





ST. JOHN'S BAPTIST
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WELCOME

Holy Comforter, Gadsden, Alabama

Welcome to Holy Comforter Episcopal Church — a vibrant and growing parish grounded in tradition, steeped in history, and alive with hope in the heart of Gadsden, Alabama. We are a community of faith shaped by prayer, nourished by Scripture, and united at the Table. Rooted in the richness of Episcopal tradition, we joyfully worship God together with reverence, gratitude, and grace.

At Holy Comforter we are known for our hospitality and inclusivity. Here you will find a parish that delights in welcoming others, cherishes relationships, and seeks to reflect Christ's love in all that we do. We are grateful for our past, engaged in our present, and prayerfully looking toward the future God is preparing for us.

We invite you to learn our story, share in our journey, and consider how God may be calling you to walk with us at Holy Comforter.



HOLY COMFORTER HISTORY

Celebrating God's Love Since 1888

Holy Comforter Episcopal Church has been a faithful presence in Gadsden for well over a century. The first meeting to organize an Episcopal parish in Gadsden was held in the Printup Hotel in 1888. A year later, the congregation built its first wooden church on Christopher Avenue. Though beloved, the location was considered "too far from town," and around 1901 the building was moved to the corner of Sixth and Chestnut and remodeled. That structure was partially destroyed by fire on Christmas Eve in 1918 — a moment of loss that soon gave way to renewal.

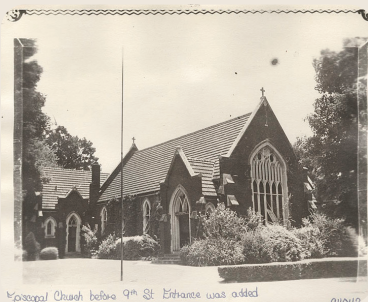
In 1920, Holy Comforter built its present brick church and a rectory at Ninth and Chestnut on land donated by the Kyle family. Early Rectors continued the pattern of growth.

From 1951 to 1977, under the long and fruitful ministry of the Rev. John T. Speaks, Holy Comforter's outreach and vision expanded significantly in the community. The Episcopal Day School was founded in 1952. Holy Comforter House — a two-hundred-unit retirement community — was built. Land donated by Mary George and Hugh Wilmer Agricola became the Hugh W. Agricola Episcopal Day Camp. The Rev. William Spencer Holcomb served from 1978 to 1986, during which time the Episcopal Kyle Home was established and continues to

serve eighteen adults with intellectual disabilities. Under the leadership of the Rev. John W. Cruse (1987–1995), the parish constructed its Great Hall, lobby, and library wing, established the Columbarium, and added an outdoor pavilion at the Day Camp.

From 1996 to 2008, the Rev. James E. Elliott, Jr. guided the parish through further growth and beautification, including the installation of new stained-glass windows, expansion of the Columbarium, and renewal of the Memorial Garden. The Rev. Joan Miller Henrick became Holy Comforter's first female rector in 2009 and served until 2012. That same year, Holy Comforter welcomed its first deacon, the Rev. Dr. David S. Barfield. In 2013, the Rev. Dennis W. Nichols began his ministry at Holy Comforter, which was sadly cut short by his sudden passing in 2014. From 2016 to 2025, the Rev. Carl M. Saxton II served as rector. During his tenure, the sacristy was renovated and extensive restoration work preserved and strengthened the parish's century-old building.

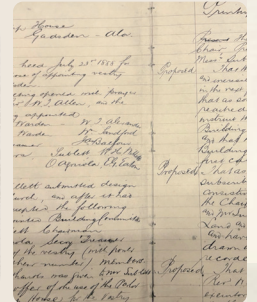
Today, we give thanks for our beautiful church and all who have been called to lead us through the years. We diligently maintain our parish buildings while focusing on growth within our parish and maintaining a commitment to serving our surrounding communities.

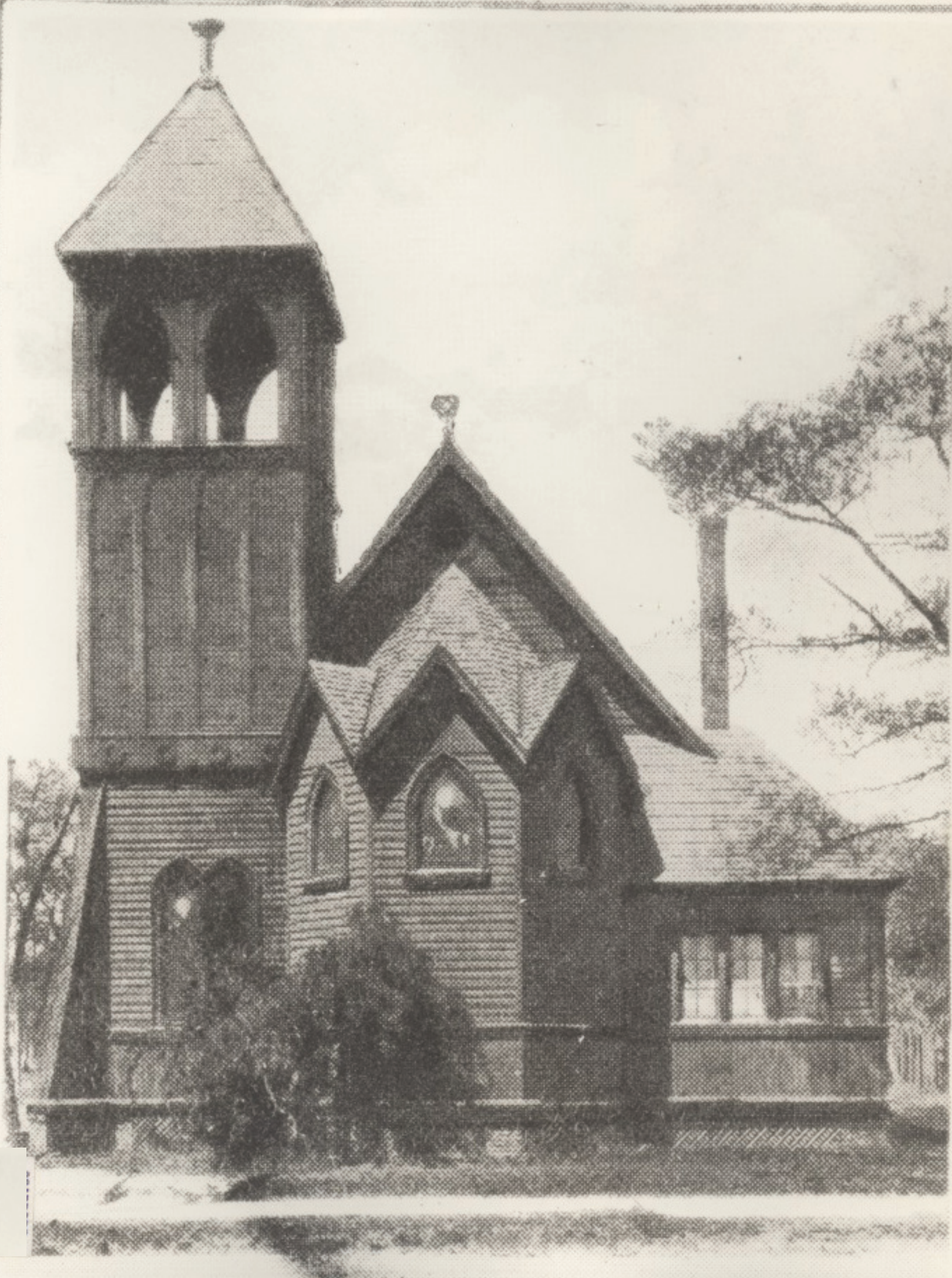


Episcopal Church before 9th St. Entrance was added



Episcopal Church, GADSDEN, ALA.





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“

This feels like a place
that has been prayed
in and prayed over.

”

The Rev. Cn. Geoffrey Evans



WHO WE ARE TODAY

Faithful, Loving, Christ Centered

Holy Comforter stands today as a devoted congregation seeking to live faithfully into Christ's command to love — love for God, love for one another, and love for the world that God so deeply cherishes.

We are steadfast in our commitment to proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ through both word and deed. Our common life is grounded in unity — across generations, backgrounds, and perspectives — as we strive to be a community in which all persons are valued, and genuinely welcomed.

Within our parish, love is practiced with intention: through kindness, attentive listening, generous hospitality, devoted service, and an unwavering desire to see justice, peace, and reconciliation flourish in our midst and beyond.

While a significant portion of our congregation is composed of seniors, we remain fully engaged in the ministries and mission of the church, offering our gifts and talents in response to God's call. We are equally heartened by the increasing presence of younger families who have joined us in recent years. We welcome them warmly, cherish their participation, and rejoice in the sound of children's laughter enlivening our parish life as seen in our multi-generational 2025 Confirmation Class.

We believe that love possesses the power to heal, to restore, and to transform. Accordingly, we seek to embody that love faithfully in our relationships, our ministries, and our outreach to the wider community.

Holy Comforter is a church that worships with reverence and serves with compassion, trusting always in God's continual guidance, renewal, and grace.





CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Cherished, Growing, Hope-Filled

Our children and youth are cherished and nurtured by the entire parish community. Though our group is currently small, our commitment to these young members is strong, faithful, and joyful. We believe investing in children and youth is one of the most meaningful ways to grow God's Kingdom. Holy Comforter is eager to welcome more young families and their children, and we stand ready to expand our children and youth ministries as God provides the opportunity. Here, our youngest members are known, loved, encouraged, and surrounded by a parish family that delights in watching them grow in faith.

- Nursery (0-3) available during most services and events
- Children's Chapel – fully outfitted child-sized chapel to teach younger children about how we worship
- EYC – tweens and teens, classes and activities planned as needed
- Acolyte training – age 11+, getting kids involved in ministry and worship
- Vacation Bible School – summer program, includes Day School students

MINISTRIES

Equipping The Saints

Through our many ministries, we come together to learn, love, and lift one another up each day. These ministries are the heart of our shared life where relationships are strengthened and faith is deepened. We joyfully invest in these ministries, honoring them as the foundation upon which our beloved parish has been built. Each ministry reflects our desire to serve faithfully, grow spiritually, and care for one another as the Body of Christ.

- Choir
- Lectors and Eucharistic Ministers
- Acolytes – children and adults
- Greeters
- Altar Guild
- Flower Guild
- Garden Guild
- Rosary Group
- Brotherhood of St. Andrew
- Daughters of the King
- Episcopal Church Women (ECW)
- Prayer Shawl Ministry
- Livestream Technicians



OUTREACH PROGRAMS

Faith In Action

Holy Comforter is committed to sharing God's love through service and generosity, making a meaningful connection with our community. Though the world around us has changed since our earliest days, our call to love our neighbors has remained the same. We continue to reach outward with compassion, humility, and grace, seeing Christ in those we serve and allowing God's love to work through us. Our outreach ministries reflect our deep desire to care for others and honor human dignity. We live faithfully into Christ's command to love our neighbors. The outreach ministries we prayerfully nurture and actively support include:

- Episcopal Day School – grades pre-K – 12, weekly chapel services in the church
- Brown Bag – packs once monthly lunches for Way of the Cross Feeding Ministry
- Reverse Advent Calendar – annual food collection for the Etowah Community Food Bank
- ECW Soup Sale – annual event much-anticipated by the community
- ECW helps Camp McDowell -- provides camper supplies and counselor meals during Special Sessions
- Blessing Box – provides food bags, clothing, and hygiene bags for the needy in the neighborhood
- Kyle Home – associated with Holy Comforter, Housing for 17 mentally-challenged adults; church has an "adopt a friend" program to pair parishioners and residents
- Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) – UA Adult Education classes meet in the church building on weekdays, 3 sessions per year
- Daughters of the King - welcome bag ministry for newcomers
- MANNA Sunday – donations collected for our local meals on wheels program; several church members work as volunteers
- Prayer Shawl Annual Sale – group knits shawls which are blessed and given to members or neighbors who are ill; sale of items pays for their yarn
- Bell Carillon – plays chimes and hymns for the community
- Windy Van Hooten – local non-profit uses our Episcopal Day Camp property as part of their educational programs for local schools and the community





“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

MATTHEW 25:40



AD GLORIAM DEI ET IN MEMORIAM
WILLIAM CONRAD KYLE
BORN APRIL 1892 DIED AUGUST 1947



OUR DESIRES FOR A RECTOR

Loves God and Loves People

Holy Comforter seeks a rector who will lead us with faith, and serve among us with humility and joy. We long for a pastor who is deeply grounded in prayer, strong in commitment to pastoral care, and will stand with us in both the sacred and ordinary moments of life.

We cherish our Episcopal heritage and we desire a rector who honors and preserves our traditional

liturgy while helping us experience its beauty as it relates to our daily lives.

We seek a rector who will nurture Christian education, develop our youth programs and help integrate new members into the church. We want a rector who is a teacher at heart, and one who will participate fully in parish life. Above all, we desire a rector who loves God, and loves people.

“

Here, the Rector is
always on the side,
but the Cross is always at
the center.

”

Tom D. Banks (1929-2008)
Late Parishioner

WHAT WE OFFER

Loving, Prayerful, and Christ-Centered

Holy Comforter is a community that warmly welcomes all, embracing each person with open hearts and open doors. We place great value on genuine relationships, authentic faith, and the sacred journey of living together as disciples of Christ.

Our parish holds dear the truth of God's Word, the beauty of the sacraments, and the richness and depth of Episcopal liturgy. We approach every aspect of our common life with prayerful intention, seeking to honor God through reverent worship and faithful daily living. Holy Comforter is a place where Communion stands at the center of our spiritual life, where worship is offered with dignity, and where faith extends beyond Sunday into every facet of our lives.

We strive to grow together in Christ, supporting one another as a true family of faith. We offer a community that listens with compassion, loves with sincerity, serves with dedication, and prays with purpose. As we look to the future, we seek a rector who will join us in our story, walk beside us in ministry, and guide us with wisdom and hope into the next chapter of our life together.



HOLY COMFORTER BY THE NUMBERS

Committed To Growth and Prosperity

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Baptized Members	190	178	177	166	191
Average Sunday Attendance	57	52	68	82	82
Number of Pledge Units	59	61	61	66	76
Total Income	369,139	335,281	388,765	447,835	437,706
Annual Expense Budget	340,535	335,961	431,165	424,119	322,400



GADSDEN, ALABAMA

Welcoming and Full of Heart

Gadsden is a welcoming small city rich in history, natural beauty, and genuine Southern hospitality. Nestled along the Coosa River and surrounded by rolling hills, it offers a slower pace of life balanced with meaningful opportunity and all the amenities of larger cities about an hour away. Residents enjoy strong community connections, affordable living, outdoor recreation, arts, and local culture. This is a place where neighbors know one another, we nurture our children and churches continue to shape lives. Gadsden offers the gift of authentic relationships, and the opportunity to serve in a community eager for love, leadership, and hope.



EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF ALABAMA

Faithful, Supportive, Mission Minded

The Episcopal Diocese of Alabama is a diverse, and mission-minded body committed to proclaiming the Gospel with love and courage. Rooted in Episcopal tradition and guided by prayer, the Diocese supports its parishes through collaboration and shared ministry. Holy Comforter is grateful to be part of this diocesan family and participates fully in its mission and ministry of God's ongoing work.



EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE
Holy Comforter
GADSDEN, ALABAMA

SEARCH COMMITTEE CONTACT INFORMATION
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