



"It's a blessing to have this jewel on our campus," says Rev. Kate Colussy-Estes, chaplain.



The chapel in the garden

A New Chapel

The Julia Thompson Smith Chapel lifts spirits at Agnes Scott College in Decatur. BY **JOE RADA**

Agnes Scott College's Julia Thompson Smith Chapel fills a pleasant garden on one side of the Decatur-based college's Science Quad. Towering clear-paned windows in the 68-foot-tall A-frame let daylight pour into a sanctuary with seating for 100. A rare antique pipe organ dominates the balcony, and a nine-panel stained glass window accents the narthex.

Dedicated in 2008, it's the first freestanding chapel in the 120-year history of the traditionally female Presbyterian college. (People formerly gathered for services in classrooms, the student center, or the auditorium.) The Rev. Kate Colussy-Estes, chaplain, tells *Southern Living* more about this place of faith.

Q What goes on at the new chapel?
It provides a space for prayer, contemplation, and worship services. Study groups meet for discussions. We've held lectures and concerts, weddings and memorial services. The college is traditionally linked to the Presbyterian Church, but people of all faiths are welcome.

Q Why is the chapel important to the college?
Having a real chapel gives students opportunities to explore who they are and what they stand for as spiritual persons. We nurture that component of their lives just as much as we encourage them academically. It's the spiritual center of our campus. It's also nice to have a place to drop in just to pause and reflect.

Q What do you like best about it?
The big windows face a lot of trees, so I like watching the birds fly and the seasons change. In lives filled with frenzy, this place calls out for us to stop and be still awhile. The acoustics are fantastic, so anything involving music is memorable.

Q Tell us the story about the tar paper on the roof.
You can't see them because they're covered with shingles now, but on each piece of tar paper up there the word "Grace" is printed every few feet, because that's part of the manufacturer's name. I think it's so appropriate that in a place devoted to God's grace we are—figuratively and literally—enveloped by grace. *

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