



est. 1838

Grace-Calvary Episcopal Church

Grace-Calvary Episcopal Church is open to all people for communion with God and each other in Christ. Within and beyond this historic church, we strive to do God's work: nurturing our spirits; reaching out to those in need; and valuing and caring for the diversity of God's creation.

260 East Green St
Clarkesville, GA 30523
www.grace-calvary.org

Parish Profile
August 2024



Grace-Calvary Episcopal Church was established in 1838 as Grace Protestant Episcopal Church. It was the sixth Episcopal parish to be established in Georgia. The church building, completed in 1842, remains the oldest unaltered Episcopal church building in the state. Built by Jarvis Van Buren, a relative of U.S. President Martin Van Buren, and consecrated on Oct. 10th, 1842, the church is a superb example of Greek Revival Architecture characterized by tall columns and a portico. The historic structure continues to serve its parish as it did when it was consecrated. Extensive restoration was done in the mid-1950s and in the 1980s, and current members place great importance on keeping the historic structure in good condition. The name was changed to Grace-Calvary in 1974 when it merged with Calvary Episcopal Church in Cornelia.

Welcome to Grace-Calvary

Grace-Calvary Episcopal Church is a diverse and welcoming community of people who support each other in our spiritual and everyday lives. This is a church for people who ask questions, make mistakes, and enjoy being human in the light of God's love.

Whoever you are, you are welcome here.

We are a growing church. Our church family includes all ages so we are constantly adjusting our programs to meet the spiritual needs of people of all ages and stages of life.

We are an evolving church. We love our liturgy and traditions. We also keep changing - trying new ways to become more the church Jesus wants us to be.

We are a compassionate and caring church. Within and beyond this historic church we strive to do God's work: nurturing our spirits; reaching out to those in need; and valuing and caring for the diversity of God's creation.

We are a worshipping church. Our ability to come before God, acknowledging and valuing our differences, brings added life to our worship together.

Whoever you are, you are welcome here.



Who We Are

Our Priest-in-Charge

The Rev. Michelle Fritch was ordained to the diaconate in 2011 and the priesthood in 2012. Michelle is a graduate from the University of Central Florida with a degree in Communications, a Master of Divinity from the University of the South in Sewanee, TN, and recently obtained a master's degree in counseling from Mercer.

Born and raised in Florida, Michelle grew up in the Diocese of Central Florida and served in SW Florida at Holy Innocents in Valrico, and as Youth and Family Ministry Coordinator for the Diocese of SW Florida. In 2015, Michelle moved to Atlanta where she served at St. David's in Roswell.

Michelle has experience in youth and family ministry, pastoral care, facilitating support groups, centering prayer, retreat planning, preaching, teaching, and leading worship. Her favorite scripture passages are Romans 8:38 and John 15:1-17. She fiercely believes that love can change the world and that hugs heal.

Michelle is a proud mom of three adult children, Isaiah, Zachary, and Victoria, and a dog named Bailey-girl. She enjoys spending time with friends and family, hiking, and taking Sunday afternoon naps.



Photo Credit: E. Lane Gresham

Strengths, Opportunities and Challenges

Grace-Calvary is a strong congregation with committed members, dedicated leadership, and is poised for the opportunities change will bring.

We are surrounded by the beauty of the North Georgia Mountains and are blessed with a welcoming and warm congregation.

We are committed to maintaining a visible presence in a growing community, and embracing the unique position of the Episcopal Church in the world.

Our historic and intimate church building attracts both newcomers and locals.

Our beautiful campus serves as a cornerstone for many local outreach programs for which we have a longstanding commitment.

Attracting young people and families with children is a challenge that Grace-Calvary shares with many churches today.

We recognize the importance of listening to the needs of our parish and community in order to develop activities to engage more involvement and participation.

How We Grow in Our Faith

Christian Formation

Grace-Calvary's rich heritage of Christian formation inspires and instills confidence in the future as we rebuild our programs in the wake of the pandemic.

Our small parish has produced a remarkable number of youth leaders at the Diocesan level in recent decades. We aim for that tradition to continue! We currently have two youth who are active at the Diocesan level. We hope to reestablish a youth group on our campus as we attract additional teens.

Our Sunday School program is designed to accommodate ages 5 - 13, discussing "The Sunday Paper" and "The Sunday Paper Junior" lectionary-based curriculum in small groups.

We have traditionally partnered with another local church for VBS. This year, however, Grace-Calvary hosted its own, "Peace Camp." It was a great success and will become a much anticipated annual event.

Adults are nurtured and stimulated in a weekly "Adult Forum" class where lively discussions ensue around engaging books chosen by forum participants. Another class meets to view and discuss the series, "The Chosen."

Grace-Calvary has traditionally sponsored the Sewanee-based Education for Ministry program, which will continue in years to come as we regain momentum, post-pandemic.

Our comfortable facilities and committed volunteers provide fertile soil for the exploration of God's word together.

We look forward to enriching past traditions while we remain excited about new and different ways to learn from God and from one another.

Worship

Grace-Calvary's historic significance is a defining feature of the church and one which endears parishioners and others to it. Built in 1842, this simple space provides a sacred atmosphere for our worship.

While we have adopted some variations, we adhere strongly to the liturgical calendar, observing each season with traditional services.

Laity participate in worship in several ways. Chalice bearers, lectors, and crucifers contribute regularly. The Altar Guild, Flower Guild, and Bread Guild serve faithfully behind the scenes to ensure that all aspects of the worship experience are in place and ready.

Music is an essential component of worship at Grace-Calvary. It is enhanced by the church's historic Henry Erben organ. Commissioned in 1848, it is the oldest working pipe organ in Georgia and is played weekly during worship. The church has both a vocal choir and a bell choir. They rehearse weekly and perform regularly in worship.



The Grace-Calvary Campus & Cemetery



St. Julian Hall

Named for St. Julian Lachicotte, priest at Grace-Calvary from 1981-1990, St. Julian Hall has Sunday School classrooms for children and adults, a nursery, large commercial-grade kitchen, library, and a spacious meeting area upstairs. A porch at the end of St. Julian Hall provides a “stage” for outdoor fellowship events. The playground adjacent to the Hall is a fun, safe place for the children. In 2019, the basement was renovated to better serve the numerous outreach programs hosted here.



Parish Office

During the tenure of Julian Lachicotte, a house across the street from the church was purchased and converted into offices. The building has separate offices for the rector, office manager, financial administrator, and the office volunteer. In addition, the building has a full kitchen, a small sitting area, a large multi-purpose room, and a large conference room. This building is regularly used by various community outreach groups and an adult Christian Formation class.



Labyrinth of the Holy Cross

On the grounds of St. Julian Hall, the Labyrinth of the Holy Cross is welcoming and waiting for seekers to wander its path. The labyrinth, designed by local artist David Wall, was installed in 2010. A hand-crafted metal and stained glass Celtic cross sits atop a stone memorial in the center of the labyrinth. The labyrinth has hosted outdoor worship services and is open to the community as well. Many travel the path of the labyrinth as a form of meditation and prayer.

Our Faith in Action

Reaching Out

Outreach

In accordance with our Mission statement, we seek ways to minister to one another and to reach out to others.

The church was instrumental in beginning several local outreach programs which have grown over the years to provide needed services for county residents. Examples include the Soup Kitchen, Sharing & Caring (a thrift shop and financial assistance ministry), and the Foothills Counseling Center.

The church also provides regular welcoming meeting spaces for many local groups not otherwise associated with the church, such as AA and Al Anon meetings, Foothills Counseling, Local Farmer's Market and Red Cross Blood Drives.

Grace-Calvary members engage with the community generously with donations of time, talent, and materials across a wide spectrum of need. Examples include building ramps for the disabled, volunteering at the soup kitchens, Habitat for Humanity builds, collecting supplies for the soup kitchens and our local animal shelter, Prison Ministry, Christmas caroling to shut-ins, and partnering with a local elementary school to provide Christmas for children of families in need.



Where We Are Going

Financial Summary

Grace Calvary Episcopal Church

Balance Sheet Summary

12/31/2023

Cash and Investments	520,235
Land and Buildings	736,193
Accounts Payable	202
Unrestricted Net Assets	785,258
Temporarily Restricted Assets	44,503
Permanently Restricted Assets	347,971
Total Assets	1,256,428

Results of Operations:

Revenue	215,682
Expenses	177,093
Excess of Revenues Over Expenses	38,588

Stewardship

Grace-Calvary has a sound financial condition, due largely to the diligent oversight of the Vestry, successful annual stewardship campaigns, and parishioners who faithfully and generously honor their yearly pledge commitments.

Our Local Community/Demographics

Community

“Out of the hills of Habersham....”

Song of the Chattahoochee

Sidney Lanier

While Habersham County is noted in the *Song of the Chattahoochee*, Clarkesville is known for a tributary of the Chattahoochee River - - the Soque River. The Soque River surrounds Clarkesville on the west and southwest sides of the city, and the river is known for its scenic beauty and trophy trout fishing. Clarkesville is the county seat of Habersham County, and is a small 2.49 square mile area with a 2020 Census population of 1,900. Since its founding in 1823, Clarkesville has been known as a tourist destination. Tourism and second homes are still important factors in the community.

The per capita income of Habersham County is \$29,069 (2022) and the median household income is \$56,680 (2021). In the 1990s, Rand McNally named Clarkesville the second best place to retire in the United States. With its rural setting in the beautiful foothills of the Appalachian mountains, essential amenities, small town friendliness, and affordable living, Habersham County is a desirable location for people of all ages.

Habersham County’s largest employers are:

Fieldale Farms (poultry): 1500 employees

Habersham County School System:
1075 employees

Ethicon (division of Johnson & Johnson): 825 employees

Tencate (protective textiles): 485 employees

Steel Cell (metal fabrication): 382 employees

Higher Education

Area residents are fortunate to have access to a variety of opportunities for advanced education. North Georgia Technical College is located in Clarkesville. Piedmont University is 4 miles south in Demorest. To the west is Truett -McConnell University and to the east, Toccoa Falls College. Brenau University is south of Clarkesville in Gainesville.

The Arts

Piedmont University has an outstanding venue for its performing arts program, The Swanson Center. In downtown Clarkesville, the Habersham Community Theatre showcases local talent and their productions are quite often performed to sold out audiences.

Outdoor Opportunities

In addition to the Soque River, other outdoor recreation areas nearby include Lake Russell and Nancytown Lake, Tallulah Gorge State Park, Smithgall Woods State Park, Lake Burton, Lake Seed, and Lake Rabun. There are numerous camping, hunting, boating, and hiking opportunities in the surrounding Chattahoochee National Forest.

The county rec sports program is based at The Ruby Fulbright Aquatic Center in Clarkesville. Youth and adult sports leagues as well as individual activities, such as pickleball, tennis and swimming, are offered.

Easy to Travel To and From

Clarkesville is conveniently located close to two international airports, 85 miles from Hartsfield-Jackson in Atlanta and 77 miles from Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport. For those who may prefer rail travel, there is an Amtrak station in Toccoa, 11 miles east of Clarkesville.

Useful Websites for Community Resources

Learn about Habersham County at our Chamber of Commerce website:
habershamchamber.com

For a glimpse of opportunities in Clarkesville, visit: clarkesvillega.com/main-street

Education:

Habersham County Public Schools -
habershamschools.com

Tallulah Falls School -
tallulahfalls.org

Rabun Gap Nacoochee School -
rabungap.org

North Georgia Technical College -
northgatech.edu

Piedmont University -
piedmont.edu

Sports and Recreation:

Habersham County Recreation Dept. -
habershamga.com/parks-and-recreation.cfm

Tallulah Gorge State Park -
gastateparks.org/TallulahGorge

Brasstown Bald or Mount Yonah -
www.fs.usda.gov/conf

Bicycle Ride Across Georgia -
brag.org/

Hogpen Hill Climb (5k & 10k run for Habitat) -
runthehogpen.org

Tallulah Falls Twin Rivers Challenge -
[Tallulahfalls.org/advancement/
twin_rivers_challenge.cms](http://Tallulahfalls.org/advancement/twin_rivers_challenge.cms)

Entertainment:

Habersham County Community Theater -
habershamtheater.com

Habersham Hills Cinema -
gtcmovies.com/theatre-info/habersham-hills-cinemas

Sautee Nacoochee Cultural Center -
snca.org

Hospital:

Habersham Medical Center, is now a campus of The Northeast Georgia Health System -
nghs.com/locations/Habersham

Library:

Clarkesville Library, a member of the Northeast Georgia Regional Library System -
clarkesvillelibrary.org

