

Pastors

Father T.J. Dill (1949-1951)

Our first Pastor was Father T.J. Dill moved into two rooms in the home of Mr. & Mrs. William McKeown of Colborne Road and established the St. Vincent de Paul Society with Al Hatton as president and the Catholic Women's League with Margaret Hogan as president.

In February, 1951, Father Dill moved into a permanent rectory next to the Basement church on Charlesworth Avenue. On January 19, 1959, a fire gutted the church and the four hundred families who now comprised the parish, once again, attended Mass at Sacred Heart School.

Father J.F. Kelly (1951-1956)

Father J.F. Kelly replaced Father Dill as pastor and was in this position from 1951-1956. Father Kelly the Sacred Heart School bus for \$100 in 1953 to transport students back and forth to school. Shift workers in the parish helped Father Kelly with this task, When St. Michael's School was opened in 1955, the bus was given to them.

Father A.F. Scalisi (1956-1965)

Father A.F. Scalisi replaced Father J.F. Kelly as pastor.

On September 2, 1958 Father Scalisi signed the contract for the new church to be built on the north side of Charlesworth Avenue and the next day the clearing of the site began. A sod turning ceremony was held on September 7th, attended by Bishop Cody and other dignitaries of the Catholic Community of Lambton County. Herson Armstrong filmed this ceremony and the various stages of the building of the church and the film has been transferred to video tape by the 50th Anniversary Committee. Thanks to Ruth Armstrong this video will become part of the Archives of Sacred Heart Parish.

A new church was built across the road on the northwest corner of Charlesworth and Father Scalisi, pastor, and Father Devine, assistant pastor, celebrated the opening Mass on November 1, 1959. Renovations turned the basement church into a parish hall.

The rectory was later moved to Lecaron Avenue and later became the residence of the Parish Custodians, Arnold and Mary Bongers and after their retirement, Harry and Ruth Daamen. The house was sold in 2015 when Father Vincent Guilikers was the Pastor.

This property was sold to the Catholic Separate School Board. This enabled The North yard at Sacred Heart School be extended and a small parking lot was added.

Father D.K. McMahon (1965-1982).

In 1962 the Second Vatican Council initiated many reforms and changes. Vatican II promoted the inclusion of the Laity within certain aspects of the church's liturgical and governing structures. Father McMahon ensured that the changes of Vatican II occurred at Sacred Heart and was extremely gifted at delegating responsibility to parishioners. He appointed Lay Lectors in 1965, a Parish Council was established in 1966 to bring democracy to the decision making in the parish, and added Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist in 1970. Mass was celebrated in English rather than Latin. Church music now included religious folk songs. A Saturday evening Mass was added.

It was important to note that Father McMahon handles the changes occurring during his years at Sacred Heart with such dignity that people hardly realized that the stress must have been incredible!

In 1981 Brother of St. Louis, Brother Arthur (religious name), was ordained to the priesthood at Sacred Heart and became Father Paul Beck by Most Reverend Bishop John Michael Sherlock.

Father McMahon celebrated his retirement in 1982 with a parish-wide celebration of the Eucharist with Bishop M. Gervaise, Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of London as Presider. After Mass parishioners, including children, expressed their love and appreciation for Father McMahon at a social gathering.

By 1980 approximately 1,300 families were registered in the parish. In addition, masses held at Sacred Heart, the Anglican Parish of St. John in the Wilderness, Bright's Grove, generously shared their church with us to hold 5:00 p.m. Saturday evening mass from July 1970 until the new St. Michael School was opened. Mass was then celebrated in the school gym until St. Michael Church was built. 'As soon as the present St. Michael's school was opened in 1985, weekend Masses were held in the gymnasium. When Bishop Sherlock came to bless the school, he announced that a new parish, also dedicated to St. Michael, would be established.' (Gather up the Fragments A history of the Diocese of London, Michael Power, Danial J. Brock, et al.)

Father P.E. Crunican (1982-1987).

Father Crunican hired Maggy Barnfield to build a Baptism Preparation Program in 1983. In 1983 Father Crunican asked Sue and Jim Siler to enhance the worship environment/Sanctuary decorations. The Silers introduced the Christmas Gift stocking/bags.

In summer 1984 the Diocese of London invited Father J. Lopresti from the National Forum on Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (R.C.I.A.). Father Crunican and a team from the parish attended. It was decided among the team that R.C.I.A. would begin in September. Sister Patricia Hogan C.S.J., was appointed Director. At the end of the first successful year, Sister Patricia left and in 1984 Stella Burns became the new Director.

One of Father Crunican's many strengths was the involvement of the Laity in the life of the parish.

Father J. Hardy (1987-1988)

Father J. Hardy was appointed Pastor in 1987 with a joint responsibility for the Diocesan Evangelization Commission. His tenure was only one year with the parish. Father Hardy was known as an excellent preacher and supported existing ministries.

Father T.J. Lever (1988-1998).

Prior to Father Lever's appointment as Pastor, he was part of the Diocesan endeavor in Peru for ten years.

Fr. Lever gave enthusiastic support to the existing Ministries and worked to enhance all of them.

Fr. Lever formalized the role of Stella Burns as the Pastoral Minister in 1988. Fr. Lever also instituted Youth Ministry 1990 and appointment Mary Valiquet as Coordinator of Youth Ministry (C.Y.M.).

In 1993 the Diocese saw the need for further education for parish staff and those volunteering in the parish. The Diocese commissioned Assumption University, Windsor, to develop a Certificate and Master's program in Pastoral Ministry. Father Lever supported and encouraged three people to attend the five-year part-time program.

Father Lever, along with many parishioners, was active within the Cursillo Movement.

In 1994 Father Lever, the Pastoral Team and Sacred Heart Parish Pastoral Council identified a Parish Vision and Vision Principles that became in the roadmap for the parish focus from that time on.

In 1994 Stephen Ministry was introduced to the parish.

1997 Father Lever, Stella Burns and Peter Burns began Bereavement Ministry. Father Lever was instrumental in recruiting senior men as altar servers for funeral liturgies.

In January 1998, Father Lever was assigned as Director of Ministry to Priests office.

Father L.G. Desjardins (1998-2010).

Father Desjardins was actively supportive of the existing ministries, volunteers and lay staff. He was an excellent person to work with and for. He acknowledged that the lay staff were fully competent and were fully capable of knowing when they needed advice and assistance.

Father Desjardins had a great love of liturgy. His many creative gifts enhanced the many liturgies and liturgical seasons in the life of the church year which also drew the assembly more deeply into each celebration. (See Decorating Committee in Archive.)

In 2009, Father Desjardins became Pastor of the oversaw the cluster parishes of Sacred Heart Parish, Sarnia and St. Michael Parish, Bright's Grove which included shared responsibility for the many ministries some of which were combined. He had part time help to assist with weekend Masses and Baptisms by Father Peter Poole. At this time, Dave Robertson was ordained a Permanent Deacon and assigned to Sacred Heart and St. Michael clustered parishes.

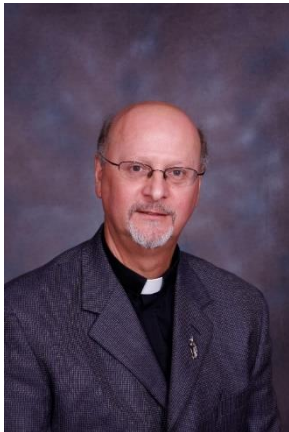
During Father Desjardins time as a Seminarian and later a Priest, he was involved in the Christ in Others Movement (COR).

Father P. Keller (2010-2013).



Father P. Keller supported existing ministries and restructured Sacramental Preparation with Grade Two and Grade Eight to have parents take on the role as the primary educators of the faith of their children.

Father V. Guillikers (2013-2018).



Prior to Father Guillikers ordination to the priesthood, he spent four months at Sacred Heart preparing for the Transitional Diaconate. His ordination to the Transitional Diaconate was celebrated at Sacred Heart.

Father Guillikers redesigned the Sanctuary, meeting room and other areas of the church property.

In 2015 Christopher Stoesser was ordained into the Permanent Diaconate and was assigned to St. Michael and Sacred Heart Parishes.

Father Guillikers was active in the Chatham Cursillo Movement.

Father D.M. Bedard (2018-2021) Episcopal Vicar, Sarnia Deanery.



Father Bedard, strongly supported the existing ministries.

In his second year, Father Bedard led the parish through the many challenges of the COVID pandemic.

Here at Sacred Heart, we have been most fortunate to have forward looking Priests who have fostered Lay Ministry on all levels. Be they Staff or those who have given so generously of their time and talents to enable our various ministries and committees to flourish and grow.