

# Historic church reborn by faithful work, prayers

BY MILES LAYTON

Editor

God has gained a new place of worship on East Church Street.

St. George's Orthodox Church is about to get a new home within the historic St. John's Church.

The ink is drying on the deed that was transferred very recently from the Episcopal Diocese of East Carolina to St. George's.

Tuesday morning, the faithful gathered to commemorate this event on the steps of the new, well maybe old, church.

"This is wonderful day for Edenton," said Sambo Dixon, a key player in this Godly endeavor. "Once again the community has come together to ensure that an incredibly important African-American landmark will not only be saved but restored to the highest standards. The restoration of St. John's church is another example of Edenton's commitment to making sure that our African-American built heritage is not lost but saved and celebrated."

Worth noting, the Chowan Historical Commission's newly instituted preservation covenant program. "While many individuals in the saving of St. John's Church, it was John Morehead who really did the majority of the work to see that this building was saved. All of us in Edenton owe John Morehead an enormous thank you for all his efforts and for the ongoing preservation of the building."

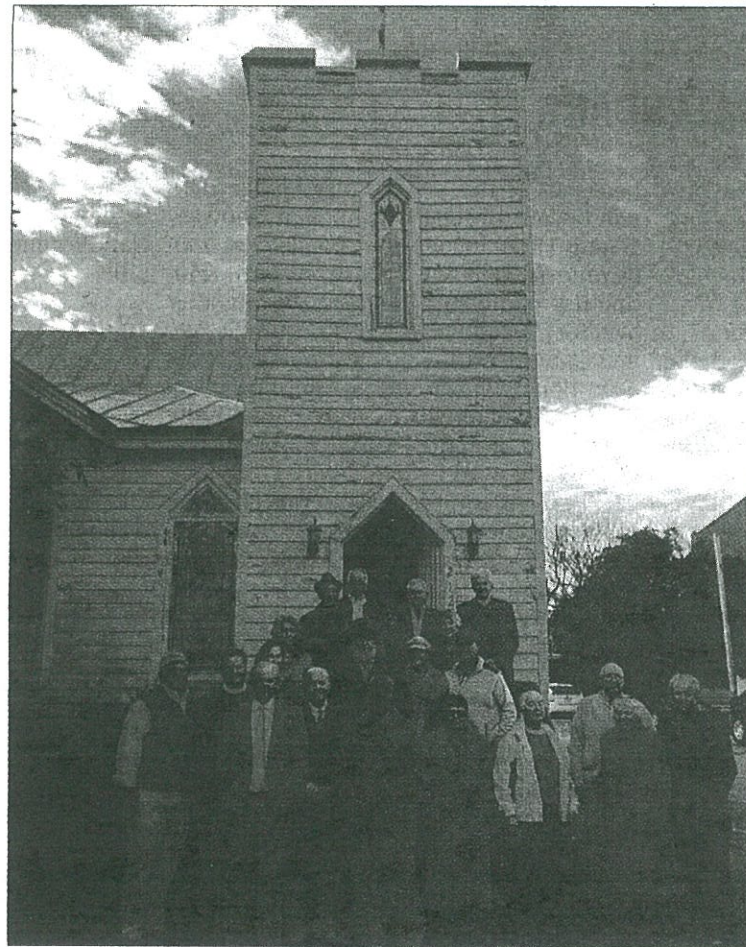


PHOTO BY MILES LAYTON

Town officials and church leaders gathered Tuesday morning to pay homage to a new, albeit old, house of worship. When repairs are completed, St. George's Orthodox Church parishioners will praise God within the historic St. John's Church.

the church and parish hall are complete, Morehead said, St. George's congregation anticipates moving into the St. John's property at some point this spring.

"The congregation will retain the name St. George's Orthodox Church, but will honor and maintain the distinguished history of the property as the former St. John's Church and St. John's School," he said.

Morehead said that while working with the National Trust's representatives to Edenton for the Kadesh A.M.E. Zion Church restoration grants in July 2017, John Morehead of St. George's and Dixon of St. Paul's observed that the nearby St. John's Church had been vacated by the tenant that had been occupying it since 2009.

Discussions then began immediately in July 2017 with the Right Reverend Robert Skirving, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of East Carolina, about the possibility of achieving the St. John's property's preservation through its donation to St. George's Orthodox Church, which has outgrown the railway depot.

"Through the efforts notably of Dixon, Hood Ellis, and the Reverend Malone Gilliam, all from St. Paul's Episcopal Church, and following endorsement by the vestry of St. Paul's, the Trustees of the Diocese of East Carolina ultimately decided

The Trustees' decision is summarized by one of the paragraphs recited in the deed of gift to St. George's.

"The Trustees of the Diocese accordingly have concluded that the best resolution for the property and its restorative repair and preservation would be its ownership and occupancy by a liturgical Christian Church's local congregation that has a demonstrated record of advocacy, funding, capability, and achievement in the repair, restoration, and preservation of historic architecture for church use," Morehead said.

The deed of gift was executed on Feb. 2, 2018, being remarkably the fifteenth anniversary of the Edenton Orthodox Mission's first worship service in 2003.

The negotiated agreement's main provision was the simultaneous execution by St. George's Church of a Historic Preservation Agreement with the Edenton Historical Commission, in the same form developed by Preservation North Carolina (the Historic Preservation Foundation of North Carolina) and recorded for many historic properties in Edenton and across the State.

Through its building fund accumulated over the past 1½ years, the Orthodox congregation in the coming days will contract repairs to the roof on and around the church tower and the

## A mustard seed of an idea

Guided by God's hand, St. George's parishioner and was driven to find a new home for the church — a place of worship that he is very proud of.

Burning the midnight oil Monday evening, Morehead explained to the Chowan Herald the minutiae about what made this dream be-

the place was in good shape and was optimistic based on what he saw: beautiful woodwork, tall ceilings, ornate wooden pews built so as to keep any penitent's back straight.

Dixon said the building and grounds are going to be protected through protective covenants administered by the Edenton Historical Commission. This is the first building in Chowan County

ton Historical Commission's newly instituted preservation covenant program.

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school tower at St. John's, repair damaged siding and a damaged window and two doors where rain water has likewise been entering, and will repair the accumulated damage beneath the two towers and around the doors, besides replacing some of the heating and cooling equipment and undertaking a repainting of the exterior and a rehabilitation of the floor in the nave.

## A bit of history

The Edenton Orthodox Mission Station was organized in 2002 and had its first service on February 2, 2003 - the Feast of Candlemas, or the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, on the fortieth day after His birth.

Semimonthly services were held in what's now the County Social Services Building, at the end of West Freemason Street, until July of 2006, when weekly services began in St. Anne's Parish Hall.

In October 2007 the Edenton Mission Station began renting the Suffolk & Carolina Railway's 1902 passenger depot on East King Street at the corner of Oakum Street.

Later in October 2007, the Archbishop of the Or-

thodox Diocese of the South came to Edenton, blessed the building for services, and granted the Mission its permanent name of St. George's Church.

After some initial carpentry work, weekly services began in the depot in December 2007.

Soon the depot's largest room, originally the waiting room for black passengers, was restored to its original 1902 appearance for an Orthodox chapel, and services there began in October 2008.

In recognition of the restoration of the depot interior for a church, the Edenton Historical Commission invited and opened the building for its Christmas Candlelight Tour in 2011, 2012, 2015, and 2016.

In August 2014 St. George's Church received its resident priest, Fr. Benedict Churchill, who remains part-time the Editor of St. Vladimir's Seminary's Press.

## Check it Out

Next Sunday, the St. George's congregation plans to offer a look inside the historic St. John's Church building at a short Service of Thanksgiving at 12:30 on Feb. 11. The public is invited. Further information is available by calling St. George's Church at 482-2006.

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## Thank you.

Roland and Anthony Perry,  
the sons of the late Mrs.

Beatrice Perry, wish to thank our many relatives and friends who reflected on our Mother's life and for your many expressions of sympathy. She would have been so pleased. We are grateful, and your thoughtfulness will always be remembered and deeply appreciated.

We are so blessed to have you in our lives.

Thank you for being there with us during that period of our bereavement.

Humbly submitted,  
Anthony and Priscilla Perry



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