

School Parish Partnerships

Sacred Heart School opened in 1949 with just four rooms. Two rooms were used as classrooms – one of these rooms housed grades 1, 2, 3 and 4, and the other housed grades 5, 6, 7, 8. The third room was used to store supplies and the fourth room was used for Parish liturgies. The first Principal was Sister Maureen.

The Parent Teacher Association was organized 1953 with William Higgins as the first President. Among the fundraising endeavors, with the help of the C.W.L., was the first “pay as you go” Kindergarten with Kit Hollingsworth as teacher.

In 1969, the addition of the gymnasium and the library were added. The school yard was enlarged when the old parish hall was demolished and the rectory moved to its present location north of the Church. It served as the residence for Arnold and Mary Bongers and then Harry and Ruth Daamen who were Custodians and Housekeepers. The house was sold by Fr, Vince Guilkers in July 2015.

In 1955 St. Michael School was opened on Telfer Road. A larger new St. Michael School was built on Wildwood Drive. In 1970, Saturday evening Masses were held at St. John in the Wilderness Anglican Church, Once the school was completed then Saturday evening mass and other masses were held in the school gym after the school was built.

Sacred Heart School continues to offer space for Church activities.

St. Helen School was opened in 1957 with four classrooms with Sister Monica Marie as Principal. The school was closed in 2003.

In 1978 Gregory A. Hogan School was opened to help relieve the growth in population at Sacred Heart School. Dorothy Rogers was the first Principal. The new St. Michael School was then built in -- to accommodate an increasing number of students from Gregory A. Hogan school.

Later when St. Michael and Sacred Heart parishes formed a cluster, St. Anne and St. Michael Schools were ministered to by Sacred Heart Pastoral Team.

St. Anne School opened in 1996 to accommodate a further growth in population in the north of Sarnia.

Over the years St. Patrick High school has had many locations. In 1921 a fifth class was added to St. Joseph's School, 1923, a further move to Our Lady of Mercy School, then in 1935 St. Patrick's was moved to Essex Street. Note: Fr. Tom Lever was a student when the school was on Essex Street. 1953-1954 saw a new school built on Bright Street. The Bright Street School had two divisions – St. Patrick's for male students and St. Patricia's for female students. In 1969 St. Patrick's and St. Patricia's become one school. Later St. Patrick's moved to the former Central Collegiate on East Street.

St. Christopher High School was built opened in Fall 1996 to accommodate an increasing number of students at St. Patrick High School. Due to the decreasing number of students, St. Christopher and St. Patrick High Schools amalgamated in 2013 and the school was named St. Patrick High School.

Sacred Heart Church has a long-standing collaboration with Sacred Heart School – sharing their building to accommodate worship and social gatherings - Confirmation reception, etc. Prior to Lay Ministers being added to the Parish Staff, our Pastors and Associate Pastors were very present in the schools. They celebrated Mass and Reconciliation regularly with Students and Staff. The Parish Ministry staff and the school worked together with students who would be receiving First Communion, First Reconciliation and Confirmation. The school also provided time for the student choir to practice to be ready to lead the Saturday evening Mass and allowed students time away from school to serve on the altar at funeral Masses.

The school also allowed students time away from school to serve on the altar at funeral Masses.

Later Father Lever invited a group of men to serve at funeral Masses. In the past couple of years Women were also invited to serve at Funeral Masses.

Father Desjardins believed it was important to introduce alternate forms of liturgy in addition to the celebration of the Eucharist.

With his guidance the Co-Ordinator of Youth Ministry, Cathy Smith, and the Pastoral Minister, Stella Burns, began celebrating the Liturgy of the Word with the school children.

These liturgies involved designated classes to set a thematic environment, set up electronics and provide music. Each class also provided decorations to highlight the theme of the Liturgy. Lectors from the designated class were prepared by the Parish Pastoral Team. The class wrote the Prayers of the Faithful. Two such liturgies were celebrated each semester in each of the schools.

In addition to these liturgies, our parish Priests would celebrate Mass with the schools. Again, a member of the Pastoral Team would guide the children through the readings, etc. As a Pastoral Team we were extremely grateful to Principals and Teachers who gave us access to the classroom to work with the students.

When Sacred Heart and St. Michael parishes clustered, we worked with St. Anne and St. Michael School and Sacred Heart and Gregory A. Hogan schools.

It has been important for the Parish and Schools, especially grades two and eight, to liaise with the teachers. In August each year the Pastoral Team hosted a luncheon for our Parish school Principals. During these luncheons both Parish and schools organized dates and times for school Masses and liturgies, dates for Days of Reflection for First Communion and Confirmation, use of the schools for parent meetings and the sharing of costs for teaching kits “Together in Jesus”.

Prior to the reception of First Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation, the Pastoral Team hosted a luncheon for the teachers who would be teaching these sacraments.

Renovations

Over the years many renovations and updates to the church have taken place. The more recent by Father D. Kenny McMahon was the Sanctuary to accommodate the Vatican II changes to the Liturgy, where celebrant faced the assembly.

The original parish meeting room was long and narrow with a folding divider which divided the space into two smaller rooms. There were two doors from the parking lot which allowed entrance to the two smaller rooms. One room was dedicated to St. Jude and the other to St. Anthony.

Fr. Paul Crunican extended the meeting room width by taking some of the parking lot, which made it much more user friendly, he built a new kitchen from the third parking bay in the garage. The C.W.L. were partners in this endeavor. The former kitchen was used for storage. Fr. Crunican used the rectory patio to build a small meeting room. It was named the Father McMahon room. He carpeted the Church also. Father Crunican purchased a piano for the Church as few people were able to play the organ, this enabled those who played the piano to join the music ministry. Fr. Crunican also added the overhead screen and projector. This eliminated the need the cost of purchasing hymn books. It also allowed greater flexibility in the choice of music. A copyright fee is paid for each hymn/song. This system has been updated several times. It has proven to be not only useful for music, but is used for announcements, photographs of the newly baptized, Vacation Bible School participants, and at Mass on the first day of November, where photos of parishioners who have died during the year are shown.

Later a Clavinova was purchased which provided greater musical flexibility.

Father Lever added air conditioning to the Church, and had the roof replaced with a metal roof, which is still in good working order. New clear glass windows replaced the original windows which were coloured textured glass. Some Parishioners expressed dismay with the change. One mother liked the new windows for the simple reason that she could see if her child was really using the washroom and not playing outside on the parking lot. Fr. Lever renovated the former kitchen/storage space as part of the Secretary's office for storage, electronic equipment, cabinets for registers, etc. He also built a room to store chairs and tables for the meeting room, and added new front and inside doors at the newly renovated side entrance. The two Confessionals which were on either side of the aisles at the back of the Church were replaced by a new Reconciliation Room and the niche which housed the Our Lady of Perpetual Help icon was also relocated at the back, across the aisle from the Reconciliation Room, adjacent to the Nursery.

Father Len Desjardins renovated the rectory kitchen, installed an automatic watering system, much needed work on the meeting room and McMahon roof and ceiling due to ongoing water damage, and new flooring in the office area. He also removed the organ and replaced the area with the

baptistry and relocated the choir to the former baptistry. Father Len was also very involved along with the Liturgy Committee and staff members preparing the Church for special liturgies and serviced. He spent many hours constructing water fountains, Advent wreaths, making banners, etc. These greatly enhanced seasonal and other special liturgies. (See Decorating Committee in the “Archives” section.)

Father Vincent Guilikers installed new carpeting, and renovated the Sanctuary and the meeting room, and had new carpet laid in the church and hallways. He, together with a team of parishioners, removed all the pews in readiness for the carpet installation. This was a two-week process. Parishioners attended Mass in neighbouring parishes during this process. Unfortunately, due to defects in the carpet, this process had to be repeated a few months later.

Father Guilikers sold the original Rectory/Custodian and Houskeeper house in 2015. The lot between the house and the church has been retained by the parish.

On the first weekend of the church closure due to COVID, March 15, 2020, Sacred Heart Rectory was flooded due to a toilet valve leak that caused water to continually shoot out into the room thus flooding most of the upper floor. The large amount of water accumulated on that level ultimately made the ceilings on the main floor collapsed. The damage was discovered by Ana Maria Moniz Monday morning when she arrived to work and found water and drywall all over the dining room.

Father Bedard managed the restoration project, beginning with the initial cleanup. Due to COVID restrictions, the restoration of the damaged rectory was slow moving with months of no work being done whatsoever. In July 2021 we are in the final stages of the restoration and can say that it will be a beautiful living space for our Family of Parishes Priests.