

New Ebenezer

Circa 1977

Situated on a peaceful tract of land amidst whispering pines and sparkling waters, New Ebenezer is a non-profit retreat facility that provides comfortable accommodations, an expansive conference facility, and heartfelt hospitality in the remote and beautiful setting of coastal Georgia near Historic Savannah.

New Ebenezer Retreat & Conference Center

Founded in 1977 by Mr. Richard C. Kessler, New Ebenezer Retreat and Conference Center is the result of a 1973 vision on a mountain in Austria to recreate Historic Ebenezer as a retreat center, a 'New Ebenezer.' Mr. Kessler was haunted by the direction for days before sharing his God-given idea of said retreat center that would reflect the town and values of Historic Ebenezer with his wife, pastor, and father.

After a meeting with Jerusalem Church's Pastor Phil Hugel, a congregation meeting was called and Kessler shared his vision with members of the church. Though he did not have all the answers to their questions about the Retreat Center's possible creation and future, he was shocked by the unanimous vote of 'Yes' to use part of the church's land. By December of 1974, Richard revisited Jerusalem Church from his Orlando home for yet another congregational meeting. He presented his need of financial support for the first cottage and was granted funding without question. Surprisingly enough, they were then granted funding from the Ebenezer Trustee Fund the very next day.

Back in Florida while the project began, Mr. Kessler would receive nightly updates of the day's success. Near the end of clearing and burning the plot of land, he returned to Rincon for the weekend, eager to see results. Upon seeing what seemed the severe destruction of his land, Richard was heavily burdened with pressure and an absence of joy. He quickly turned to prayer and asked God for relief and assurance. At the same time, a "subdued, round, 'moon-like' light appeared in the sky directly up the straight road ahead." This sign from God brought him total peace and urged his steps of faith, one after another.

Over time, director after director came. Staff overturned and facilities were expanded. We now are blessed with eight cottages, two great halls, outdoor facilities and recreation, and many other amenities and meeting spaces. Our founding and growth was by the grace of God and generous confidence of our community through donations and support. We continue to grow in programs, staff, and excellence of service and hope you will join us to experience the gift that is New Ebenezer Retreat and Conference Center.

Our Historic Start

Historic Jerusalem Lutheran Church was completed in 1769, and still has worship services today as the oldest Lutheran church in America with a continuously active congregation.

Our History

The Georgia Salzburgers

The township of Historic Ebenezer, founded in 1734 and relocated in 1736, has a heritage as rich as America. Settled by Lutheran Salzburgers seeking a place of religious freedom and a chance for a new beginning, it grew to about 2,000 residents. Each family was given a town lot for their home, a two-acre garden plot on the town's edge and a 50-acre farm further out.

The British captured the town in 1779. Most of the homes were destroyed and many Salzburgers fled to their farms. The church was used as a hospital by the British, then as a storehouse for their supplies, and finally as a stable for their horses. Patriots, under the command of General Anthony Wayne, drove the British out in 1782.

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Historic Ebenezer eventually became the first capital of Georgia. John A. Treutlen, a member of the Jerusalem congregation, was the first governor.