



The History of Shallowford Presbyterian Church

It started with a dirt road. In 1823, the DeKalb County Court ordered that a road be built connecting the courthouse in Decatur with the “shallow ford” of the Chattahoochee River. A little over a hundred years later, in 1937, J.R. Carmichael purchased farmland along the then dirt road. In 1958, the Atlanta Presbytery received a gift of four acres from the Carmichael family, and then purchased an additional acre with an eye to planting a new congregation on Shallowford Road. On June 1st of that year worship was first held in the Carmichael home, and Shallowford Presbyterian Church was formally organized on July 24th. The fledgling church’s first pastor, the Rev. Kirk N. Nesbit, was installed on October 26th.

From these small beginnings, the church grew. For the first three years, the church met for worship at Oak Grove Elementary School. In 1959, a plan was adopted for sequential construction of a chapel, an education building, and main sanctuary. The Carmichael Chapel was completed in August 1961 and the Education Building was dedicated four years later. Within a year, the Education Building was serving as home to Shallowford Kindergarten and Preschool as well as to the burgeoning Christian Education ministry. The Sanctuary building, the crowning piece of the original plan, was finished in May 1976. A Capital Campaign was launched in 1998, resulting in an expansion and remodeling of the Education Building to include the Great Hall, Heritage Hall, and the Atrium.

Shallowford has been blessed with outstanding pastoral leadership in its history. Rev. Nesbit served for over ten years, completing his ministry at Shallowford in 1970. He was followed by the Rev. Dr. Thomas L. Are who faithfully served Shallowford for over 20 years, departing in 1992. The Rev. Dr. C. Gray Norsworthy was installed as Senior Pastor in 1994 and served until September 2008. Shallowford then followed God’s call to welcome Rev. Christopher A. Henry as Shallowford’s fourth Senior Pastor in January 2011. Rev. Henry served for over 7 years, completing his ministry in May 2018.

Today, Shallowford Presbyterian Church is a strong, vital, and welcoming congregation with a long-standing tradition of quality ministries of education, mission, and pastoral care, and with a reputation for having music and youth programs which can be counted among Atlanta’s finest. As we are thankful for our past, we also look to our future, trusting God to open up opportunities to be of ever greater service to our community and to make a difference in the name of Jesus Christ. May we always be a “Place of Grace.”