



2025 Parish Profile



The Church of the Cross
491 Buckwalter Parkway
Bluffton SC 29910
thechurchofthecross.net

The Church of the Cross in Bluffton, South Carolina

A Vibrant Anglican Parish in the Lowcountry of South Carolina

Introduction

Nestled in the heart of historic Bluffton, South Carolina, The Church of the Cross stands as a beacon of faith, tradition, and community service. With a rich history dating back to the mid-nineteenth century and a robust commitment to the spiritual and social well-being of the Bluffton community, this parish offers a unique blend of tradition, vibrancy, and hospitality. This profile will offer a comprehensive look at the life and ministry of The Church of the Cross, highlighting its history, beliefs, worship life, programs, outreach, and vision for the future.

History and Heritage

Worship in the Bluffton area began with the establishment of St. Luke's Parish in 1767, followed by the construction of a church near Pritchardville in 1787. Religious services on the May River's "The Bluff" started in the early 1830s.

By the 1840s, Bluffton had grown into a summer retreat for local and inland planters and a ferry stop between Savannah and Beaufort. In 1842, a chapel was built near where The Church of the Cross now stands.

The Church of the Cross was founded in 1854, at a time when Bluffton was a small riverside village. Its iconic structure, designed in a striking Gothic Revival style and constructed with local heart pine, was consecrated in 1857. The building, now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, has survived wars, hurricanes, and the ever-changing tides of history, serving as a spiritual home to generations of worshippers.





The church's architectural beauty is matched by its setting, perched on the bluff overlooking the May River. Its cross-timbered façade, original stained glass, and open, airy interior evoke a sense of reverence and peace, drawing visitors and parishioners alike into an atmosphere of worship and reflection.

Through the Civil War and Reconstruction, The Church of the Cross remained a steadfast spiritual center. Over the decades, as Bluffton grew from a quiet riverside town into a thriving community, the parish adapted, expanded, and flourished. Today, the church functions as both a historical landmark and a vibrant congregation, bridging the past with the present.



**One body
worshipping
on two campuses**

Statement of Faith

(Adopted by The Vestry of The Church of the Cross, November 14, 2019)

The Church of the Cross (The Parish) is an Anglican church in Bluffton, South Carolina, in communion with The Anglican Church in North America (ACNA). We are committed to our Mission, “Rooted in the Past, Sheltering the Present, Reaching Out to the Future, Empowered by the God of the Ages” and Vision, “To be followers of Jesus committed to transforming lives in His power and for His glory.”

As such, we ascribe to the following as our core doctrine:

A belief in the Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; three distinct persons co-equal in glory and co-eternal in majesty and of one substantial Godhead, such that there are not three gods but one God.

A belief in the Holy Scriptures as divine revelation, trustworthy, carrying the full measure of His authority, containing all things necessary to salvation, and to be submitted to in all matters of faith and practice of life.

A belief in the One Savior of mankind, Jesus Christ, who in His person is both fully God and fully man; of one substance with the Father as regards His Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards His manhood.

A belief in the perfect obedience of Christ; His true and actual suffering, his substitutionary and atoning death on the cross, and His bodily resurrection and ascension as the only means given for our salvation and reconciliation with God.

A belief in faith alone as the only grounds for the merits of Christ being imputed to us for our justification before God (justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone), leading to good works empowered by the Holy Spirit.

A belief in the consummate return of Jesus Christ in glory to judge the living and the dead, and a belief in the bodily resurrection of the dead and their entrance into either eternal damnation or everlasting blessedness.

A belief in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church as those souls that have been redeemed entirely by the work of Christ and called out of bondage into freedom, out of darkness into light, out of error into truth, out of death into eternal life.

A belief that historic Anglican polity organizes the visible Church under the offices of Bishop, Presbyter and Deacon. Furthermore, the Church exists to worship the Triune God and to lift up the Savior Jesus Christ before all people through the faithful preaching and teaching of the Gospel, through prayer, and through the faithful administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper (Holy Communion or the Eucharist).

A belief in the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds as accurate representations of the essence of the Christian faith, and affirmation of the (39) Articles of Religion as a coherent and concise expression of Anglican doctrine.

Further; We believe Christians are called beyond mere membership to the lifelong journey of discipleship, learning to faithfully live what God has revealed about us. (Matthew 7:24-29, Mark 8:34-36, Galatians 5:22)

We believe all people are created in the image of God, who wonderfully and immutably creates each person as genetically male or female. These two distinct complementary genders reflect the image and nature of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Rejection of one's biological sex is in conflict with this created-ness and is inconsistent with our beliefs.

In the Church, we believe marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in Holy Matrimony, a single, exclusive, lifelong union, as delineated in Scripture (Genesis 2:18-25; Mark 10:1-9). This signifies to us the mystery of the union between Christ and his Church, reconciling and re-uniting two complements. God's good intention for us is that sexual intimacy is to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. (1 Corinthians 6:18; 7:2-5; Hebrews 13:4.) For the blessing and protection of the bond of marriage, our families, and particularly our children, God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.

Because God has ordained marriage and defined it as His covenant relationship between a man and a woman, the Parish (like the Diocese) will only recognize and solemnize a marriage that is between a man and a woman. Further, the clergy and staff of the Parish (like the Diocese) shall only serve in weddings and solemnize marriages between one man and one woman. The facilities and property of the Parish (like the Diocese) shall only host weddings between one man and one woman.

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. (Acts 3:19-21; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31.) Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of the Diocese.

Finally; This statement of faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible is the trustworthy Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of humankind. For purposes of the Parish's faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, our Rector is the final interpretive authority on matters of doctrine and their application.

In order to preserve the function and integrity of the Parish as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the Parish's members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by the Parish in any capacity, or who serve as leaders, agree to abide by this Statement of Faith. (Matthew 5:16; Philippians 2:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:22.)

We are committed to biblical and classical Anglican Christianity. We celebrate and stand for the unchanging truth of the Gospel as centered in the grace of Jesus Christ, in the gift of biblical revelation, and the moral vision expressed in historic, Anglican Christianity.

Vision

To be a community of Christ-imitators in which people are respected, loved and called to God-honoring excellence as they serve the Lord and others in His name

Mission

Rooted in the past, sheltering the present, reaching out the the future, empowered by the God of the Ages

Strategy

To be the body of Christ on multiple campuses committed to transforming lives in His power and for His glory.

Beliefs and Denominational Affiliation

The Church of the Cross is a parish with a membership of over 2000 within the Anglican tradition, rooted in the historic faith as expressed in the creeds, liturgy, and teachings of the Anglican Communion. It is currently affiliated with the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA), having previously been part of The Episcopal Church. The parish holds to orthodox Christian beliefs, emphasizing the authority of Scripture, the centrality of Jesus Christ, and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

The church's mission statement encapsulates its purpose: "To be a faithful witness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the heart of the Lowcountry." Faith formation, discipleship, and evangelism are central to parish life, guiding its ministries and outreach.

Worship and Liturgy

At The Church of the Cross, worship is at the heart of the parish's identity. Multiple services are offered across its two campuses: the historic church located on Calhoun Street in Old Town Bluffton and the Cross Schools campus on Buckwalter Parkway. Services range from traditional Anglican liturgies with organ and choir to contemporary praise services featuring modern music ensembles.

Historic Traditional Services: These two Sunday morning services are more traditional, drawing upon the Anglican Book of Common Prayer and featuring time-honored hymns. The beauty of the sanctuary, with its wooden beams and stained glass, creates a setting conducive to reverence and spiritual reflection.



Historic Gracetime Service: This Saturday evening service is a casual service with renewal and early Christian contemporary music following along with a shortened liturgy and Eucharist. This service draws its name from 1 Thessalonians 5:28



Chapel Service on the Cross Schools Campus:

This Sunday morning service is a liturgical service utilizing elements from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer in our chapel on the Cross Campus.



CrossPoint Service: This modern campus hosts a more contemporary worship service, designed to be accessible to people of all ages and backgrounds. This service features a worship team on the school stage and offers a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere.

The parish observes the liturgical year with special celebrations for Advent, Christmas, Holy Week, Easter, and Pentecost.

Baptisms, confirmations, weddings, and funerals are conducted with reverence and pastoral care, emphasizing the role of sacramental life in the journey of faith.

Spiritual Formation and Education

Christian education is a cornerstone of The Church of the Cross. The parish offers opportunities for spiritual growth and learning for all ages:

Children's Ministry: Sunday School classes, Vacation Bible School, and children's worship experiences are designed to nurture young believers, helping children grow in their knowledge of Jesus and the Scriptures.

Youth Ministry: The youth group meets regularly for Bible study, fellowship, service projects, and retreats. Students are encouraged to wrestle with questions of faith, develop leadership skills, and build lasting friendships.

Adult Discipleship: Adults can participate in a variety of Bible studies, small groups, and spiritual formation classes. Teachings are also offered on Christian basics, Anglican beliefs, and a variety theological topics help deepen faith and foster community.



Cross Schools: The parish partners with Cross Schools, an independent Christian school located on the Buckwalter Campus, offering education from 12 months through 12th grade. This ministry underscores the church's investment in the intellectual and spiritual formation of the next generation.

Pastoral Care and Fellowship

The Church of the Cross places a strong emphasis on pastoral care and the nurturing of an authentic Christian community. Clergy and lay leaders are actively involved in providing support and guidance to parishioners facing illness, bereavement, or personal crises. The church operates a network of care teams, prayer groups, and visitation ministries to ensure that no member journeys alone.

Fellowship opportunities abound, from parish picnics and holiday events to men's and women's retreats, book clubs, and interest groups. These gatherings foster connection, friendship, and a sense of belonging within the larger parish family.



Outreach and Missions

With a heart for service, The Church of the Cross is deeply engaged in outreach, both in the Bluffton area and beyond. The parish supports a range of local and global ministries, responding to the needs of the community and embodying Christ's call to love and serve others.

Since 2010, our volunteer-run thrift store, God's Goods, has given over \$5 million to local, national and international missions groups through grants to those groups who are dedicated to spreading the Gospel. A Missions and Outreach Board led by faithful parishioners facilitate the grants and distribution of funds.

Weekly our volunteer run Food Bank provides bags of food for an average of 450 families in our county. In conjunction with our Food Bank, we offer free clothing, housewares, and furniture to the Food Bank patrons to help meet their physical needs through the overflow items not sold in the God's Goods Thrift Store.

Local Outreach: The church partners with food banks, shelters, and social service organizations to address hunger, homelessness, and poverty in the region. Regular service projects and mission days provide hands-on opportunities for parishioners to make a difference.

Global Missions: The parish supports missionaries and ministries in countries around the world, including medical missions, education initiatives, and church planting efforts. The church encourages its members to engage in short-term mission trips and to support global partners through prayer and financial gifts.

Communications and Technology

Understanding the importance of connection in today's world, The Church of the Cross maintains a robust online presence. Livestreamed services, podcasts, e-newsletters, and an active social media platform keep parishioners informed and engaged. The church website offers resources for worship, education, and spiritual formation, making it easy for newcomers to learn about parish life and get involved. Weekly almost 200 people livestream our services which keeps those who are unable to attend connected to the parish and congregation. This ministry of outreach through technology began during the season of Covid, but it has proven to be continuously meeting the needs of God's people who are ill, homebound, have moved away or travel frequently.

Leadership and Governance

The parish is led by a rector, supported by assisting clergy, a vestry (elected lay leadership), and a dedicated staff. Leadership is characterized by a collaborative spirit, a commitment to transparency, and a desire to equip laypersons for ministry leadership.

Lay Ministries

The Church of The Cross stands as a model of active faith in practice. The church's emphasis on lay leadership and compassionate care ensures that its ministries are both diverse and impactful, serving the needs of the congregation and the broader community alike.

With over 70 different ministries, the church demonstrates a commitment to service, outreach, and spiritual growth. What makes these ministries particularly notable is that each is led by lay members, highlighting the congregation's dedication to empowering individuals to serve and lead within the church.

Lay leadership is at the heart of The Church of the Cross. Unlike some churches, where ministries are primarily overseen by clergy, here lay members — those not ordained — initiate and guide a wide range of ministries. These lay leaders bring diverse talents, perspectives, and passions to their roles, fostering an environment where everyone is encouraged to participate and contribute.

Stephen Ministry

The Church of The Cross boasts a vibrant Stephen Ministry, a nationally recognized Christian care-giving program, in which trained lay members provide confidential, one-to-one support to people experiencing challenges such as grief, illness, or other life difficulties.

The Church of the Cross' commitment to empowering lay members through leadership and care initiatives has a profound impact on both the church and the wider community. These ministries provide essential services, foster relationships, and reflect the church's mission to live out faith in practical and meaningful ways.

Through programs like the Stephen Ministry, the Food Bank, God's Goods Thrift Store and many one-on-one ministries, members experience the love and support of their church family, reinforcing the values of empathy and service.

Looking at the Future

Looking ahead, The Church of the Cross is committed to faithful growth, both spiritually and numerically. The parish seeks to expand its ministries to reach new residents and families moving to Bluffton, deepen its investment in youth and children's formation, and continue stewarding the Historic Campus with care and vision. Plans are in the development phase for an additional campus further west in Hardeeville. This property will follow the same footprint of development as Cross Schools 25 years ago. The new East Argent Campus will include an early education school with a worship space for adding another service to serve that area of the county. Plans also are in the works to develop 40 acres behind the current Cross Schools campus to build a new high school with athletic fields.

The parish is dedicated to expanding small group offerings, enhancing worship and music ministries, and exploring new ways to serve the changing needs of the wider and more diverse community. The Church remains grounded in prayer, guided by Scripture, and open to the leading of the Holy Spirit as it moves forward.

Summary

The Church of the Cross in Bluffton, South Carolina, is a parish rooted in history and propelled by mission. Its blend of tradition and innovation, commitment to service, and dedication to spiritual growth make it a cornerstone of the Bluffton community. Whether you are seeking a church home, exploring the Christian faith, or simply interested in the rich heritage of the Lowcountry, The Church of the Cross offers a warm welcome and a vibrant spiritual community.

Additional Resources

[History of the Parish](#)
[2024 Annual Report](#)
[Fall 2025 Parish Magazine](#)
[Ministry Team & Vestry](#)
[Cross Schools Website](#)

Videos

[“Where We Are”](#)
[“Where We Are Going”](#)

Contact Information

Locations:

110 Calhoun Street, Bluffton, SC 29910 (Historic Campus);
491 Buckwalter Parkway, Bluffton, SC 29910 (The Chapel on the Cross Schools Campus)
495 Buckwalter Parkway, Bluffton, SC 29910 (CrossPoint service on the Cross Schools Campus)

Website: www.thechurchofthecross.net

Denomination: Anglican Church in North America (ACNA)

Founded: 1854

