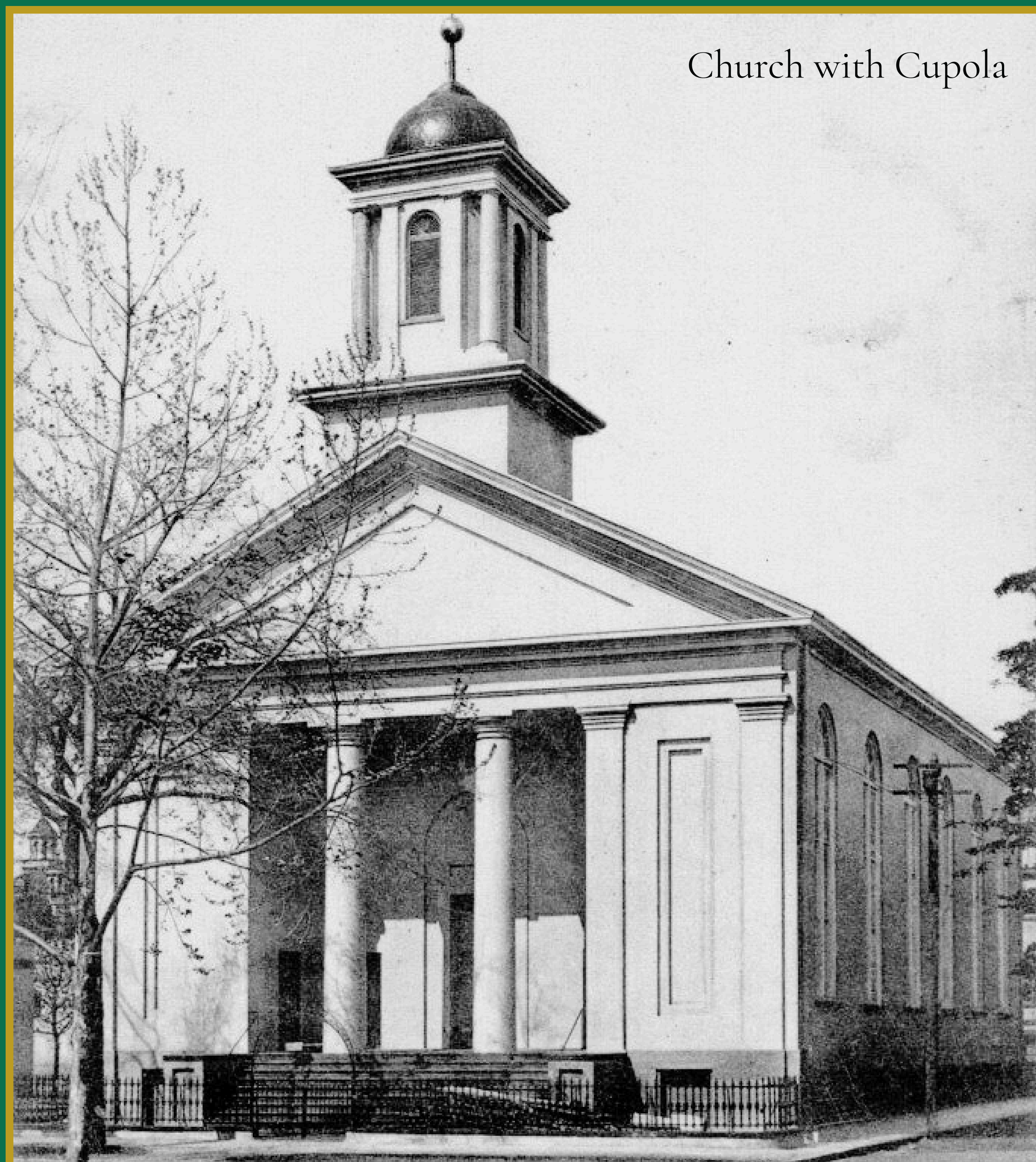


# The Building



Church with Cupola

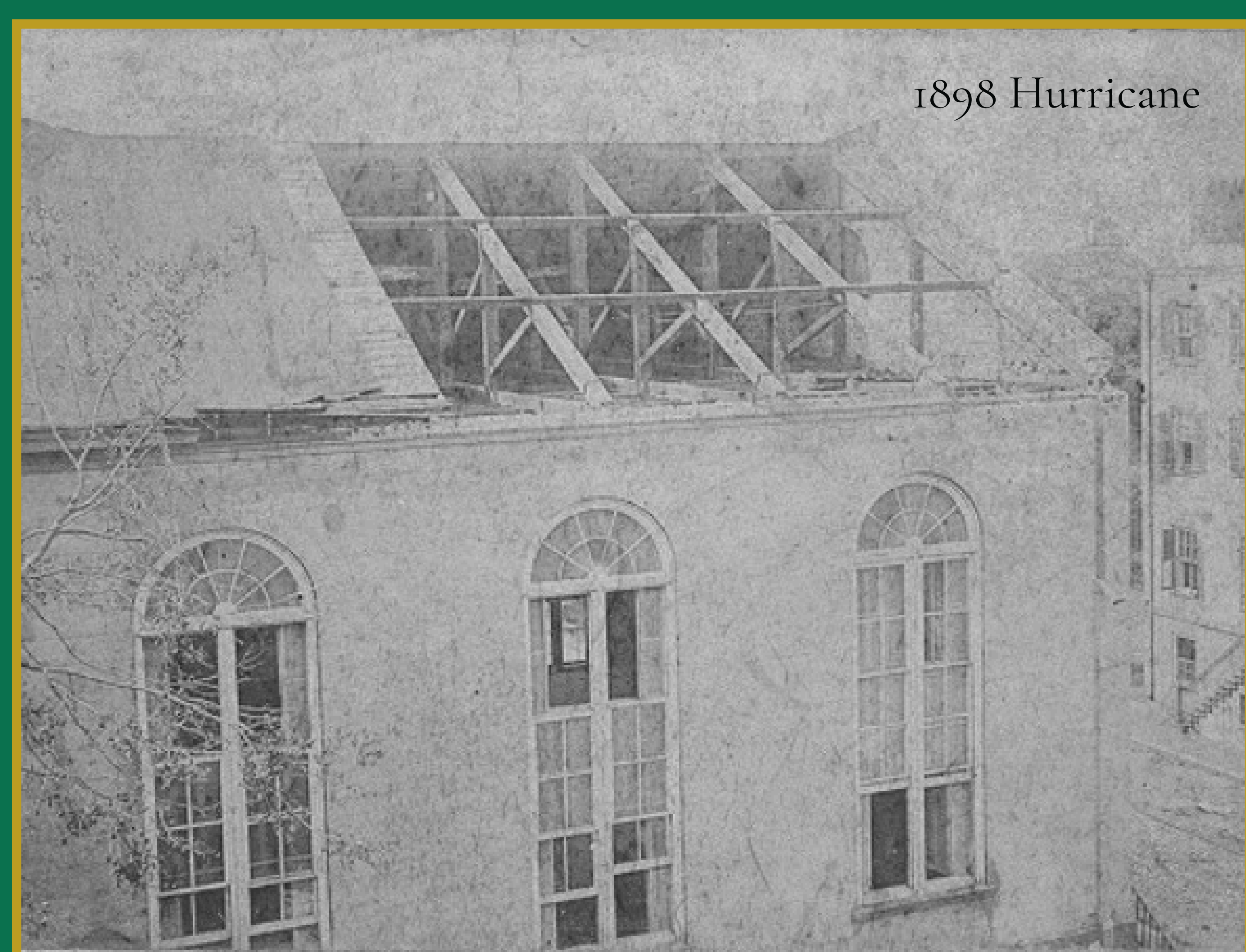
The current structure was completed in 1833, making it the city's oldest standing house of worship. This edifice was made possible through the estate of Josiah Penfield—a deacon of our church who also helped to establish Mercer University. The building's original design featured an exterior cupola and an interior wrap-around balcony.

After being damaged by several hurricanes, the church was completely renovated in 1922. At that time, the cupola and balcony were removed, the imposing facade and porch were added, and the pipe organ was installed. Built by the E.M. Skinner Company, the organ is the oldest and largest in the Savannah region, boasting over 4,000 pipes. The walnut pews were also added at this time, being paid for through church bake sales.



1900 Interior Rendering

The current architectural style of the building is Greek Revival, although it also incorporates several Roman elements. Subsequent renovations took place in the 1970s and 2000s, but no drastic changes were made. The most recent restorations included truss work in the attic and the renovation of the ground-floor restrooms.



1898 Hurricane

In keeping with early Baptist practices, there are no symbols—religious or secular—in the sanctuary other than the cross. The baptistry is the oldest in Savannah; prior to its installation, baptisms were conducted in the Savannah River. The pulpit and lectern were gifted by the J.C. Lewis family, whose descendants are still active members. The church archives include our original charter, the communion silver from the schism of the 1850s, and needlepoint kneelers created by the women of the church.

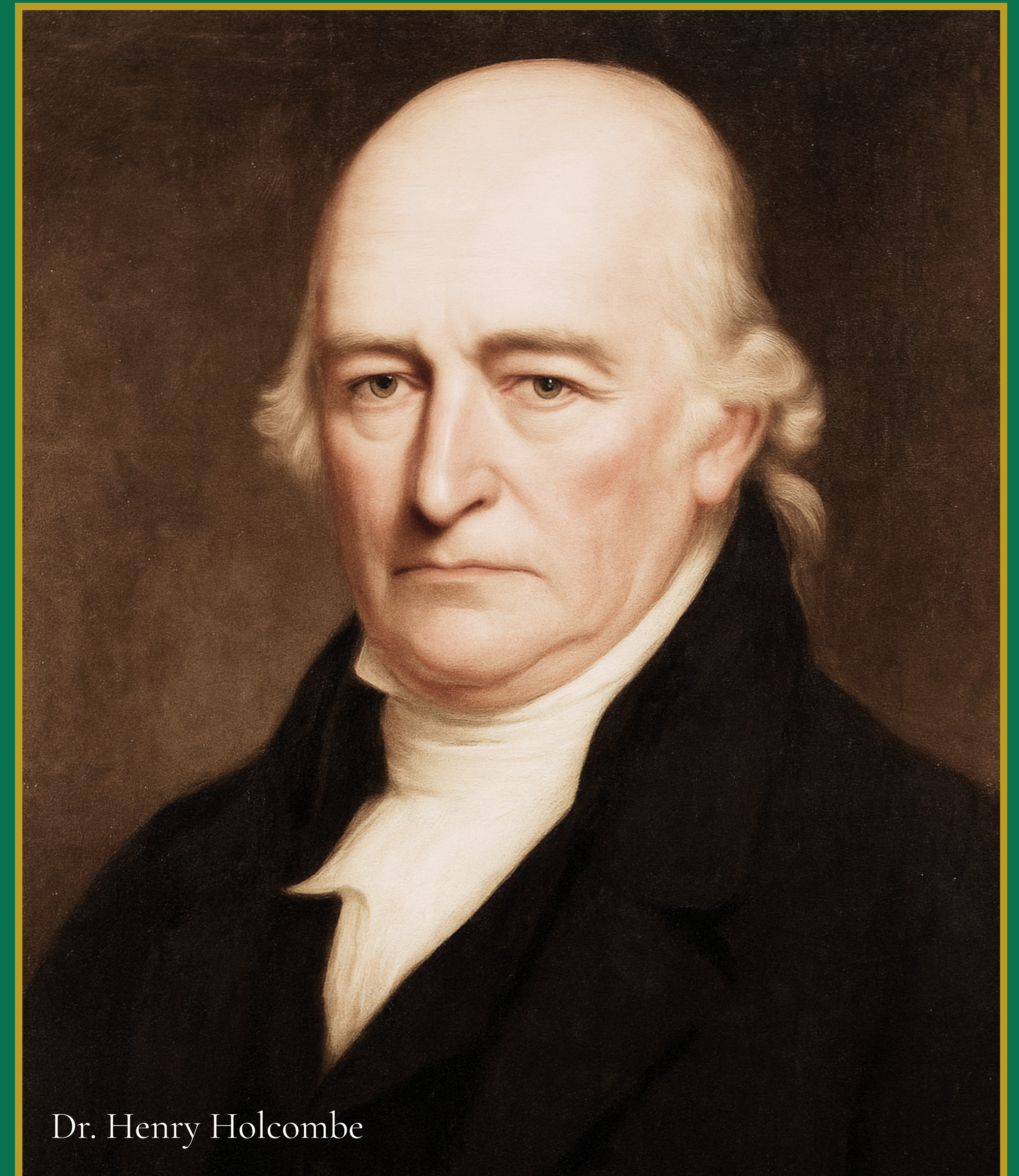
# The People

The First Baptist Church of Savannah, GA, was chartered on November 26, 1800, making it one of the oldest Baptist congregations in the state of Georgia. The original Baptist meeting house was located on Franklin Square, where the First African Baptist Church now stands. Our church's first minister was Dr. Henry Holcombe, a prominent figure in Baptist life. Our second pastor, Dr. William Johnson, was the founding president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The worship style of the church is formal and liturgical, deriving from the Charleston Tradition of Baptist Worship. Hallmarks of this form include ordered services, the use of confessions of faith, leadership by educated clergy, and focus on scripture, prayer, and praise. Music and the creative arts are also important elements of our worship.

Our congregation has long been at the forefront of mission work and social justice. Under the leadership of Dr. Thomas Austin, our church became involved in ecumenical dialogue in the 1970s, and helped to establish local mission agencies that are still active today. We also support the work of missionaries around the world, including efforts in the Middle East, Europe, and Cuba.

The church began discussions of ordaining women as deacons as early as the 1940s, appointed its first female associate minister in the 1980s, and became fully inclusive of the LGBTQ+ community in 2016. Despite our history, we were one of the first churches in the South to leave the Southern Baptist Convention. Today, we are affiliated with the Baptist World Alliance, the Alliance of Baptists, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, and the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists.



Dr. Henry Holcombe



Ordination Service



Savannah PRIDE