many members are related to one another. Our entire congregation enjoys opportunities to have fellowship on holy days, feast days, and special celebrations sponsored jointly with St. Andrew's. We have several members who have benefitted by attending Cursillo at Honey Creek.

### **Outreach**

A scholarship is awarded to a graduating senior from McIntosh County Academy. Elizabeth Noble Stewart was a prominent African-American educator and a lifelong member of St Cyprian's Church. She graduated from high school and was the recipient of a scholarship through the Episcopal Church where she attended and graduated from St. Augustine College in Raleigh, NC. Because of the influence education had upon her life, beginning in 2006, she spearheaded a scholarship through St. Cyprian's Church to support students in their education endeavors. After her death in 2009, the scholarship was named in her honor as the Elizabeth Noble Stewart Scholarship. We provide assistance to our members, community organizations, and/or causes as needed. A discretionary and a benevolent fund was set up in 2003-2004 for this purpose. A handicapped ramp building ministry was formed by the Christian Men's Fellowship of both churches in 2004. To date, 182 low income elderly community members from McIntosh

and area counties have benefitted from this program. The group has appreciated the assistance of other churches in and around our community including, St. Marks Episcopal Church of Brunswick, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, First Presbyterian Church, and Morgan's Chapel all from McIntosh County. Some of our church women belong to the ECW and give of their time to assist in community work and fundraising endeavours. We have some of our members assist weekly in the efforts of the 5 Loaves and 2 Fishes Food Pantry.

### **Community Overview** (from a St. Andrew's profile)

Darien is the second oldest planned town in Georgia being established as a military outpost by Scottish Highlanders under James Oglethorpe starting in January, 1736. Darien's Scottish heritage is evident in many parts of the town and the surrounding areas of McIntosh County.

Except for the tabby waterfront ruins and outer walls of the two-story Strain Building near the waterfront, practically all of the buildings in Darien were constructed after the Civil War. Most of the town was burned in June 1863, as the result of a raid by federal troops stationed on nearby St Simons Island.

Today, the town of Darien is a community home to restaurants and numerous shops. It is the county seat of McIntosh County which is in the heart of the Altamaha river delta. Darien is located about 60 miles south of Savannah, Georgia and 70 miles north of Jacksonville, Florida. Easily accessible from I-95 and Highway 17, Darien and McIntosh County are experiencing an influx of people who are drawn to the area's natural beauty and it's more relaxed lifestyle. Although there is an employer base in the county, many residents work in neighboring Glynn, Liberty, and Wayne Counties. Brunswick, Georgia is just 17 miles south of Darien and it employs most of McIntosh residents who work outside of the county. Some of the major employers are Hercules, Georgia Pacific, Southeast Georgia Health System, Sea Island Company, King and Prince Seafood, Rich-Seapak Corp, and the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC).

### **Church Personality**

St. Cyprian's is a traditional church with a diverse congregation that strives to achieve unity with God and each other in Christ. Like St. Andrew's, as of November 20, 2020 we continue to make great progress under the committed and capable leadership of the Reverend Bill Barton, interim priest and his wife, Sarah. However, a search committee is actively engaged in the process of selecting a rector.

There is a long association and spirit of fellowship that exists between St Cyprian's and St. Andrews. We believe our churches will continue to grow numerically, spiritually, and financially under the leadership of our new rector. We pray that the new leader will motivate all members to remain actively involved with the services, programs, and activities of both churches.

## **Expectations and Attributes**

The members of St. Cyprian's in the past, worked cooperatively and sincerely with the rector of St. Andrew's . Given a prayerful selection, our intention is for our interactions with the new rector/vicar to continue to be satisfactory.

We believe that the selected rector/vicar should possess the following attributes:

- Theological and scriptural grounding
- Strong preaching ability
- Pastoral skills
- Accessibility
- Spritual guidance
- Motivating leadership
- Tolerance
- A sense of humor

## **Goals and Objectives**

### **Goal I**

Reclaim inactive church members and recruit new members.

- Organize an outreach campaign
- Reconnect with members to increase attendance
- Identify creative opportunities to maintain retention

### **Goal II**

All Parishioners / Members will have access to the church's services and communications.

- Expand WiFi, telephone calls, etc.
- Mail Newsletters via postal service and electronic mail
- Organize in-person forums regarding church updates

### **Goal III**

Embrace the church's history and the descendants' connections to The Butler Island Plantation.

- Become a leading partner in the Butler Island Project
- Encourage church members' involvement
- Develop an educational campaign focused on the history of The Weeping Time and The Butler Island Plantation.

### **Goal IV**

Recruit new volunteers to participate in existing projects at the church.

- Encourage new involvement in the Food Bank and Clothing Bank Ministry
- Involve members in Christian Men's Fellowship, etc.

### **Goal VI**

Develop a Pastoral Care Team.

- Visit home bound and hospitalized parishioners. Send out cards monthly to honor birthdays, anniversaries, and other special events. Assist clergy in delivering Holy Communion as well as spending devotional time with shut in members

## **Vestry**

Our vestry is composed of 8 members. An effort is made for members to serve staggered terms, however given the size of our congregation, willing members to serve are not always available. As a result many members have served on the vestry more than one term. We meet monthly and at other times if necessary.

## **Vestry Members:2021**

Selwyn Nelson-Senior Warden

Warren Sloan-Junior Warden

Arthur Stewart-Treasurer

Laura Durand-Clerk

Terry Palmer

Frankie Hunter

Clara Stewart

Dr. Ed Blackburn