

EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE ANNUNCIATION

Vidalia, Georgia



Parish Profile

November 2014

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THE ANNUNCIATION

Our stained glass window behind the Altar depicts Botticelli's famous painting.

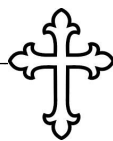
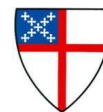
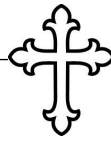


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**Episcopal Church of the Annunciation
1512 Meadows Lane
P.O. Box 1311
Vidalia, Georgia 30474**

June 2014

Dear Prospective Rector,

In December 2013 our Rector resigned to accept a position as Hospice Chaplain with a private hospice organization. In February, after meeting with Canon Frank Logue, the Bishop's Canon to the Ordinary, the Vestry appointed a Search Committee, and we set upon a journey to find our new Rector.

The search committee began their work in the spring of 2014. We contracted with Holy Cow Consulting to help us with an assessment. The committee asked 89 members to participate in this process. Seventy three members completed the assessment. The assessment has allowed us to determine goals and set priorities for our church.

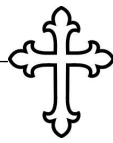
This profile will help give you a sense of who we are, where we are planning to go, and the skills required to help us achieve our goals.

After reading this profile, if you feel that Annunciation might be a good fit for you, I encourage you to contact us. We will prayerfully consider each candidate.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of Annunciation.

Sincerely yours,

Jack Dell
Search Committee Chairman



Introduction



Since its founding, Annunciation has followed a Path. That course leads each of us to know Christ better, and binds us all together in the effort. That is God's true Path for an Episcopal Parish, but sometimes we get off the true course, lose our way for a bit, then get back. Like all churches, when we are closest to the true Course, our Parish flourishes, and when we are further from the Path, our Parish declines. In the past dozen or so years, we have been through two periods of growth and excitement, and two periods of setbacks. We now find ourselves at the conclusion of a period of decline, and we have started to reverse that trend.

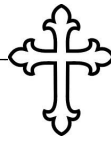
We partially understand our current condition because we are living it, but often that is not enough to fully comprehend the situation. We also have the full support of the Diocese in our efforts, which we know is critical, and we contracted with Holy Cow Consulting. The results of their professional survey and analysis of Annunciation, combined with the assistance of the Diocesan office to interpret the meaning of the survey, provided us with a meaningful picture of where we are as a congregation and what we envision as the steps to get us back to our Path. The search for our next Rector is the key part of this journey, but it is not the only part. We are looking for a spiritual leader and pastor for our flock, but we know that getting us back to the Path is not a job solely for the Rector; we are already taking the steps that we can, on our own, to get back.

The two most recent episodes in our grow/decline cycles were caused primarily by the service of Rectors whose talents and abilities either did or did not fit well with Annunciation. A decline, followed by growth, then another decline have made us more aware of our need to be prayerfully open to the hand of the Holy Spirit as we join with our next Rector, always thankful for our Church family and our blessings.

Here is the good news of Annunciation, and the not-so-good news.

First the not-so-good news:

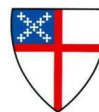
1. Our demographics indicate declining membership and attendance. This is not out of line with the Church in general, but is of concern in a small Parish in a small town.



2. We have suffered a slight decline in giving in recent years. This is attributed to fewer pledging units, since average pledged amounts are up.
3. Our congregation is “age-challenged”. Only 12% of our survey respondents are under the age of 45. We have only a few small children in the Parish, and no regular attendance by families with teenagers at home.
4. Our Holy Cow assessment places our Parish in the low energy-low satisfaction quadrant. This is the recovery quadrant, and we recognize that we need to make significant changes to regain the Church’s vitality and health. Holy Cow also places us in the highly settled category, but mid-way between progressive and conservative. We believe that both of these descriptions relate to the age and tenure of our congregation, and reinforce the need to make our Church more attractive to new, and especially younger, members.

Now the good News!

1. We have begun the work that the lay leaders and congregation can do before the Rector Search process is completed. We are seeking our way back to the Path. We have reactivated the Men’s Supper Group, the Foyer Groups, the Flower Guild, monthly Pot Luck Suppers, and we have begun a morning breakfast/discussion group. Through these personal ministries we are re-learning what it means to be the Church.
2. The Diocese of Georgia has our back. This is the most significant support from the Diocesan office that we have experienced in decades, and we are grateful, and hopeful.
3. Our financial condition is stable, and our reserves are significant; we have the resources and are willing to invest in our future.
4. Response to the Holy Cow survey was outstanding. We asked 89 members to participate and 73 (82%) did so. This indicates a high involvement from the congregation in the search effort, and also gives us a much more accurate picture of the attitudes of the members.
5. The most encouraging responses in the survey came from the Transition Profile section:
 - During the transition phase: 4% expect to be less involved, 96% more involved;



- Level of availability to assist with additional duties: 11% less available and 89% more available;
- Giving patterns: 2% less, 98% same or more;
- Exploring other churches: 11% tend to agree, 89% disagree;
- Is it time for this transition? 9% disagree, 91% agree;
- The Church should continue in the same direction: 76% disagree, 24% agree;
- Our next Rector should have same skills as recent one: 77% disagree, 23% agree.



Church Assessment



In 2014 Annunciation contracted with Holy Cow Consulting for a church assessment. The assessment was completed on April 19, 2014. Eighty nine members were asked to take the survey, and 73 (82%) completed it. Canon to the Ordinary Fr. Frank Logue met with interested members of the congregation on April 30 to interpret the results and answer questions.

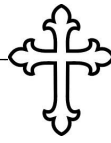


What did we learn about ourselves? The Energy/Satisfaction map places us in the low energy-low satisfaction quadrant. This is the recovery quadrant. The realization that our situation was this threatening was a wake-up call to almost all of the active members of the congregation. We also learned that there is a potential incongruity in how we want to proceed. On one hand, we want to create an environment which will make Annunciation welcoming and appealing to new members, especially younger prospects. On the other hand, we are a settled church which exhibits some resistance to change. It is the firm belief of the Search Committee that by the time the church profile is available for use by prospective Rectors, our congregation will have resolved the “change in order to grow” issue and will already be in the process of making meaningful changes. We also believe that by making small positive changes that are successful, we can build momentum that makes the next steps easier. It seems clear to us that maintaining status quo will result in further attrition and no meaningful growth.



What issues were identified as being most important for improvement in our Church life? Survey respondents clearly pinpointed the following five areas where additional energy and effort should be placed:

- * Make necessary changes to attract families with children and youth to our church. This is likely a recurring driver for Churches in today's cultural environment, but it is pivotal for Annunciation. Our census of young families is very low, and we need critical mass in this area so that our programs for young people are meaningful. However, the additional challenge manifests itself when we consider that the assessment also tells us, in the Flexible Style Index, that we are not generally open to significant changes. We believe that the membership must, and will, adopt a more receptive posture to changes if we are to meet the goal of attracting new members, particularly younger ones.



- * Develop and implement a comprehensive new strategy to reach new people and incorporate them into the life of the church. This goal is very close in scope and challenge to the item above. However, there are some discontinued programs from our past that would be easy to reinstate and would likely assist us with this goal. Even so, this represents a challenging opportunity to fashion a comprehensive new way of doing things.
- * Provide more opportunities for Christian education and spiritual formation at every stage of life. Some of these opportunities could involve a return to programs we have let go by, as mentioned above. Some will be new. We understand that will require congregational involvement. Our membership must make a commitment to participate in and support a stronger Christian Education program.
- * Create more opportunities for people to form meaningful relationships (for example small groups, nurtured friendships, shared meals, etc.) This item should be relatively easy for us, as it was once a very important part of our Church life, and was allowed to decline to a less meaningful level.
- * Expand outreach ministries that provide direct services to those living on the margins of society. Annunciation is too small a Parish to create a group of outreach ministries from the ground up while dealing with the other issues listed above. However, we have many individual members already involved in outreach projects, and it could prove advantageous to begin to include others in the Church in these programs. This approach should prove beneficial when new prospects arrive and have an interest in outreach; we will be able to offer them a choice of community activities to which Annunciation is already connected. As progress is made and momentum builds, new “ground up” ministries should be possible.

On a positive note, the survey clearly showed that during this time of our search and transition to our new Rector’s leadership, members expressed the intention of:

- * Being generally more involved
- * Willing to take on additional responsibilities
- * Maintaining or increasing their level of giving



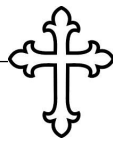
Rector Profile



We are a group of Christians ready to revitalize our church family, strengthen our worship service, and enrich our Christian education. We desire a meaningful, liturgical based worship that leads to spiritual growth. We seek an individual who is creative, energetic and resilient, with a proven track record in managing growth and change. We desire a spirit filled individual who will support and guide our determined flock as we restore Annunciation to its former status.

Our next Rector will:

- * Provide a meaningful, liturgical based worship that leads to Spiritual growth.
- * Lead and guide us as we institute programs aimed at increasing attendance and membership.
- * Make pastoral care a priority.
- * Collaborate in developing programs that will attract youth and young adults.
- * Guide us as we improve our Christian education program.
- * Be willing to participate in community activities as the public face of Annunciation.
- * Help us establish a signature outreach program.



History



In December 1954, the Reverend J. Nathaniel Reid conducted the first Episcopal communion service ever held in Toombs County. The service was held in the educational building of the Vidalia Presbyterian Church. Twenty seven people attended this service.

In January 1955, the Rt. Reverend Albert R. Stewart came to Vidalia to discuss the possibility of organizing a mission. He offered to have the Reverend Peter Fleming, then Deacon of St Paul's Jesup, serve our group by coming twice a month to conduct evening prayer and to work with the group on organization.

In March 1955 the Reverend Peter Fleming was ordained into the Priesthood. His ordination service was held on the Feast of the Annunciation. We named our mission "The Church of The Annunciation" in thanksgiving for his work on our behalf.

During the summer 1955 we rented a section of the Community House and converted it into a Chapel. Our first confirmations were held in this Chapel. Easter 1956 was a special time. Our group obtained the required ten communicants to sign a petition requesting the Diocese to recognize the group as a mission.

Former and Current Leaders of Annunciation



The Rev. J. Nathaniel Reid
Dec 22 1954, held first public
Episcopal Service in Vidalia,
Christmas Communion



The Rev. Peter Fleming
(V) Feb 1955—Aug 1957
Served at first Vicar



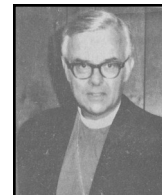
The Rev. James Crowther
1st Resident Deacon
Aug 1957—May 1958



The Rev. Bruce Wirtz
(V) June 1959—Sept 1960



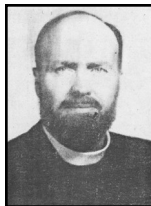
The Rev. Silas Emmett Lucas
(V) April 1964—Nov 1971



The Rev. Brad Rockwood
1972—1975



Fr. Mihael Rowell
1976—1977



The Rev. Richard Cantrell
(V) Aug 1978—Sept 1983



The Rev. Ronald B. Southerland
(R) June 1989—Dec 2007
Served as second Rector



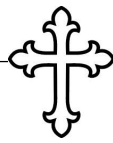
The Rev. Bill Stewart
(I) Jan 2008—May 2009



The Rev. James H. Clendinen
(R) Oct. 2009—Dec. 2013



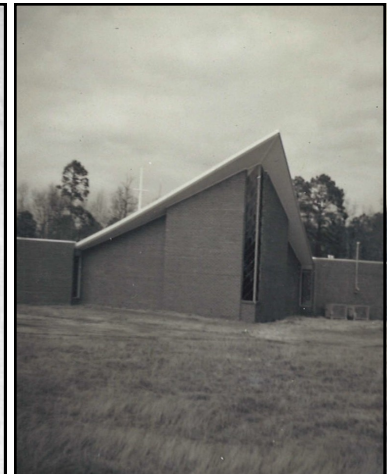
The Rev. Dr. Reed Freeman
(I) June 2014—Current Date



History



In 1959 the land was given to the church, and in March 1960 we had the “ground breaking” for the first Church building. In this setting, Annunciation continued to prosper as a Mission for the next quarter century. Under the leadership of The Rev. Hal Crisler, the Church of the Annunciation was recognized as a parish at the Diocesan Convention in 1987.





History



Groundbreaking for the present Church building occurred in early 2001.

The new Church building was consecrated on November 18, 2001. Among the 250 people in attendance were former rectors and members from as far away as Florida and New York.





Church Leadership



Bishop

The Rt. Rev. Scott Anson Benhase

Adviser

The Rev. Canon Frank Logue

Interim Rector

The Rev. Dr. Reed H. Freeman

Deacon

The Rev. Dcn. Burt Derrick

Senior Warden

Beverly Thompson

Junior Warden

Bobby Hamilton

Other Vestry Members

Wes Chapman

Bill Martinez

Latrelle Stockton

Larry Threlkeld

Appointed Positions

Treasurer-Anne Roller

Clerk of the Vestry-Della Richards

Search Committee

Chair - Jack Dell

Therisa Ingley

Max Manry

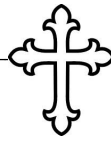
Jen Martinez

Harry Moses

George Mosley

Christie Roller

Anne Smith



Parish Staff



Office Administrator/Secretary

Mrs. JoAnn C. Hutcheson

JoAnn manages many daily tasks of the Church Office to include greeting visitors and answering the telephone, as well as maintaining Church records and performing book keeping duties. She publishes the weekly Sunday service bulletins and the monthly Church Newsletter. She also assists in maintaining our Church website.

Organist/Director of Music

Dr. David H. Paine, M.D.

David, a faithful and dedicated parishioner, has served in the capacity of Organist and Director of Music since 1997. He provides music for the 10:30 Sunday Eucharist, the Christmas eve service, funerals, and other services.

Christian Education Director

Mrs. Beverly B. Thompson

Since 2006 Beverly has taken responsibility for our the Christian education of our youth. She developed, with the assistance of several dedicated volunteers, a program which still serves us today.

Nursery Director

Mrs. Karen Hidalgo

For the past several years, Karen has served as our Nursery Director. Her responsibilities include insuring that the nursery is open each Sunday morning and staffed to provide a place for members to leave infants and young children while they attend our 10:30 a.m. worship service. The nursery is also open during special services.



Parish Demographics



The 134 members of Annunciation are a loving, caring group. Our membership is a mostly older mix of 51 family units. Thirty seven (72%) of our families are over 50 years old, and of those 21 (47%) of the families are retired. Nineteen are single person families. For various reasons, membership over the last five years has declined, a trend we are working to reverse.

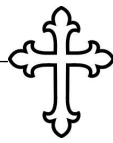
At this time our youth program is limited to Christian education because we have only one teenage child. The other children in our membership are under 10 years old. In order to fill the need for youth activities on a bigger scale, we work with the local Presbyterian Church, which also has a smaller youth population, to plan and execute joint events such as the Easter Egg Hunt and Vacation Bible School.

Growing membership and attracting young families with children are major concerns that we feel have to be addressed.

Statistics from the **Parish Parochial Report** are shown below.

<u>Year</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2005</u>
Total Membership	134	171	172	171	167
Ave. Sunday Attendance	41	45	46	47	45
No. of Pledges	44	53	58	56	48
Total Pledged	\$151,000	\$159,000	\$159,000	\$156,000	\$120,000
Total Operating Revenue	\$151,674	\$163,117	\$159,720	\$164,452	\$150,978
Total Operating Expenses	\$162,856	\$164,737	\$169,793	\$173,765	\$133,999
Op. Revenue less Op. Expenses	(\$11,182)	(\$1,620)	(\$10,073)	(\$9,313)	\$16,979

Calendar year 2005 demographics are shown to provide an anchor point. Notice that revenues exceeded expenses in that year. This was consistent from 1990 through 2009. In 2010, operating expenses exceeded revenue, and this trend has continued.



Worship Services



Regular services are held each Sunday at 8:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. At the early service, Rite II, without music, is typically observed. The 10:30 a.m. service, with music, is normally Rite II, but Rite I is held on occasion.



In addition, we celebrate the ten principal feasts of the Christian year (BCP pages 15 & 16).

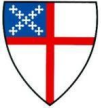
Other services which we celebrate include:

Ash Wednesday
Maundy Thursday
Good Friday

The Annunciation
Rogation Day (Picnic)
Blessing of the Animals

The pictures shown below and on pages 18 and 19 are representative of the services that we enjoy.



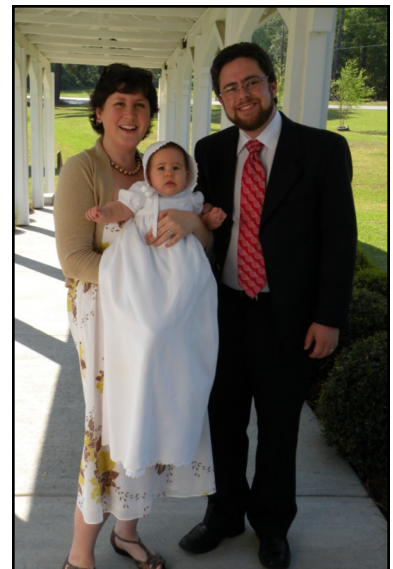


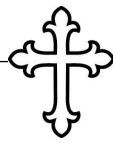
Worship Services





Worship Services





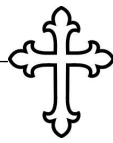
Music



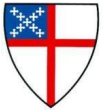
Annunciation is fortunate to have the rare combination of a building with great acoustics, a fine Moller Organ, and an innovative and dedicated organist/music director. Since beginning in this position in 1997, Dr. David Paine has expanded our organ from a manually controlled 200 pipe, four rank 1948 Moller to that of a manual/computer-controlled analog/digital hybrid instrument with the equivalent of approximately 3300 pipes or about 54 ranks, including a 32 foot pedal stop. All of this is powered by the combined processing of seven control and soundfield environment computers working together in real time. The repertoire of the instrument ranges from the sublime to triumphant, encompassing over 1000 classical and contemporary sacred works of music.

Dr. Paine provides music for the 10:30 Eucharist, the Christmas Eve service, funerals, and other services.





Ministries and Committees



Annunciation has several opportunities for lay people of all ages to become involved in the ministries of the church. These ministries allow parishioners to give glory to God and complement the work of our dedicated leadership and staff.

Lay Worship Ministry

Currently we have 6 Eucharist Ministers, 3 Acolytes, and 12 Lectors. Additionally, we have a member who has been ordained to the Sacred Order of Deacons. One Chalice bearer and one Lector assist the rector at each service.

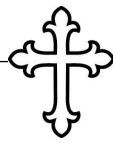
We are experiencing expanded lay participation in worship ministries. Each Sunday, a Vestry person ensures that the buildings are open and assignments are filled. Members are scheduled as greeters and alms collectors for each service.



Altar Guild

The women of Annunciation's altar guild consider it both a privilege and an honor to work quietly behind the scenes for the love and care of God's altar. The eight members of the altar guild take turns caring for all activities relating to the altar, rotating their services weekly throughout the year. By participating with the altar guild, the members "feel the real presence of God more strongly".





Ministries and Committees



Episcopal Church Women (ECW)

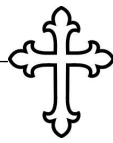
Annunciation's ECW meets approximately once a month for fellowship, a shared meal, to discuss business, needs in the parish and community, and upcoming projects and programs. The ECW has enhanced the life of our church and community by assisting with medical and other expenses for people in need; helping God's Storehouse Food Bank and The Refuge Women's Shelter with supply drives during the year; and providing meals for parishioners in times of need. ECW's biggest undertaking is the "adoption" of three to five families in need during the Christmas season. The entire parish comes together in the true spirit of love to meet the needs and wishes of these families. An annual ECW-sponsored rummage and bake sale is the primary source of revenue to support these ministries, with additional support from individual donations of funds and supplies.



Daughters of the King

Five women belong to the St. Mary of the Annunciation Chapter of Daughters of the King. As daughters, these women serve through assistance to our priest as needed, help with activities for the children and youth of our church, and endeavor to strengthen the spiritual life of our parish. The chapter meets once a month for study and prayer. Our fellowship enables each daughter to discern God's truth and bear the cross through her life For His Sake.





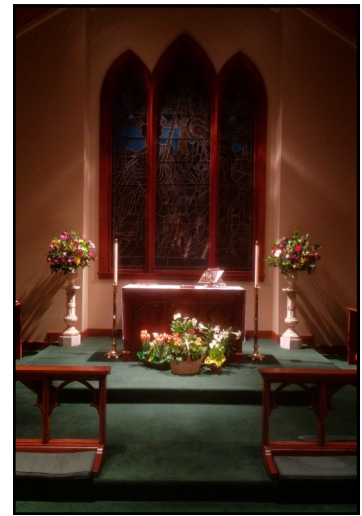
Ministries and Committees

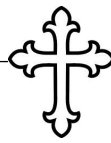


Flower Guild

The Flower Guild provides the flowers and greenery for services, weddings, funerals, holidays and other occasions.

Flowers are provided at a reasonable cost to parishioners wishing to honor someone or to make a memorial gift. The Flower Guild takes pride in their tasks, knowing they have done something to help keep Annunciation looking beautiful.





Financials



OPERATIONAL FINANCES AND THE 2014 BUDGET

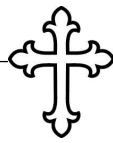
ANNUNCIATION HAS NO DEBT. We have been blessed with parishioners who are capable and willing to support the needs of the congregation. From at least 1990 through 2009 the church enjoyed budget surpluses. Many of these surpluses were significant. This allowed us to build up significant reserves (over \$128,000) in our general operating fund. Unfortunately, the church has shown a budget deficit for years 2010 through 2013. The 2014 budget projects an end of year surplus, and we are on track to meet this projection. We recognize that this is not typical and is due to not having a Rector for the first six months of this year. We also understand that the 2015 and later budgets will be higher, and will require additional giving to prevent budget deficits. It is worthy to note that, while the number of pledges has declined, individual giving has increased. A summary of the 2014 budget, a history of the past three years revenue and expenses, and a snapshot of our current financial status follows:

	Budget	Actual		
Revenue:	2014	2013	2012	2011
Pledges & Plate Offering	\$138,500	\$150,859	\$162,870	\$159,036
Other Offerings	\$ 600	\$ 814	\$ 247	\$ 682
Non-Operating Income	\$ 0	\$ 6,364	\$ 14,283	\$ 6,969
Total Revenues	\$139,100	\$158,037	\$177,400	\$166,688
Expenses:				
Diocese and Church	\$ 20,168	\$ 19,899	\$ 19,788	\$ 25,246
Salaries & Administrative	* \$ 79,577	\$114,665	\$114,733	\$112,319
Operating	\$ 28,825	\$ 28,291	\$ 30,219	\$ 32,228
Non-Operating Expenses	0	\$ 4,013	\$ 17,876	\$ 3,883
Total Expenses	\$128,570	\$166,886	\$182,616	\$173,676

* No Rector for 6 months. 2013 and prior included pay package for full time Rector.

Current Financial Status

General Funds:		Restricted Funds:	
General Fund Cash	\$32,799	Building Fund	\$16,749
Church Corp Investment	95,680	Memorial Fund	5,636
		Other	5784
Total General Funds:	\$128,479	Total Restricted Fund	\$28,169



Capital Campaigns



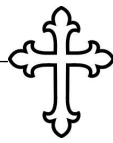
Annunciation's most recent capital campaign was held in 2000. This was a three year campaign with a goal of \$250,000.00. Forty eight family units pledged \$460,000.00.

The purpose of this campaign was to build a new church building. Funds from the campaign, coupled with other monies already in the building fund, allowed us to build a new Church with seating for over 150 people. Total cost of the project was \$660,562.00.

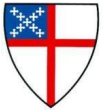
In addition to the large stained glass window, all Church furnishings, i.e. altar, altar rail, kneelers, pews etc., were given as designated gifts. The new Church was completed in early November 2001, and the consecration and first service was held on November 18, 2001. The debt on the construction loan was retired on December 31, 2002, thirteen months after the church was completed.

Currently there are no plans for a new Capital Campaign.





Buildings and Grounds



The Church grounds are located at the intersection of Meadows Lane and Cheney Drive, in an established residential area three blocks from the main thoroughfare in Vidalia. Our grounds encompass approximately five acres, are well landscaped and maintained, and contain three buildings.

Main Church

Built in 2001, the Church Building is a Gothic structure with the main entrance facing Meadows Lane. The beautiful interior of the Church features a large stained glass window depicting Botticelli's painting of the Annunciation. The stained wooden ceiling and stained Altar and moldings add to the beauty of the building. Twenty-two traditional pews provide comfortable seating for over 150 people. The excellent acoustics complement the Moeller-Ahlborn pipe organ and chimes. The pews, altar rail, and all of the furniture in the sanctuary were provided through designated gifts.



Parish Hall

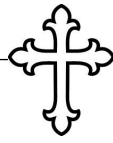
The Parish Hall, constructed in the early 1970's, consists of just over 2000 s.f. in a brick building adjacent to the Main Church. It contains a kitchen, large meeting/dining area, nursery, and two restrooms.



Offices and Old Church Building

Separate offices for the Rector and Church secretary are located in the old church building. This space also serves as a meeting/conference space, youth activities area, and Sunday School rooms.





Buildings and Grounds



Playground

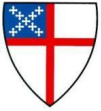
A fenced playground with equipment for small children is adjacent to the old church building and parish hall.



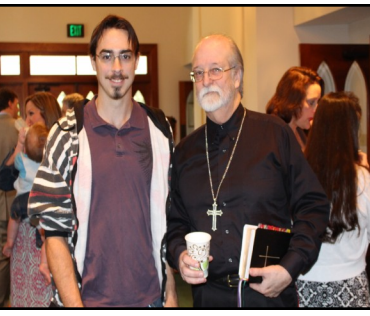
Columbarium and Grounds

Annunciation recently added a Columbarium, which was consecrated in 2008. It is a semi-circular brick wall with wrought iron wings and cast stone coping. The first phase contains 24 double niches; the Columbarium can be expanded to 72 double niches. To date, 14 of the niches have been sold, and two former members have been inurned. The Grounds around the Columbarium and the Church buildings are planted with native trees and flowering shrubs such as camellias and hydrangeas.





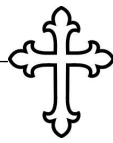
Parish Life in Pictures



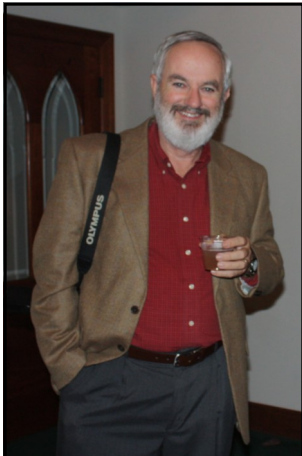


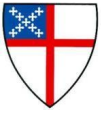
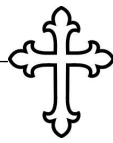
Parish Life in Pictures



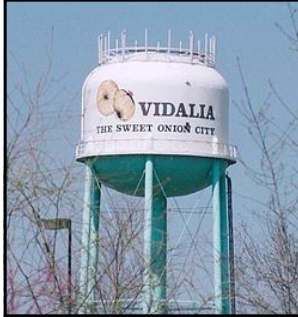


Parish Life in Pictures



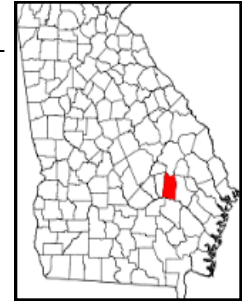


Our Community



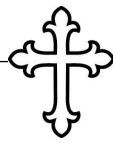
Vidalia is the most populous town in Toombs County Georgia, serving as a shopping, banking, and dining hub for surrounding communities. The population of Toombs County is 27,300. It is the principle health care center for the entire region. Meadows Regional Medical Center, a non-profit hospital, and its associated private practice clinics offer first class medical and surgical options for the citizens. It is a remarkably stable community with relatively low population drift (a loss of only eighteen between the 2000 and 2010 census figures). The area has a healthy base in agriculture, and is the home to the Vidalia Sweet Onion, a USDA protected brand reserved for Granex onions grown in the area.

Vidalia is almost half way between Macon and Savannah near I-16, about an hour's drive from Dublin and Statesboro, GA, and three hours from either Atlanta or Jacksonville, Florida. St. Simon's and Jekyll Island in the Golden Isles of Georgia are only two hours away by car, but Vidalia is off of the main interstates and is spared the traffic that such main arteries bring. The town has its own general aviation regional airport, with a 6000 ft. runway and precision instrument approach equipment.



Vidalia and Toombs County have separate public school systems, and there are two private schools in the community. The immediate area has two two-year post-secondary colleges and four public and private four-year colleges. These colleges include Georgia Southern University in Statesboro (fifty-three miles distant), Brewton-Parker College (thirteen miles away), East Georgia College and South Georgia State University both in Swainsboro (a distance of thirty-five miles). The excellent Vidalia City and Toombs County public schools have produced graduates who have gone on to virtually every major prestigious university in the United States.

Currently, unemployment in Toombs County is 10.0%, which was lower than the regional average of 10.6% but higher than the Georgia and national averages (8.1% & 7.2%). The highest contributor to the economy of the county was health care (22.3%), with the county's largest employer being Meadows Regional Medical Center. Bethany Home, an elder care facility located near the center of town, is one of the city's other top employers. The county also has a strong food and accommodations base (7.6%). In the manufacturing segment, major employers include Trane, Chicken of the Sea, and Tumi, Inc., maker of fine luggage.



Our Community



For the region at large, one of the most substantial employers is Southern Nuclear, operator of the Plant Hatch nuclear power generator, located between Vidalia and Baxley, Georgia. A number of its executives live in Vidalia and commute.

Vidalia looks and feels like a welcoming, prosperous, and hospitable place, and there is little wonder that people choose to live in Vidalia. The town has a higher median income and higher educational level than surrounding counties, and in the year 2000 there were ten hospital beds per 1,000 inhabitants, which is more than triple the state average. In January 2011, Meadows Regional Medical Center expanded its facilities and moved into a new, state-of-the-art building, on Highway 280.

Vidalia, officially incorporated in 1890, has a strong sense of the past, and cultural opportunities are exceptional for a town its size. The Altama Museum, a beautifully restored home on Jackson Street, preserves crafts and heirlooms from the area's past, and features rotating exhibits of new works by local and regional artists. The Historical Society meets in the public library and hosts speakers on area topics. The Vidalia Community Chorus and The Franklina Playhouse offer citizens opportunities in music and drama. One of the finest genealogical libraries one may find is located in Vidalia: the Jack Ladson Library is downtown and offers extensive, well organized records. The Historic PAL Theater is a City-owned restored 1930's movie theater which anchors a vibrant renovated downtown area. Visitors to downtown Vidalia will find coffee shops, restaurants, antique stores, gift shops, clothing boutiques and the like.

Vidalia hosts an annual Sweet Onion Festival in April that draws visitors from across the country, and the Vidalia Onion is, of course, known internationally. A new amphitheater was built last year as a venue for events around the Festival and throughout the year. Visitors from other towns, and visitors to other towns, choose Vidalia for hotels and, most especially, dining. Dining options range from the extremely casual to the gourmet. Authentic barbeque, home style fried chicken, hand made subs and sandwiches, and specialty dishes are all available in Vidalia. Motels in Vidalia offer modern conveniences and updated rooms.

The area offers extensive leisure and recreational opportunities. There are two public, eighteen-hole golf courses in Vidalia, and two State Park courses within 30 miles. Hunting and fishing are popular pastimes, with the Altamaha, Ochopee, Oconee, and Ocmulgee Rivers nearby. These rivers also serve canoeing and kayaking enthusiasts. Local recreation departments in



Our Community



Vidalia and Lyons offer full programs for youth and adults, and there are three major recreational complexes in the County. In addition to the public recreation programs, there are several fitness centers, and many private instruction locations for dance, yoga, gymnastics, karate, etc. Fitness sports such as cycling are popular, and there is an annual triathlon in the County.

Vidalia is a town with a strong sense of identity, one that welcomes newcomers and fosters its citizens.



Our Community in Pictures



Meadows Regional
Medical Center



TUMI Luggage
Vidalia, GA



New Amphitheater,
Downtown Vidalia, GA



Trane, Vidalia, GA



Brewton-Parker College
Mt. Vernon, GA



Southeastern Technical College
Vidalia, GA



Altamaha River
Fishing & Recreation



J.R. Trippe Middle School
Vidalia, GA



Restored Bank Building,
Downtown Vidalia



E.I. Hatch Nuclear Plant
Baxley, GA



Georgia Southern University
Statesboro, GA



Vidalia Regional Airport
Vidalia, GA